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THE CREATION OF ELIM-AI

This article presents the events of the Kazakh-Dzungarian wars of the first third of the 18th century and the most important tragic years of the Aktaban Shuburyndy. An attempt was made to disclose these difficult events «Aktaban Shuburyndy» through the research of the famous scientist Mukhamedzhan Ty-nyshpaev and oral folk art the Kazakh people, namely the song «Elim Ai». The author examines in detail the history of the appearance of the song «Elim Ai», draws attention to the fact that the text of the song was published in issue 52 of the journal «Kazak» in 1914. A year later the text was again published in the collection «Terme» in 1915 in Orenburg. The author tried to analyze the text of music and music.

Key words: History, Kazakh-Jungar wars , Elim Ai, Kazakh, song, folk music, culture.

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Елім-ай әнінің шығуы

Бұл мақалада XVIII ғасырдың алғашқы ширегіндегі қазақ-жоңғар соғысының оқиғалары мен Ақтабан Шұбырынды жылдарындағы қайғылы оқиғалар легі айтылады. «Ақтабан Шұбырынды» қайғылы оқиғасының салдарлары мен себептерін ашы мақсатында Мұхамеджан Тынышпаев зерттеулерін қамтыған және қазақ халқының халық ауыз әдебиетінің мұрасы «Елім ай» әнінің шығу тағдырын талдаған. Автор «Елім-ай» әні туралы 1914 жылғы «Қазақ» газетінің 52 санына шыққан «Елім ай» әні туралы мақалаға назар аударған. Бір жылдан соң 1915 жылы Орынбор қаласында «Терме» жинағында тағы осы әннің мәтіні жарияланған. Автор әннің мәтіні мен әуен сарынының ерекшелігіне назар аударған.

Түйін сөздер: тарих, қазақ-жоңғар соғысы, Елім-ай, Қазақ, ән, халық музыкасы, мәдениет.

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Создание песни Елим-ай

В статье представлены события казахстанско-джунгарских войн первой трети XVIII века и самые важные трагические годы Актабан Шубырынди. Была предпринята попытка раскрыть эти трудные события «Актабан Шубырынды» путем исследования известного ученого Мухамеджана Тынышпаева и устного народного искусства казахского народа, а именно песни «Елим-Ай». Автор подробно рассматривает историю появления песни «Елим-Ай», обращает внимание на то, что текст песни был опубликован в номере 52 журнала «Казак» в 1914 году. Через год текст был снова опубликован в сборнике «Терме» в 1915 году в Оренбурге. Автор попытался проанализировать текст и музыку.

Ключевые слова: история, казахско-джунгарские войны, Елим-Ай, Казах, песня, народная музыка, культура.

Introduction

This short paper is a summary of one chapter of my dissertation on the history of the Kazakh-Jungar wars and the so-called Bare Footed Flight of the Kazakhs (Kaz: Aqtaban shubīrīndī). The chapter preceding this paper's chapter illustrated how Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev's seminal article on the Kazakh-Jungar wars of the 1720s undertook the necessary intellectual labor to create the Bare Footed Flight. This chapter follows directly by showing the process by which the poem Elim-ai became an unlikely hallmark of the national lamentation over the events of the 1720s.

Let us begin with Mukhamedzhan Tynyshpaev's 1927 article on the Bare Footed Flight. That article included the text of the song Elim-ai with a Russian translation (Tynyshpaev, 1927: 27). Tynyshpaev included the text (see below for his version) of the poem, which he introduced: «The historical disaster remains in folk memory with the following verses.»

About fifteen years later, the poem again appeared connected with the Bare Footed Flight in the 1943 edition of the History of Kazakhstan edited by Anna Pankratova: «In the music of the 18th century, as in the literature of the same period, we see the song and melody «Qara taudyn basynan kösh keledi» («Over the Karatau mountains come the nomads») written about the event «Bare Footed Flight.» The music and words are full of bitterness and sorrow. They tell of the heavy oppression endured by the people» (History of Kazakhstan, 2011: 396).

