



Valentina Berndt  
20180418 (KIMEP)  
2337035 (University of Glasgow)

*Soviet Kazakh identity through the works of Magzhan Zhumabaev and Ilyas Zhansugurov*

MA International Relations  
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Thesis Supervisor: Didar Kassymova, Nygmet Ibadildin, Heiko Pääbo

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THESIS DEFENSE COMMITTEE:

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Second member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Third member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Abstract

This thesis aims to contribute to the growing scholarship surrounding Kazakh national identity and Kazakh literary studies, by focusing particularly on the development of Kazakh poetry and the evolution of Kazakh identity in the 1920s and 1930s. The thesis is investigating the following research question: How did Kazakh identity evolve in the perception of the Kazakh poets Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov during the 1920s and 1930s? The literary study focuses on two authors; Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov, who represent the two predominant ideological strands and discourses within the Kazakh intelligentsia surrounding the future of the Kazakh people, their culture and their country: Kazakh modernity and Soviet modernity. The theme of modernity, as an overarching dominating discourse of the time, serves as the conceptual tool of this research. Cultural studies and the theories associated with it, such as Stuart Hall's conception of identity, serve as the theoretical basis of this study. This study analyzes and draws conclusions from a variety of poetry from Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov, which has been translated into the Russian language. The following work argues that the evolution of Kazakh identity was at a crossroads in the 1920s and 1930s and in desperate need for change as it was stagnant. Both authors express the strong need for this change and both give clear criticism and suggestions for change. Their propositions converged frequently in particular their views on education, literacy and Kazakh language yet their views on the nature of modernity and how best to reach it differed markedly.

Keywords: Kazakh identity, Kazakh literature, Kazakh modernity, Soviet modernity, Soviet education reforms, Language

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

## Introduction

Modern day Kazakhstan is on the search of its national identity and more and more people are seeking an answer to the question: what does it mean to be Kazakh? This crucial question has not only been on the minds of current Kazakhs but has also been on the minds of poets and political activists in the 1920s and 1930s. This incredibly important time period has shaped Kazakhstan to what it is today, due to the many tragedies which happened during this time such as the ongoing transition from a nomadic to a sedentary society, the brutal Civil War, and the multitude of famines as well as a multitude of policies which also contributed to the formation of the modern Kazakh state, its history and identity.

Recognizing the momentous change which was occurring, poets such as Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov, were adamant to play a role in the future of the Kazakh identity. Both Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov as representatives of the ideological discourse present in the Kazakh society of the time, as poets and intellectuals coming from vastly different backgrounds have both left a lasting mark in the Kazakh identity discussion. Magzhan Zhumabaev, as a son from a richer upper-class Kazakh family was well educated and raised inside of the Kazakh elite. It does not come as a surprise then that he was skeptical of the Russian influence in Kazakhstan during the Tsarist and Soviet times. He advocated for an independent Kazakhstan with an independent ideological discourse apart from Russia and wanted Kazakhstan to modernize. Iliyas Zhansugurov, on the other hand, did not grow up in such favorable conditions and spent much of his childhood and adult years in his “aul” (small Kazakh village), where he saw the real conditions which affected everyday Kazakhs. It then also does not come as a surprise that he was drawn to the Soviet version of modernity. While both of these paths, the Kazakh and the Soviet, have a lot in common, they differ primarily in the role that Kazakhstan plays within these propositions. While the Soviet Union proposed a one Soviet country with Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs as part of this country, the Kazakh modernity path questioned this and wanted to have a Kazakhstan which is apart from the Soviet Union. The Kazakh modernity path argued for the modernization of Kazakhstan organically by keeping track of its unique attributes in culture and in history. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was driven by the ideological motivation to achieve communism, while the Kazakh elite’s proposition of Kazakh modernity was driven by the wish to modernize and safeguard Kazakh identity. This thesis, hence, focuses on these two poets who embodied the two predominant strands of thought of the time and attempts to shed some light on the question:

How did Kazakh identity evolve in the perception of the Kazakh poets Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov during the 1920s and 1930s?

In order to answer this question, the concept of modernity needs to be understood at a greater length. Modernity was the defining hallmark of the time period in which both Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov lived. In the scholarship surrounding *modernity*, there has been an overarching domination of the western notion of *modernity* that has been prevalent since the 1950s. The western idea of *modernity* was known then as the “authentic” *modernity* to which scholars tend to refer till today. Staying true to the field of cultural studies Eisenstadt proposed the notion of *multiple modernities* which recognizes that there is no one true understanding of *modernity* and that in different cultural, historical, economic and political contexts, using different programs for *modernity* and holding a different understanding of what constitutes *modernity* an alternative form of *modernity* can emerge. This different form of *modernity* might not, in any form, resemble the Western understanding of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2017). While the western understanding of modernity can still serve as a benchmark for what modernity entails, this thesis will focus on alternate understandings of modernity, in particular Soviet-Stalinist modernity and Kazakh modernity proposed by Magzhan Zhumabaev.

During the time period under examination, the leaders of the Soviet Union had the strong belief that the communist revolution required certain circumstances to ensure its success. In the 1920s, Vladimir Lenin had his own ideas about the concessions which had to be made in order to ensure a communist global society in the long run, however, Joseph Stalin disagreed from the start and demanded less leniency. During the life and rule of Lenin, the policy landscape of the Soviet Union was characterized by socialism, some capitalistic concessions and freedom for non-Russian people to demand rights and privileges to protect their culture and way of life. With the premature death of Lenin and the rise of Stalin, the political landscape of the Soviet Union became characterized by paranoia, fear and repression. It is in these times in particular that important people in the cultural sphere were targeted and repressed. Both Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov suffered these tragic fates despite their differing allegiances. Under these political circumstances and the sudden changes that occurred in a short timeframe, the role of poets became even more important than it was before the Soviet Union in Kazakhstan.

Poetry in Kazakhstan always played an important role in the expression of culture, yet it was in the years of the 1920s and 1930s that poetry reached an unprecedented important role amongst the intelligentsia and the growing educated population in Kazakhstan. It is vital to

understand the role poetry plays as well as the historical context in which it was written in order to be able to effectively analyze the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov. Furthermore, the biographies of Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov need to be examined in order to understand their persona since they are poets who differ greatly in the way they grew up, in their education and of course, their beliefs. In order to accomplish this, the first chapter will deal with setting up the theoretical framework and clarifying the understanding of identity in a cultural studies context and the connection it has to poetry. Chapter 2 will start by explaining the special role that poetry played in Kazakhstan as a means to express Kazakh identity. The chapter will outline why poetry became so important by pointing to the active use of poetry to discuss and preserve Kazakh identity, the literacy campaign which reinforced Kazakh identity and increased access to Kazakh literature, and the shift away from an oral culture to a written culture which changed the nature of the topics discussed. Furthermore, the impact of the literary revolution started by Abai - “the Kazakh Shakespeare” - as well as the development and politicization of the Kazakh language will be underlined (Adibaev, personal communication; May 21, 2019). Chapters 3 and 4 will be concerned with the analysis of the poems of Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov. Chapter 3 will focus on Iliyas Zhansugurov with the main aim to outline the Soviet modernity project and to understand how Zhansugurov felt about certain aspects of this project through this poetry. In particular the emphasis will be placed on industrialization, positioning Kazakhs in the context of a one-Soviet Union and the need for Kazakh cultural development. This chapter will argue that Zhansugurov supported the nationality policies proposed by Lenin while highlighting his growing resentment towards Stalin. Chapter 4 will examine the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev and his denunciation of the Soviet modernity project. This chapter argues that within Zhumabaev’s poetry, Kazakhstan should advance on its own path of modernization. It is not in particular that Zhumabaev disagreed with the Soviet modernity project’s aims, but it is rather the motivation behind it and the lack of specification for the Kazakh case. Zhumabaev express allegiance with Alash Orda and illustrates a clear need for seeing Kazakhs as equals to Russians in terms of culture, society and identity. Chapter 5 addresses the view which both poets had on the state of the Kazakh identity and ultimately arrives at the conclusion that both Kazakh poets believed that Kazakh identity was stagnant and in need of modernization.

This thesis would like to contribute to the growing scholarship on Kazakh literature and history of the 1920s and 1930s and would like to shed some light into the ideological debates surrounding this time amongst the Kazakh population. This is quite important as more and more Kazakh people currently are looking for information in the Soviet and Tsarist past to find an



answer to the question: what does it mean to be Kazakh? While this thesis will not be able to give an exact answer to this question, it does aim to contribute to the valuable debate surrounding the complex identity discourse and formation of this time period.

## **Chapter 1: Cultural Identity**

### **1.1 Setting the Scene: Defining Cultural Studies**

This thesis argues that Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov perceived Kazakh identity to be stagnant and, in a time of momentous change, they found this highly problematic. They both propose alternative paths to develop Kazakh identity which are highly representative of the ideological debate amongst the Kazakh elite and society: Kazakh modernity and Soviet modernity. In order to be able to prove this argument there are some theoretical questions which must be clarified. Most importantly how identity is understood, and which paradigm is adopted in this thesis.

Analyzing identity is an immensely difficult and challenging task. The difficulties begin with the first encounter with the term, as there is no clear and whole definition of this abstract and complex concept. The difficulty continues as it becomes apparent that in order to work with identity in an empirical way, certain theoretical choices need to be made and an in-depth and multi-faceted understanding of this concept is required. Identity studies has, as of very recently with its emergence, been heavily linked to political science, sociology, anthropology, psychology and cultural studies (Barker, 2016). Since identity is such an all-encompassing concept analyzing it using one discipline alone would yield only a one-dimensional perspective to a multidimensional concept. It is here that cultural studies, with its multidisciplinary approach, attempts to include as many angles as possible to understand and analyze this concept, is most useful. There are a multitude of scholars who have devoted a substantial amount of work to researching the concept of identity, yet there is a need for a certain selectivity as it would be impossible to cover all of the theories that were proposed within cultural studies concerning identity within this thesis or even within a single book alone. The following chapter will deal with the theoretical understanding and conception of cultural identity using the theory proposed by Stuart Hall. This chapter will commence with a brief overview of culture, cultural studies and the role of identity within it, it will then continue to introduce Hall's definitions of identity and explain the relationship that identity has with language.

Before commencing to the theoretical discussion, a word of caution is advised. It must be noted, that by researching the concept of identity, one enters highly debated and contested theoretical territory (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). This contestation is aided by the newness of the concept, the complexity as well as fluidity which all contributes to a variety of different approaches and understandings. Adding to that dimension, it also has to be noted that working

with Kazakh cultural identity, especially concerning the 1920s and 1930s, is also entering highly contested territory, as not many western scholars have dedicated substantial research to the subject and the Kazakh and Russian scholars who have, often fall into ideological or emotional traps when analyzing this topic. This is also due to the resurfacing of the topic with the fall of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the new Kazakh country. Keeping these issues in mind it is here that cultural studies can help in treating this topic with respect, care and understanding in order to find a balanced approach to working with identity.

In order to understand the concept of cultural identity, the field in which it is researched needs to be examined at a greater length, since cultural studies is a unique discipline that requires consideration and understanding before deeper examinations of specific key areas which define it. Cultural studies as a discipline, or an anti-discipline as some term it, is just as complex to define as identity. There are no clear disciplinary boundaries that this study abides to, taking analytical tools, concepts and understandings from a multitude of different disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, history, literature studies and many more (Barker, 2016). This multidisciplinary nature is necessary since culture is also a multidisciplinary term. When defining culture, this multidisciplinary nature once again comes to the forefront, as can be seen in the varying definitions of culture; Sir E.B. Tylor defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”(Sardar and Loon, 2012, p.12), while Margaret Mead defined the term as “the learned behavior of a society or a subgroup” (Sardar and Loon, 2012, p.13). These definitions seem to emphasize different aspects of the many dimensions of culture, as we understand it today. The reason for this is due to the changing understanding of culture throughout time. The evolution of our understanding of culture has been expressed in the words of one of the fathers of cultural studies, Raymond Williams:

“it had meant, primarily, the ‘tending of natural growth’, and then, by analogy, a process of human training. But this latter use, which has usually been a culture *of* something, was changed, in the nineteenth century, to *culture* as such, a thing in itself. It came to mean, first ‘a general state or habit of mind’, having close relations with the idea of human perfection. Second, it came to mean ‘the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole’. Third, it came to mean ‘the general body of the arts’. Fourth, later in the century, it came to mean ‘a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual’(Raymond Williams, 1958, p.xvi as cited in Oswell, 2006, p.5).

Hence, it can be understood that throughout time, the way we understand the concept of culture has been evolving and changing. Arriving at the current understanding of culture, according to Hall, as presented in Barker's *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*, culture is "the actual terrain of practices, representations, languages and customs of a specific society. I also mean the contradictory forms of common sense which have taken root in and shaped popular culture" (Hall, 1996, p. 439 as cited in Barker, 2016, p.7). These practices, representations and languages which Hall refers to play a vital role in culture, as he emphasized by explaining that culture "is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings – the 'giving and taking of meaning' – between the members of a society or a group" (Cited in Zou, 2012, p. 465). These meanings are what makes us make sense of the world. These are generated and are not simply found (Barker, 2016). These meanings are mostly expressed through the use of language.

Yet, language is not simply limited to written or oral language since it is a system of representations. This system of representations can represent emotions, opinions, ideas and more through 'signs and symbols' such as images, music and objects (Zou, 2012). This has been reflected also in the work of Stuart Hall, and others, who analyze the role of the media, television, songs, dance and more to understand its relationship with a certain culture. Thus, according to Hall and Williams, culture is a very complex term, the understanding of which changes with time and which binds a certain society together through practices, representations, languages and behaviors of everyday life which is made possible through meaning.