Some twenty years later still, now outside the academy, one finds the poem/song alongside the Flight once again in Esenberlin's trilogy Kochevniki/Köshpendiler (The Nomads). In the 1986 edition, the song appears on page 241, supposedly a nationwide response to the tragedies suffered by the Kazakhs (Esenberlin, 2014:308-309).

Presently, the connection is much more nationwide than Esenberlin imagined. Since 2004, every student hoping to attend university in the Republic of Kazakhstan must pass the so-called Unified National Test (Rus: ENT, Kaz: UBT). The test is divided into several subjects, one of which is mandatory: the history of Kazakhstan. Thanks to this country-wide testing system, every citizen of Kazakhstan under the age of 30 knows by heart at least some details of the Bare Footed Flight. On that same test, one may have to produce the «fact» that Elim-ai was the name of a song produced by that catastrophe. Whatever the veracity of this connection, let us trace the origins of this «fact.»

The history of the Elim-ai poem/song can be traced through history to the middle of the nineteenth century. Its content, form, meaning, and associations have changed as it passed through the hands of ethnographers, «nationalist» historians, and later Soviet-trained scholars before being enshrined in the heart of twenty-first-century «Kazakh identity.» Following independence in 1991, the song has indeed metamorphosed into a kind of trademark of Kazakh-ness. Now (in 2014) one can stay at any of a dozen Elim-ai hotels, send one's children to a similar number of Elim-ai nursery or music schools, cheer on the Elim-ai soccer team, enjoy a meal at an Elim-ai restaurant or cafe, or even use the Elim-ai cell-phone plan from Aktiv.

At least one reason for the popularity of the name is its meaning, though difficult to translate simply in English. Elim-ai in partial translation breaks down as «Oh, my El!» The final step of translation is the most difficult, since when one breaks open a dictionary, the word El denotes a state, a country, the homeland or fatherland, people or a people, the public, tribe, clan, a union, or more poetically an ally or friendly person.

Understanding the word El does not become easier with progressive delving into its etymology. The Encyclopedia of Islam states that El «has undergone a wide semantic development,» from its first known occurrences in the Orkhon inscriptions of the early eighth century, whose meaning V. Thomsen explained as «empire» or, more precisely, «a people, or union of people, organized under a kagan.» We also see El used in the title Ilekh Khan, possibly coming from «El-lig,» or «holding an empire.» El appears in the eleventh-century Arabic-Turkic dictionary of Maḥmūd Kāshgharī with the definition al-wilāya, or «district, territory.» Kāshgharī's definition coincides with its use in the Ottoman Empire in place-names like Rūm-eli («Rumelia»), meaning «territory conquered by Rome» (Encyclopedia of Islam 2nd edition).

So it is very difficult to conclude what, exactly, the title «Elim-ai» signifies. Soviet-era writers seem to have prematurely settled the issue, translating the song into Russian as Rodina moia, or My Motherland. However, Esenberlin's Russian translator of Kochevniki/Köshpendiler offered the more poetic O, moi mnogostradal'nyi narod, (O, My Long-suffering People.)

History of the Text

To follow the history of this song, let us move in chronological order. The oldest identifiable

text appeared in a collection published in 1885 in Orenburg, one of the administrative capitals of the Kazakh subjects of the Russian Empire. Petr Raspopov translated into Russian translation several Kazakh songs collected by Akhmet Zhantöreuly, an official within the Bukei Horde who graduated

from the Officer School (Kadetskii Korpus) in Orenburg. Guessing the original Kazakh is made more difficult by the fact that Raspopov put the Russian translation into rhyming verse. Even so, as we will see, the text is clearly the progenitor of later versions:

С горы Кара-Тау идут караваны:
 Верблюдов грузить молодых еще рано:
 Тяжка нам разлука с родными, с семьею,
 И как наме назвать это время? Ужасно,
 Погода к тому же буранна, ненастна,
 Для нас непогоде теперь будет хуже,
 В какую ж живем мы тяжелую пору!
 Все семьи в разброд, и в детях опоры
 Там мать, там отец без детей остаются,
 Увы, сколько бедствий послал ты нам, Боже,
 Постель заменяет, не мягкое ложе.
 Подошвы распухли, хоть в степи и гладко.

То, знать, перемена киргизской кочевки;
 Нет клади на спинах, в носах нет веревки!
 И жжет наши очи слеза за слезою.
 Что всякий лишь прошлое счастье знает!
 И пыль, и песок нам пути заметают.
 Чем в зимнее время январская стужа.
 Вернется ль когда к нам прошедшее счастье,
 Родители больше не видят, к несчастью!
 И слезы рекою все льются да льются!
 В гневе своем! И земля, что нам к ночи
 Лежать ночью больно, идти днем нет мочи:
 Хотя бы плохую послал Бог лошадку!¹

Raspopov gives the title as «Karatau» (the Karatau Mountains) with a subtitle explaining the poem refers to migrations following bad/unproductive years.

The next version of the song appears only in a 1911 book titled Түрік, Қырғыз-қазақ һәм хандар шежіресі, which I mentioned in a previous post about Shakarim Qudaiberdiev.

«Қаратаудың басынан көш келеді,
 Қарындастан айрылған қиын екен,
 Мына заман қай заман, қысқан заман,
 Шұбырғанда ізіңнен шаң борайды,
 Мына заман қай заман, бағы заман,
 Қарындас пен қара орын қалғаннан соң,

Көшкен сайын бір тайлақ бос келеді.
 Қара көзден мөлдіреп жас келеді.
 Басымыздан бақ-дәулет ұшқан заман.
 Қаңтардағы қар жауған қыстан жаман.
 Баяғыдай болар ма тағы заман.
 Көздің жасын көл қылып ағызамын.»²

This version matches the Russian translation so closely, there can be no doubt that it is the same text. This text is the oldest version available in Kazakh. Qudaiberdiev gives the song no title, explaining that those who suffered from the Bare Footed Flight sang a song they already knew: «...және жолда айтылған қазақтың ескі өлеңі мынау...» -- «... and on their way, the ancient Kazakh song they sang was this...»

Shakarim's explanation makes it clear that the text predated the Bare Footed Flight, but the connection had been made. As we will see, the song's adaptability to Kazakh catastrophes in the 20th century will illustrate the malleability of the song and its text.

In 1914, a poem under the name «Elim-ai» appeared in issue 52 of the journal Qazaq, written by Mir Yaqub (Mirzhaqyb) Dulatov. The poem ap-

peared again in 1915 in a poetry collection published in Orenburg under the title «Terme.» The text of the poem in no way resembles the others, which isn't so surprising considering the vagueness of the title (Oh, My Homeland!)³. A thorough study of the topic demands an investigation of any text under the title «Elim-ai,» but it seems we may safely dismiss this text's possibility of describing the Bare Footed Flight.

The Text and the Music

The early Soviet era witnessed an era of renewed Russian interest in Kazakh culture, or more accurately, the problems of the lack thereof. Aleksandr Zataevich (1869-1936) was a European-oriented amateur composer from western Russia⁴. A skilled pianist, Zataevich arrived in Orenburg

in April of 1920 as part of a «concert brigade» and quickly found work teaching in a recently opened music school for the Muslim population. The Civil War was entering its final years and Orenburg soon became part of the autonomous Kirgiz (Kazakh) region of the RSFSR in October of the same year. Already in November, officials invited Zataevich to collect and publish traditional Kirgiz (Kazakh) folk songs, the results of which labor was a song collection in 1925, «1000 pesen kirgizskogo naroda» (1000 Songs of the Kirgiz (Kazakh) People) (Zataevich, 1925: 335).

Without the aid of a recording device, musical ability with Kazakh instruments, or even a basic understanding of the Kazakh language, Zataevich collected fifteen hundred «songs» between 1920 and 1923. Particularly difficult to collect were the instrumental works played on the dombyra. Song no. 714 below showcases this excellently with an unrealistically simple and repetitive dombyra ostinato. Varvara Dernova, a Soviet musicologist who began her career with a deep analysis of Zataevich, criticized the composer-turned-ethnographer for actively «correcting» the folk music he collected with simplistic notation.