Cultural studies dives deeper into the specifics of how culture does what it does, what it is, how an individual fits within a culture and what influences and shapes a culture. Much like the term culture, cultural studies also has a multitude of definitions and encompasses a wide range of different elements. Barker, who uses the understanding of cultural studies which Hall proposed, defines it as "a body of theory generated by thinkers who regard the production of theoretical knowledge as a political practice" (2016, p.5). He expands on the concept by quoting Hall (1992): "a cluster (or formation) of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society" (2016, p. 6). To summarize, according to these two conceptions proposed by Hall, cultural studies regards the production of knowledge as a political practice which in turn influences the worldview of people who adopt this knowledge as part of their identity.

## 1.2 Identity, Language and Cultural Studies

The importance of identity and its role in politics, nowadays is undeniable. According to Grossberg identity has become the defining term used for assessing and understanding political occurrences (1996). Many scholars believe there is even a ‘crisis of identities’, within modern societies, which makes the understanding of the term ‘identity’, ever so important. Keeping the definition of cultural studies in mind, it comes without a surprise that identity and its research plays a central role within the field of cultural studies. The researchers of which have proposed groundbreaking and immensely thoughtful work that has revolutionized a multitude of different academic disciplines as well as politics. According to Grossberg there has been an evolving tendency to even equate the two and to say that cultural studies is the theory and the politics of identity and difference (1996). To Grossberg the reason for this is the evolving and dominant scholarship in cultural studies surrounding post-colonial studies, feminism and racism (1996). Barker also argues that identity and cultural studies are inherently intertwined since cultural studies aims to find answers to questions such as how we become the way we are, or in the words of Barker “how we are produced as subjects” (2016, p.11), and how we emotionally identify with certain descriptions of ourselves (2016).

It is undeniable that there is no clear-cut answer to what identity truly is, yet within the framework of cultural studies there are a multitude of different definitions and approaches to it. The two main theoretical strands have been summarized by Stuart Hall. Hall clearly distinguishes between two different conceptions of cultural identity which some term essentialist and anti-essentialist. He does this within his exploration of diasporas and the uncovering of post-colonial Caribbean past which is also a dearly personal subject to him. These conceptions of identity, hence, rest within this context. The first conception defines cultural identity as the ‘one true self’, the culture that is shared by all within this group which is shaped through a shared history and ancestry (1989). As ‘one people’ then, all would reflect the shared history and cultural codes which make a stable and one continuous system of meanings and frames of reference possible, within the context of an ever-changing history around them (Hall, 1989). This concept of cultural identity is defined through its rigidity, determined and stable, ‘one true’ identity which so many countries are aiming to ‘uncover’. This identity is something that has to be found, as it is inherently there.

The second conception of cultural identity rejects the rigidity and the ‘one true self’ model proposed in the first definition of identity and recognizes that there are similarities which bind groups of people together but there are also *differences* which reflect the ever-changing nature of identities. Rather than thinking of cultural identities as stable, this conception emphasizes

the ever-evolving nature of identities and stresses the importance of an identity of *becoming* as well as *being*. Here identities become transcendent in time, since they are both shaped by the past and by the future and are subjected to the influence of personal experiences, history, culture and power (Hall, 1989). It is crucial to understand that identities here, are not stable and that they constantly change. This change is dependent on the rejection or negotiations of difference from the latter form of identity as this form was dependent on emphasizing and negotiating the difference it had from the former (Grossberg, 1996).

It is undeniable that identity and language have been deeply connected. Within cultural studies language is used as a way to produce meaning and this can be done in two ways. These ways reflect a structuralist and post-structuralist approach. The first way is through a system of encoded signs which is a means for a text to say what it says. It produces meaning through denotation, connotation and iconicity. Denotation is what a word refers to, connotation is what a word reminds us of and iconicity is the corresponding image of a word (Soranzo, 2013). The second way we can think of text is as a communicative act which allows for the writer, speaker or artist to express their reaction to a certain situation and to their general culture. To explain this simply, writers can assign different roles, different positions and statuses using language (Soranzo, 2013).

Poetry, as a part of language is able to do this too. Poetry is an act of cultural identity, which means that poetry can be used as a means to express certain allegiance or membership to a culture and to express a certain relationship towards another culture (Soranzo, 2013). According to Beach, poetry can be seen and analyzed in two different ways and perspectives; aesthetic and sociological, which he acknowledges as useful but also incredibly restrictive (1999). He proposes to use the domain of cultural studies in order to examine it in a multi-disciplinary way and a way that might be more appropriate to the specific context of the poetry. The aesthetic means of examination has been one of the major reasons why cultural studies has rejected poetry as an appropriate text for analysis, yet this has been rapidly changing. Beach acknowledges that in the past there has been a very odd approach towards poetry, which is quite uncharacteristic of cultural studies in its current form. Since the differing purpose of poetry in different cultures and the different expressions and influences within it have been largely unrecognized by the theorists of cultural studies in the past. Currently the study of poetry has been advancing rapidly and is flourishing, especially within and isolated context and culture (Beach, 1999).

In the specific context of Kazakh literature and poetry, especially since the late 19th Century to today, literature and poetry play an extremely important role and serve vital

purposes. Diana Kudaibergenova argues, in the words of Laurenson and Swingewood, that literature as a part of art is “the collective expression of society” (2017) She attempts to understand literature and its role in sociological terms and argues that it serves two purposes within the framework of Kazakh expression and development of nationalism and the history of Kazakh literature and its role in society. These two functions are the transmission of cultural identity and history within the society. She argues that literature serves the purposes of excluded groups and minority groups and also ethnic groups that fell victim to severe censorship (Kudaibergenova, 2017). This was the case for Kazakhstan during the time both Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhnasugurov were active.

The analysis which will follow within this thesis will be conducted in accordance to the second conception of cultural identity as it will allow for a more careful and detailed research on Kazakh identity in the 1920s and 1930s. Since this was a very unusual time, as many changes occurred within the Kazakh society and a whole new regime was established which greatly affected Kazakhstan. In order to investigate the influence of these changes on to Kazakh identity more deeply, the medium of poetry was chosen, and two, highly respected Kazakh poets were selected for analysis. Both Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov, have been recognized as vital in the expression of Kazakh identity. It must be recognized that there are also other poets of this time that have done equally important work, yet, these two authors have been chosen also due to their different personal histories and circumstances which all tragically ended in their premature death under Joseph Stalin’s repressions. To these authors, their poetry served as a means for free expression in a time of severe censorship (Kudaibergenova, 2017).

It is interesting, then, that many researchers within cultural studies have consciously chosen to avoid working with poetry, as some deem it to be one of the main culprits of the rejected notion of “high culture” (Damon & Livingston, 2009). Since cultural studies has mostly been involved with research surrounding minorities and members outside of the dominant cultural group, poetry was deemed as one of the main methods of solidifying a system of hegemony and domination (Damon & Livingston, 2009). This is not the case for Kazakhstan, quite the contrary. There was a strong intellectual movement within Kazakhstan, starting from the late 19th century into the 1930s, which saw poetry as a means to express Kazakh culture, grievances of oppression and political ideas associated with the future of the Kazakh people.