In this case, I feel confident that my own undergraduate training in music composition at

Western Michigan University in combination with my own experience listening to Kazakh folk music gives me the necessary credentials to suggest that Dernova was being too kind. His notations of folk-songs are simplistic and confusing. Too often he relied on erratic time-signatures to represent the prevalent poly-rhythms while simultaneously neglecting to represent any but the most basic embellishments of the melodic line. Vernova's dissertation rose from a study of his original research notations, from which she concluded that once Zataevich decided to highlight the «whimsical» nature of Kazakh melody, he simply excluded the tunes which did not fit that general hypothesis.

Zataevich and his work fall into the gaze of this project because he collected several songs titled «Elim-ai,» none with text attached, though each included a «vocal» line, one with dombyra accompaniment. Zataevich included several pages of notes detailing the collection of the tunes and some interpretation of the un-included texts. In the case of Elim-ai, no connection is made with the Bare Footed Flight or more generally with the eighteenth century. Indeed, Zataevich explained that he collected No. 714 from a musician who explained its provenance as a tune sung by destitute Kazakhs forced to labor in the mines near Semipalatinsk in 1916.

Zataevich tune No. 444

444. Элим-ай! (I) 269
(О, моя родина!)
Медленно, с нежностью. ♩ = 68
Сообщил тот-же.

Zataevich tune No. 493

493. Элим-ай. (II) 290
(О, моя родина!)
Медленно и задумчиво. ♩ = 68
Сообщил тот-же.
замедляя

Zataevich tune No. 714, with ostinato dombyra accompaniment

Not long after Zataevich published his encyclopedic magnum opus, Tynyshpaev presented his work on the Bare Footed Flight in a festschrift dedicated to V. V. Bartol'd, the orientalist then guest-lecturing in Tashkent. Tynyshpaev follows Qudaiberdiev exactly in his usage of the poem, explaining that the text relates to the Flight, but giving it neither name nor tune.

As late as the 1920s, then, the song Elim-ai and the text connected to the Bare Footed Flight remained completely separate.

In the early 1930s, the Kazakh polity had changed significantly. The Arabic script had been replaced by Latin, the borders had shifted drastically to exclude Orenburg, Omsk, and Tashkent while including Verny (Alma-Ata, today's Almaty) and Ak Mechet (KyzylOrda, the capital of the Kazakh SSR until 1927). In 1933, the Union of Composers invited Evgenii Brusilovskii (1905-1982), a recent graduate of the Leningrad Conservatory, to move to the capital Alma-Ata and teach at the Kazakh Music and Drama College.

Here it is important to note the changing face of Bolshevism/Communism in the 1920s and 1930s. During the early days following the Civil War, it was impossible to predict which aspects of imperial culture were sufficiently revolutionary to remain while the bourgeois portions were liquidated. However, the «cultural» production under Stalin in the 1930s very quickly returned to the «safe» Russian Romanticism of again lionizing such icons as Pushkin, Tchaikovsky, and Glinka. In this way, instead of allowing some indigenous Kazakh artform to take center-stage, the Soviet leadership quickly explained that the lack of Kazakh operas, plays, and other European artforms was a problem with an easy solution: hire Russians to write them! The level of ignorance of Kazakh culture reached such heights that some suggested the Kazakhs had no form of musical culture prior the arrival of the Soviets in 1917!

And so, not to put too fine a point on it, Brusilovskii, armed with Zataevich's book of «authentic» Kazakh tunes, had all the resources necessary to write hundreds of Soviet-Realist operas. Brusilovskii admitted that he was willing to work in Alma-ata particularly because of his fondness for Zataevich's book. Temirbek Zhurgenev, the Kazakh Commissar of Education, put the question directly: «Would it be possible for you to write an opera for us based on Kazakh folk music?» Perhaps Brusilovskii should have hesitated in his answer, because after replying in the affirmative, he was given thirty days to create the music for the opera which became the centerpiece of Kazakh national culture: Qyz zhibek. This process was undoubtedly made easier by Zataevich's work, since Brusilovskii essentially harmonized already-existent tunes before delivering them to the librettist who then set the text.