### **1.3. Methodology**

The research which will be conducted within this thesis is driven by the research question: How did Kazakh identity evolve in the perception of the Kazakh poets Magzhan Zhumabaev

and Iliyas Zhansugurov during the 1920s and 1930s? In the investigation of this question it becomes clear that, they both propose alternative paths to take for the Kazakh identity development which are highly representative of the ideological debate amongst the Kazakh elite and society; the Kazakh modernity path and the Soviet modernity path. In order to do this, this chapter will paint the context of the study, explain key concepts, explain the methodology used and discuss some of the limitations of the study.

In order to answer the research question, both Magzhan Zhumabaev's and Iliyas Zhansugurov's poetry will be analyzed in a qualitative manner. Keeping the theoretical exploration in the chapter beforehand in mind, the following methodology will reflect the definitions of identity and the relation it has to poetry. Since identity is not constant and changes, many authors who investigate identity, its change and conception, through a specific lens of race, gender, sexuality, post-colonialism and more. For the following exploration, the thesis will be using the idea of Soviet modernity in contrast to the idea of Kazakh modernity as proposed by Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov.

This is important since the Soviet Union, at this time was concerned with the modernization of society and the economy. At a time when the Soviet Union was considered severely behind in terms of economic development, agricultural production and demography, the consequences of the severity of the war following the October Revolution revealed the problems which the government would have to tackle. The discourse under which the Soviet Union decided to undertake the New Economic Policy and later the Five-year Plans, where to achieve the grand goal of communism, which would only be possible in a society and economy comparable to the United Kingdom. In order to achieve this a huge effort was put into rapidly flinging the areas of the USSR into the future. In order to get the masses behind the idea of hard work and sacrifice, the government embarked on an ideological stampede which would become an important characteristic of the USSR in those years. A major target was the sphere of culture (Hoffmann, 2003). This strong motivation is expressed in the words of Emel'ian Iaroslavskii in 1933 "We have before us a large task - to raise the material and cultural level of the masses" (Hoffmann, 2003). This strong motivation, in this thesis, will be conceptualized under Soviet strive for modernity.

It is clear that there were many that would not neatly align into the new plans of the Soviet Union. In Kazakhstan, the elite was very concerned with the Soviet understanding of modernity and the impact these changes would have the Kazakh culture, way of life and subsequently the Kazakh identity. Hence, they proposed their own Kazakh modernity, which would be more suitable for the Kazakh society, demography, culture, traditions and economy.



Diana Kudaibergenova argues that modernity is the overarching narrative of the 1920s and 1930s in Kazakhstan at the time, which is visible in the literature and poetry and is a main theme of discussion, making it a highly relevant and appropriate means of examination (2017). Staying true to the cultural studies paradigm defined above, this thesis will use a post-structuralist examination of the works of the poets; Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov.

Hence, following study will not be done in accordance to research methods proposed by the structuralist camp of the authors of cultural studies, the reason for this being that these methods would focus too strongly on incredible detail and certain stylistic word choices and the poetics in general. Much like the most recent movements within cultural studies, this thesis is not concerned with such research, since the poems within this thesis are treated as texts written with a conscious political expression and with a clear message directed to the audience. Constructing a methodology for a concept which is incredibly difficult to define and measure such as identity is challenging, yet the following research will follow a methodology constructed specifically for the unique context and research of this study.

In order to determine the messages and ideas which the poets express in their poetry, each poem will be read, and ideas will be isolated and tracked. This will be done using the tool of interpretation. Interpretation in this case will be based on a system of 'identity markers'. Such marker would be words such as, which (народ (the people), казах (Kazakh), родная земля (native land) родина (home country) will be tracked when reading the poetry and marked for further examination. The 'identity markers' were determined by a thematic breakdown of the area of examination since referring to a fate of certain people can only be done in a number of ways such as by naming them directly or referring to a direct characteristic or place. After determining these 'identity markers', each poem will be read individually, and these words will be isolated and marked. The 'identity markers' which are isolated will be used as a marker for a deeper reading of the poetry around it and background research will be conducted to further understand the context in which they were placed. These will then be thematically organized, and the data will be interpreted and presented in the analysis section of this thesis below.

This method of data analysis allows for a sweeping 'vetting' so to speak of the poetry which is relevant and which is not relevant to the subject of examination, since both authors were dedicating a multitude of poems to their romantic interests and some were simply expressing an emotion evoked by nature and more. This method would allow for a more focused examination of the poetry which is relevant. It also permits a more effective organization of time since the method allows for an analysis of a large basis of poetry but also a more focused analysis of the poetry which was written with the intend to express political ideology.

It has to be noted here that there are a limited number of poems available and thus each poem will be read individually and a relevance towards the study can be determined by the interpretation of the entire poem so that every work which does speak about the fate of the Kazakh people can be included in the research. The poems which were collected for this thesis consist of more than a hundred by Magzhan Zhumabaev and 40 by Iliyas Zhansugurov. The collection of poetry made available for this thesis is limited by the amount of poetry available which is translated and the ability to locate it, since there is no way to track or obtain the collection online, through book stores or through the libraries in Kazakhstan.

While Magzhan Zhumabaev is now recognized as an important figure in Kazakh literature, Iliyas Zhansugurov is still a rising star and this affects the availability of literature translated into the Russian language. Furthermore, the poets were engaged in different work, and it is recognized in this thesis that Zhansugurov was an avid writer of epic poetry, which is included in the poetry count. While some might be inclined to see this as a limitation in the study, this is not necessarily the case for a multitude of reasons. Firstly, it gives a clear cut off point to the amount of literature which can and will be used. Secondly, it allows for a more careful treatment of the literature which is available and allows for more time to be dedicated to the research of background information around the poetry. Thirdly, it recognizes that the poems which were already translated have been hand-picked to be presented to the Russian speaking audience and there are inherent reasons and motivations behind these. Hence, there is a need to treat these poems which are available with special care and attention.

Recognizing these issues and keeping them in mind, this thesis will be attempting to bridge the issue of not having access to all poetry and to the language choices through interviews of experts and with family members of the poets. This will be done in order to fill some gaps in understanding of the individual poets' repertoires and in order to find a bridge between the Russian and Kazakh translations and material. The utmost care has been given to collecting as much material as possible, which was accomplished through the help of the Iliyas Zhansugurov Fund, the Iliyas Zhansugurov Museum, the Iliyas Zhansugurov Zhetysu State University, the KIMEP library, the National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the personal collections of experts, the family members of the poets and through schools' textbooks.

Since this is not a quantitative based research, the exact quantity of literature is also not a vital determinant of the importance of the research and its outcome. The validity of the research is not affected since an entire research paper could be written on a detailed analysis on just a single poem from each of the poets, especially considering that these authors have not

had the academic attention in the way that this thesis grants them. Mostly these poets are analyzed separately or in a group including other poets and authors. This research is interested in granting some well-deserved academic attention to two incredibly profound and important poets in Kazakh literature and history and would like to recognize their role as observers and active participants of history. As well-educated witnesses of the time, they wrote with consciousness, conviction and a strong belief in a better future for the Kazakh people. Since Kazakh independence they have been recognized as such and this study would like to contribute to the growing scholarship surrounding the study of Kazakh literature in the early years of the Soviet Union.

It must be acknowledged that both poets originally wrote their poetry in Kazakh but the poems which will be analyzed within this thesis will be in Russian. The reason for this being, my lack of Kazakh knowledge. Most of the translations have been done after the fall of the Soviet Union since, although the poets were rehabilitated in later years in the USSR, the poets were repressed and not actively popularized during the Soviet Union. Only after the fall of the USSR, in independent Kazakhstan their true rehabilitation occurred. Hence, it must be kept in mind, that these poems serve a certain purpose for the Kazakh literary world and, as has been recognized by Diana Kudaibergenova and many more authors, have a strong relationship with Kazakh identity. The translation into the English language will be done by me and solely for the purpose of understanding the message and key ideas in the poetry. Therefore, the translations into the English language will not be able to demonstrate the flow and beauty of the poetry but it will solely focus on the political discourse presented within the poetry. Finally, it must be acknowledged that my personal background also influences the way that I will analyze this subject. My personal upbringing, heritage and education allows for an inherent bias, and this must be kept in mind throughout this thesis.

## **Chapter 2. Kazakh Poetry and Identity**

Kazakh literature and poetry in the 1920s and 1930s was vitally important in the discussions surrounding Kazakh identity due to three factors in particular: the active intention of the Kazakh intelligentsia to use Kazakh literature as a medium to discuss identity, the literacy campaign to spread Kazakh language and thereby strengthened Kazakh identity and the shift away from oral culture to a written culture. The central role that literature and especially poetry played, lasted until the Stalinist repressions of the second half of the 1930s. During this period, poetry became a means of expression of Kazakh culture. Using poetry as a tool for expression opened up a multitude of variations in poetry and relationships with other forms of art, in particular music. Poetry became highly complex and multidisciplinary, being at times a song and at other times an epic poem on Kazakh history. This multidisciplinary nature of poetry in Kazakhstan must be kept in mind in the following section as the word song and poem will be used interchangeably during the discussion of the ways in which poetry became a means of expression of identity. In a way, poetry in Kazakhstan during the 1920s and 1930s has very much in common with cultural studies in the West and was very much ahead of its time.

### **2.1 The Kazakh Intelligentsia and Poetry**

Muratbek Imangazinov, an expert on Iliyas Zhansugurov and a Professor of Kazakh literature, referred to the early 20th Century as the “renaissance of Kazakh poetry”. He explained that during the development of Kazakh literature, poetry and written culture went hand in hand with the development of Kazakh national consciousness (Imangazinov, personal communication; May 10, 2019). There are a multitude of reasons, one of which is the active political consciousness and intent of the poets who were writing. During my interview with Marat Adibaev, an expert on Kazakh literature of the early 20th Century and one of the official translators of Magzhan Zhumabaev’s poetry from Kazakh to Russian, he strongly emphasized that poets and authors of the time period actively engaged in the creation of works as “they felt when it started, that Kazakhs could lose their identity under a strong influence (...) of the Russian language” and that “we didn’t lose ourselves because of what they have done, they saved our culture and created incredible literary works” (personal communication; May 21, 2019). A large group of the Kazakh intelligentsia, in the early 20th century, was interested in creating a strong literary body of work in Kazakh. This motivation came collectively with a multitude of political developments, changes and tragedies. Historically a series of important

and tragic events occurred in this time period starting from the Stolypin reforms which brought a large number of Slavs to Kazakhstan, the Revolution of 1905, the Russian Revolution, the establishment and disestablishment of a Kazakh autonomous Republic, a multitude of famines which followed one after another, the civil war and Stalin's repressions.

All of these events influenced a movement in Kazakhstan amongst the intelligentsia which firstly questioned some of the Tsarist reforms, in particular towards religion, and another group which wanted to enlighten the Kazakh people together with the help of Russia. These two groups were known as the Islamic oriented writers or the "Zar Zaman" (Times of Trouble) and the Russian-oriented and secular group. The Islamic "Zar Zaman" blamed all the miseries of the Kazakh people on to the Russian colonizers, they believed that Islam was the only way for Kazakhs to survive and romanticized and idealized nomadism. Some of the most prominent figures in this group included Shortanbai Kanaiuly, Dulat Babataiuly and Murat Monkeuly. The second, secular group was concerned with the rejection of the proposed views of the first group. They believed that the only way to overcome Kazakh nomadic "backwardness" and staying on track with European ideas of enlightenment and development, was in the creation of a secular Kazakhstan and advocated in favor of the Russian language and the Russian and Western culture and secular orientation. Some of the most prominent propagators of this view were Shoqan Valikhanov, Ibrahim Altynsarin and Abai Qunabaev (Kendirbay, 1997). Abai, being the most influential poet in Kazakh literary history, played a major role in the development of modern Kazakh literature. As Adibaev claims, "Abai caused a Literary Revolution" (personal communication; May 21, 2019). According to Adibaev, Abai occupies a role as important as Shakespeare in Kazakh literature. Hence, Abai, as one of the fathers of modern Kazakh literature and an active participant in political discussions on the future of Kazakhstan, left an immense mark in Kazakh literature and its development, especially in terms of ideological and political expression. Adibaev emphasized that the poetry and literature that followed Abai was never the same as it was before. It was his beautiful and innovative writing together with his enlightened ideology which left a lasting mark that can be visibly traced in Kazakh poetry to follow (Abazov, 2007). Although, some of the ideas which Abai proposed were not taken over by the following generation of poets but were changed, since his political views and propositions were largely impacted and shaped by the context of the Tsarist regime and the arising problems and ideas from this time. Yet, the ideas which he proposes cannot be dismissed as they were important and largely relevant to the Kazakh elite of the early 20th Century in particular as a catalyst for further discussion in Kazakh literature. The political and social developments together with Tsarist reforms started a snowball effect in Kazakh literature and

poetry, largely due to the prominence of the poet Abai and his work which bound politics and literature together.

## **2.2 Kazakh written language and literacy**

Poetry and Kazakh identity discourse were fused together through the literacy campaign that demanded a reformation and standardization of the Kazakh written language. The standardization of the Kazakh written language using the Arabic script became a key element in Kazakh identity discourse and was a subject of debate within poetry and literature of the time. Poetry, as a means of expression and a medium of discussion, strongly influenced the debate surrounding the position of the Kazakh language and Kazakh national identity. The literary campaign among the Kazakh population was initiated by the Soviet regime as part of its Cultural Revolution campaign. Yet, it was well before the Soviet Union started to exist that the standardization of the Kazakh language and literacy were on the Tsarist agenda. During the Tsarist era, the Islamic group and the secular Russian-oriented group played a considerable role in placing the entire issue of the Kazakh language into the center of Kazakh-ness and identity. The Islamic group advocated an increased use of Tatar. Since at the time, the religious authority was based in Tatarstan and Islam in Kazakhstan was linked to Kasan. Another strong link was formed by the Arabic alphabet, which the Kazakhs shared with the Tatars, as well as the education available in Kazakhstan. The enlightened pro-Russian group, on the other hand, opposed the suggestions of the Islamic group and advocated for a development of a written Kazakh language. The idea of developing a Kazakh language was supported by Tsarist Russia. Standing on two opposing sides, both the Tatar missionaries and the Russian Ministry of Education became active in the debate and opened up schools both to accomplish their competing goals. While this educational clash was occurring, the Kazakh intelligentsia was doing their best to produce written sources in the Kazakh vernacular, in order to influence the development of the Kazakh written language (Grenoble, 2011). The Kazakh intelligentsia was writing with the intent for saving Kazakh language and culture for the future. This is both seen in their writing but also in the simple fact that the majority of Kazakhs were illiterate and would not be able to access their works until a major change would happen to combat this problem.