Did Brusilovskii select the Zataevich tunes according to their connection with the Qyz zhibek story? Of course not. Rather, Brusilovskii selected the tunes he liked, whose characteristics he felt best matched the themes of the lead figures in the tale. First performed in November of 1934, the story was praised for its emphasis on the class struggle.

Brusilovskii's second opera Zhalbyr (1935) is the point to which this essay is racing, for in this work we have the actual origin of the combination of a song and text under the title «Elim-ai,» though ironically without a connection to Tynyshpaev, the Jungars, or the Bare Footed Flight in the plot of the opera. The story instead features group of rebels struggling under tsarist labor conscription in 1916. Thus it becomes clear that the librettist took the idea from the note Zataevich attached to Song No. 714. I have transcribed here an excerpt from the opera showcasing the leit-motif, the theme «Elim-ai.» Notice that, though the note to No. 714 inspired the opera's plot, the composer clearly based the motif on No. 444. (Brusilovskii E. Elim-ai, 1936).

Conclusion

This chapter follows directly by showing the process by which the poem *Elim-ai* became an unlikely hallmark of the national lamentation over

the events of the 1720s. That article included the text of the song *Elim-ai* with a Russian translation. As we see from the above, the song *Elim-ai*, became folk and reflected the situation in which the Kazakh people were in those centuries.



Notes

¹ «Over the Karatau come the nomads: The Kirgiz (Kazakhs) are changing camps; The camels are still too young to load: No baggage on their backs, no ropes in their noses! Grievous the separation from loved ones and family, And our eyes burn from tear after tear. What, then, should we call this time? It is terrible, That only past happiness is on everyone's mind. Weather more inclement than blizzards, Dust and sand will blow us away. For us this weather is even worse Than the frost-covered fields of January. What awful times we live in! How will times of past happiness return, All the families scattered, alas the parents no longer see their children as support! Mothers, fathers, without children, And there a river of tears, weeping and weeping! Alas, so many disasters you sent, God, In your wrath! And the hard earth upon which We rest replaces our soft beds. Laying at night in pain, going in the day without strength: Our soles our swollen, though the steppe is smooth. If God could give us even a poor horse!»

² «Over the Karatau come the nomads. With them comes a lonely camel. It is hard to be parted from one's family, tears dripping from dark eyes. What kind of time is this? A crushing time, a time when all happiness and wealth is lost. The traces of our flight throws up a cloud of dust, greater than a blizzard in winter time. What kind of time is? A time of chaos, a time of panic and destruction. Leaving behind one's family and home causes a flood of tears to flow.»

³Ем таба алмай дертіне мен ертеден,
Тырт етпейсін бас көтеріп көрпеден,
Өткен сағым, келер алдың бір мұнар,
Сақтан деген сөзді жан жоқ шын ұғар.
Қандай едің, кара кейін қайрылып.
Мүгедек боп қос қанатың майрылып.
Мұны құр бос өлең десең, өзің біл.
Не болса да көнем десең, өзің біл.
Түзелесің қашан, жұртым, оңалып?
Қайтер едің өткен дәурен оралып,
Сол күнінді көрсем -- менің арманым,
Сұм жүрегім селк етпейді жалғанын,

Сол бір қайғың өзегімді өртеген.
Еңсең неге түсті мұнша, елім-ай?
Қызылшылсың қызарғанға тым құмар.
Жемге шапқан, қармақ құрса, елім-ай!
Қандай едің, тұрсың одан айрылып.
Өксіп жылап өгей ұлша, елім-ай!
Жұрт болмаймын өлем десең, өзің біл.
Босағада жүрген құлша, елім-ай!
Тіл алмасаң, кетпеймісің жоғалып?
Жылы жүзбен мойнын бұрса, елім-ай!?
Жоқтамас ем өзге тілек қалғаным.
Бұл мінезің бойда тұрса, елім-ай!

⁴ Here I follow Michael Rouland's 2005 dissertation on Zataevich and his role in the creation of the Kazakh nation and national identity. «Music and the Making of the Kazak Nation, 1920-1936.» PhD Dissertation, Georgetown University.

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