With the creation of the Soviet Union, the issue of illiteracy became incredibly important to combat. The emphasis on literacy and the insistence of this by the Soviet regime became an important theme in the overall discussion on Kazakh identity (Grenoble, 2011). The Soviet Union found the state of literacy appalling, especially in Central Asia where the literacy rate was particularly low. In order to combat this, a literacy campaign was launched. The

Kazakh population in 1919 had a literacy rate of 2% but by 1926 there was a large increase in literacy to 22.5% (Grenoble, 2011). This increase, although substantial, was not sufficient for the Soviet government and a second and later, a third literacy campaign was launched. By the end of the third phase, which started in 1933 and ended in 1939, 83,6% of the Kazakh population were literate (Dickens, 1988). The motivation guiding this immense force to combat illiteracy was driven by political motivations which was expressed in the words of Lenin: "It is impossible to build a Communist society in a country where people are illiterate" (McLeish cited in Dickens, 1988). The words of Lenin demonstrate that the motivation for literacy campaign of the Soviet government primarily served as a tool for ideological indoctrination to create a Communist society rather than to educate the Kazakh population to spread knowledge about Kazakh culture and history.

Kazakhstan serves as one of the strongest examples of the motivation of the Soviet Union since a large number of reforms were targeting in particular Kazakhstan and the Kazakh written language. The Soviet involvement in the development of the Kazakh language was very substantial. This is clearly visible in the multiple changes of the script for writing in Kazakh. The Soviet Union, as the inheritor of the Tsarist colonial lands, had more ideologically driven motivation, while the Tsarist motivation was driven by the wish of Kazakh loyalty to the crown and over all power and control. Kazakh, which was written in the Arabic script, would switch into first the latin alphabet in 1929, and then later into a modified cyrillic script in 1940 (Sherwin, 2019). The first switch to the latin script would be justified by the fear of an increasing influence of Islam, which was seen as anti-Russian during the Tsarist regim. While the second shift into to the cyrillic script was largely motivated by the wish to integrate the Central Asian Republics in the Soviet Union. Officially the reason was explained as follows in the newspaper Pravda in 1939: "the transition to the Russian script will contribute to an even greater unification of the peoples of the USSR, to an even greater strengthening of the friendship of the peoples of the USSR" (Winner in Sebba, 2006). In fact, the standardization of the Kazakh language, which had started during the Tsarist era and continued under the USSR, was deemed to have failed to attain a codified norm in 1920 and 1930. The Soviet regime was not satisfied and it was argued that there was too high of an influence of Tatar and Kazakh vernacular in the written language which should be replaced with Russian (Grenoble, 2011). The influence of this decision is visible in the Kazakh language today. The influence of foreign languages in the development of the Kazakh written language was seen by some as problematic, while by others it was seen as positive. This led to a politicization of the Kazakh language, which was visibly

expressed in poetry and literature. The influential intelligentsia of the time actively discussed this issue, as did both Magzhan Zhumabev and Iliyas Zhansugurov.

### **2.3 Kazakh oral culture and the emergence of Kazakh written culture**

The development of a written Kazakh language and literacy in Kazakhstan was part of the Kazakh cultural transition away from a predominantly nomadic oral culture to a sedentary written culture. This transition played a key role in connecting Kazakh poetry to the national consciousness. This can be seen by the interdependence of Kazakh songs and poetry as well as the use of written culture as a means to remember Kazakh history.

Kazakhs, as an originally nomadic society, expressed their culture and history through music. Music and poetry were synonymous and often poets were also called musicians. It is therefore important to note that often poets were also musicians, such as Abai who is also recognized as one of the most influential and greatest musicians of Kazakhstan. Often works referring to Abai's repertoire use the word song and poem interchangeably, blurring the lines between music and poetry. It was through song that Kazakhs would present epic poetry, which frequently dealt with Kazakh history, legends, myths and Kazakh traditions and customs. Often times music was used as a backdrop for lyrical improvisation and as an accompaniment (Sahadeo & Zanca, 2007). The interdependence of music and poetry had a strong influence on Kazakh written poetry, which is recognized by Iliyas Zhansugurov in his countless poems in which he uses both song and music interchangeably such as in the poem Певец (*Singer*), Походная Песнь (*Hiking Song*), Степная мелодия (*Stepp Melody*) and Моя Домбра (*My Dombra*). As a feature of Kazakh nomadism, the oral tradition of song and music was not abandoned but it was clear that there would be a transition or addition to a written oral tradition. This transition away from oral culture to a written culture was seen by the Kazakh intelligentsia as a means to put aspects of Kazakh culture and identity on to paper and to lead an active discussion about Kazakh identity. Hence, the nature of oral culture was not simply replicated on paper, but rather, there was an active engagement with the subjects that were covered and the nature of the oral culture and a new written culture was created, distinct from the oral culture. This transition was also characterized by a change in the emphasis of themes and topics which were written about. Dave notes that, the incredibly rich and strong Kazakh oral tradition of epic poems, literature and *aqyn* was not concerned with political matters or any matters concerning Kazakh consciousness, for that matter, before the mid-19th century, and that most of the works dealt with family relations. He also notes that a particular emphasis was placed on creating a Kazakh one-ness in the early 20th century in Kazakh poetry and literature, something



which was not common for the literary history prior (Dave, 2008). While, there were many differences between the oral and written poetry and literature, there were also many similarities which were consciously saved. One of these features is the melodic nature of Kazakh written poetry. There was also the conscious acquisition of topics, themes and symbols which were central to oral poetry in to written poetry, such as the surrounding nature of the steppe and Kazakh customs and traditions. It was the effective transition from the oral musical tradition of poetry towards a written form of poetry with a clear role as both a guardian of Kazakh oral culture and as an active participant in its discussion which made the connection between poetry and identity much stronger.

A reoccurring theme in Kazakh songs and poems was the role of the past and history of the Kazakh people. According to Kudaibergenova, Kazakh literature and poetry is incredibly important in wanting to understand the development of a Kazakh nation and national narratives. It is exactly Kazakh literature and poetry which engaged in an active exploration of the history of the Kazakhs and the constructing and re-construction of the Kazakh national narratives. It is also, in close connection to the development of ‘print capitalism’ and the Literary Revolution that Kazakh literature and identity formation become incredibly closely intertwined (Kudaibergenova, 2017). This claim is based on the theory presented in the book by Benedict Anderson, “*Imagined Communities*”, in which he argues that nation states, and nations in general are constructed and “imagined” and hence are created and do not simply exist. They gain validity through the belief of the people. *Print Capitalism* fits into this theory by highlighting the role of literacy and the creation of the printing press in Europe. The ability to distribute printed material for the masses made literature more accessible. While there were a multitude of different languages and dialects, these were not present in the literature but rather an overarching, or one dominant language was used which helped create a feeling of ‘one-ness’ amongst the people (Muscato). This was not particularly the case for Kazakhstan as literacy was very low, yet the campaigns to combat the problem of illiteracy were in full steam and the Kazakh intelligentsia was aware of this and supported firmly the need for the Kazakh people to learn how to read and write. Especially in their own language. It seems that the Kazakh elite and intelligentsia was consciously writing and theorising about the future, the past and the one-ness of the Kazakh people in their writing in a time when their work could easily be printed and distributed to a growing Kazakh audience. And thus, the active imagination of the Kazakh nation could be discussed.

Kazakh poetry and literature played a vital role in the discussion around Kazakh identity which was due to its already uniquely important role in Kazakh society as a means of expressing

Kazakh culture and more, as well as the solidification of its position in Kazakh written culture which made poetry an important source for thought, discussion and political discourse in Kazakhstan of the 1920s and 1930s. This together with the attentiveness, sensitivity and understanding of political and historical changes which were contributors to the active intent of poets to discuss Kazakh identity made poetry one of the most important mediums in understanding Kazakh identity and its development.

## Chapter 3. Iliyas Zhansugurov's poetry in a new cultural context

Iliyas Zhansugurov is often considered to side with Soviet modernity in his poetry, as he expresses a sincere fascination and love towards the Soviet ideas surrounding modernity, such as industrialization and centralization. However, his main focus lies within the society and how the Soviet Union aimed to change the Kazakh people and their culture. In particular the ideas of combating ignorance, fostering education and the development of language, industrialization, sedentarization and one Soviet unity with the Kazakhs amongst it. Within the poetry which was available, Iliyas Zhansugurov demonstrates a genuine wish to want to change and modernize Kazakh identity and society, however he believed that this was possible through the idea of modernity proposed by the Soviet Union, only under Lenin. Within his poetry it is visible that there are many aspects of the modernization project of the Soviet Union which he is awed by and supports, in particular in the 1920s under Lenin's concessions and later starts to question his support for Stalin and his regime. Despite his support for the Soviet modernity process, his approach to expressing his views allows also for criticism of the Soviet Regime. This criticism is clearly visible in his poem, *Speed of October*. Iliyas Zhansugurov argues for the need of modernization of the Kazakh culture and subsequently identity through a particular focus of moving the oral culture to a written culture, emphasizing the need of education, industrialization and the one-ness of the Kazakh people within the Soviet Union.

### 3.1. Iliyas Zhansugurov and the Soviet Regime

In order to better understand Iliyas Zhansugurov's poetry, one needs to understand his biography as well as the political context and landscape of the time in which he lived. It is also important to see and understand how his view on the policies and goals of the Soviet Union started to change with the rise to power of Stalin and the execution of his ruthless policies concerning national minorities and the shift away from the self-determination and transition of nation-building which Lenin proposed.

Iliyas Zhansugurov can be considered an exemplary citizen within the Soviet Union up until his tragic death. He grew up in quite modest circumstances. He was born in 1894 in an unknown "aul" but referred to as "aul" Number 4 in the region of Aksusk in the Taldykurgan Oblast. His father had a big influence on his education and a thorough appreciation of the Kazakh oral culture. It was thanks to his father that Iliyas Zhanugurov was able to write in the Arabic script and developed an appreciation for playing the Dombra as well as reciting

spontaneously poetry (Antonov, 2015). His father played thus a very important role and strongly influenced his life. As a man with a rough character he was always trying to harden Zhansugurov's gentle and kind nature. Zhansugurov was an optimist that believed there was always a way out of a difficult situation, which is also reflected within his poetry (Imangazinov, personal communication; May 10, 2019). Zhansugurov was well acquainted and appreciated influential Kazakh poets and writers such as Akan, Birzhan and Abai and studied their works with pleasure. One of his hobbies at this time became the collection of Kazakh oral poetry, which he continued professionally at an older age with the respected scholar Abubakhir Divaev (Antonov, 2015). He studied in a school in his "aul" and spent the following 10 years of his life there, writing poetry about love, Kazakh songs ("Kui") and nature (Satpaeva and Adibaeva, 2002). Within his poetry and in life, Zhansugurov was primarily driven by the wish to improve everyone's quality of life. In a quite naive way, he believed that the right thing for the Kazakh people would happen and that in the end, all good, to the one who deserves it would come and a solution for all hardship and problems would be found (Imangazinov, personal communication; May 10, 2019).

Within this context, it explains why he decided to go to Tashkent in 1920 where he stayed for two years to study in order to become a teacher. It is there that he became acquainted with Russian and western literature (Satpaeva and Adibaeva, 2002). It is also in Tashkent that Zhansugurov met Abubakhir Divaev, whom he convinced to take him along on his expedition to collect folklore in the Turkestan, Syrdaryi and the Dzhetsui Oblasts. After the completion of the expedition, he returned to his home in Uyezd and met his second wife whom he loved dearly. His first wife he married due to a family arrangement which ended after 2 years. He worked in his Uezd, as a teacher at the Beltongansky "aul" school. In 1923, having recognized his outstanding teaching qualities, Zhansugurov is invited to become the director of the Institute of National Enlightenment in Almaty. In 1924, he decides to continue his education and moved to Moscow to study at the Communist Institute of Journalism, during this time, sadly his wife and their new born child died. Despite the impact of the loss of his child and wife, he continued his studies in Moscow.

From 1920-1932, Zhansugurov started his journalistic work for the newspaper Enbekshi Kazak (Еңбекші қазақ) and continued to compose poetry. Outside of poetry he also continued his love for Kazakh music and wrote "Kuis". His mastery of the Kazakh art form is particularly appreciated and his knowledge and expertise is used in the works of Alexander Sataevich, who collected Kazakh "kuis" and songs in his book *"A Collection of 500 Kazakh Kuis and songs"*. Zhansugurov also spent heaps of time and effort into translating classical Western literature

into Kazakh from Pushkin all the way to Gorky and Goethe. During his work for the newspaper, Enbekshi Kazak, he met his third wife, Fatima Torebaeva and with whom he had a son, Sayat. They split however after the death of their second child and Zhansugurov married his fourth wife Fatima Gabitova in 1932 with whom he had two daughters and a son. In 1932, he was appointed as the 1st Chairman of the Writers' Union of Kazakhstan. He was recognized and appreciated as a great writer within the Soviet Union as he was sent in 1934 to the 1st Congress of Soviet Writers whose participants were composed of highly respected writers such as Maxim Gorky, Yuri Olesha and Ilya Ehrenburg. In 1934, he achieved a highly respected position in the KazASSR Central Election Commission and was solidified as an important member of the Soviet elite.

In 1937, after the completion of his epic poem, *Kulager*, Zhansugurov is arrested under the suspicion of nationalism, having been accused by one of his close friends. He is executed on the 26th of February 1938 (Antonov, 2015). Iliyas Zhansugurov's steep climb within the Soviet system, having started as a young boy in an unknown "aul" and ending with one of the highest positions anybody could aim for within the Soviet Union, could not have been more illustrative of the opportunities offered by the Soviet Union as well as the ruthlessness of the Stalinistic policies. Being part of the Soviet elite, it was not surprising that Zhansugurov was supportive of the Communist discourse and believed that it was a force for good for Kazakhstan. His poetry, however, also reflects his knowledge of the development of some of the darkest times with Soviet history, and his disapproval of this, which is visible best within his epic poem *Kualger*. As a participator and advocate of the early Soviet modernization project, Zhansugurov was supportive of the main elements of this project. In order to understand Zhansugurov life and views, we must now turn to the context and the turn of events which prevailed during the formative years of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet modernization project was complex and changed over time from the start of the Soviet Union under Lenin in the 1920s and then under Stalin in the late 1930s. From the very beginning of the Soviet Union, according to Hirsch, there was a choice between two different paradigms: the ethnographic paradigm and the economic paradigm. She argues that the Soviet Union was looking to find a balance between these two paradigms and that this shift would characterize the Soviet Union. This quest to find a balance also demonstrates that in certain times in Soviet history one paradigm played a more important role and vice versa. The ethnographic paradigm was concerned with the creation of nation states, taking inspiration from the European nation states and wanting to apply this idea to the Soviet Union. The nation states idea, argues that ethnographic boundaries should determine the administrative and territorial

divisions. While the economic paradigm argued, on the other hand, that divisions should be made according to local economic “productive forces”. This approach was inspired by the European colonial system and thus argued that nationalism would cease to exist once the Soviet Union would be able to establish proper and favorable economic conditions (Hirsch, 2005). It is clear that most Communist at the time believed that this would be the case and that there would be an international revolution which would spread communism around the globe. Yet, there were certain conditions with the Soviet Union in 1917 which required a different approach.

It was during the genesis of the Soviet Union, after the end of WWI and whilst fighting in the Civil War, that the path of nationalism was chosen, over the economic path in order to create alliances with local movements and to keep these during the shaky first years of the Soviet Union (Hirsch, 2005). This process was also referred to by Lenin as the right to “self-determination” which aimed to keep as many non-Russians happy and willing to join the Soviet Union and the Bolshevik cause as possible, after the fall of Tsarist Russia (Simon, 2018). Thus, for Central Asia, this meant that local groups such as the Jadids in Uzbekistan and Alash Orda in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan would be able to start a national empowerment. It was in this time that the Alash Autonomy was formed. Even though there were a multitude of different oppressed peoples gaining rights and liberties, it was made exceptionally clear amongst the Bolsheviks that this state would not last for long, as it was a transition to later move towards a centralized communist state. Some of the concessions towards the suppressed people included the opportunity to succeed. However, there was the expectation that after the Socialist revolution these autonomies would not succeed, even though they were believed to have this choice, but would join the Soviet Union. The Bolsheviks were thus willing to offer a whole lot more to the non-Russians living in the territories of the former Russian Empire than the Whites, for whom there could only be a one-Russia. Thus, the Bolsheviks offered not only the option to succeed but also other concessions to nations, such as the right to protect one’s own customs and more. One of the striking examples of these concessions were made in Turkestan with the reinstatement of shariah law and religious schooling. Stalin made it abundantly clear, however, that although that autonomy would not mean independence and that a nation could not truly succeed. For the Bolsheviks, this nationality policy was not the policy which they truly supported or advocated before the war, but it was a policy which would bring more nationalities onto their side and could help them gain victory.

After this victory was achieved, as Stalin predicted, the Soviet Regime felt that the nationality policy had gained too much momentum and had thrown the Soviet Union off-track,

and thus Lenin proposed the establishment of a Soviet federalist system. Stalin strongly disagreed with granting nationalities more liberty as he feared that instead of fulfilling the quest for international communism which required a strong centralized system, the paths of the Soviet Union would diverge from that of the various nationalities living in the Caucasus and the East. However, Lenin prevailed and started the Soviet nation-building process which became the hallmark of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s. These socialist nations would be joint representatives composing the Soviet state. This system would clearly be indicating that statehood would not be constitutive of a nation. According to Simon there were two key elements at work which determined the liberty for non-Russian nationalities; the first was using nation-building as a means of sovietization through the condition for non-Russian people of support only if the Party's rules would be established; the second condition would be that this would be a transitional phase and that there would be active work put towards the final achievement of a 'merger' of nations. It was clear to Lenin and Stalin that Soviet federalism would be a transition over to create a one and merged Soviet Union, however, in particular Lenin felt that these concessions had to be made since he wanted to win over non-Russian minorities and he felt that it would only be possible to create a one merged communist nation through a transitional period of the liberation of the oppressed nations (Simon, 2018). In the following years a lot of events happened which made it difficult to establish a solid nation state in Kazakhstan or to establish a solid Soviet Union for that matter, however there were people amongst the non-Russians which did buy into the idea of federalism and Soviet nation building. In particular the 1920s which were characterized by freedom and national revival that fostered a growing number of support amongst the intelligentsia in particular in Kazakhstan. Ilyas Zhansugurov, as someone who benefited from the Soviet nation building project and was able to work his way to the top of the Soviet career ladder, was a prime candidate to be won over by this form of Soviet ideology.

The support of Lenin's policies and beliefs are visible in countless poems of Ilyas Zhansugurov, in particular the poem, *ЛЕНИН ЖИВ (Lenin lives)*, which Zhansugurov wrote in 1925, cements his sentiment towards Lenin's vision and his genuine belief that all of the Soviet Union supported it too.

*Не умер Ленин, Ленин с нами,  
Наш вождь не умер, он живет!  
И эту правду принимает,  
И верит в это весь народ.  
Нет! Быть не может, чтобы умер  
Такой великий человек!  
Ведь дело Ленина бессмертно*

*И нам завещано навек.  
 Назад историю не двинешь!  
 Несокрушимый, как гранит,  
 Класс пролетариев могучий  
 Наследство Ленина хранит.  
 Победный путь наш прям и светел.  
 Ряды железные сплотив,  
 Идем мы ленинской дорогой.  
 Не умер Ленин, Ленин жив!*

(Zhansugurov, 1962, pg.15)

Lenin didn't die, Lenin's with us,  
 Our leader is not dead, he lives!  
 And this truth is accepted,  
 And all the people believe in it.  
 No! It can not be that he died  
 Such a great man!  
 Lenin's work is immortal  
 And to us it is destined forever.  
 You can't undo this history!  
 Indestructible as a granite,  
 The class of proletarians is mighty  
 Lenin's legacy kept safe.  
 The victorious way is straight and bright.  
 Rows of iron solids,  
 We're going down the road of Lenin.  
 Lenin is not dead, Lenin is alive!

It is particularly interesting that Zhansugurov wrote the poem *Lenin lives* one year after the death of Lenin. It seems that through this poem, in which it is clearly visible that Zhansugurov supports the ideological path of Lenin, he and the people of the Soviet Union do too and will continue his work. It could be that Zhansugurov already felt that there could be big changes ahead, and in such a circumstance he positions himself on “the road of Lenin”, whose path he would follow. Within this poem, it is visible that Zhansugurov hoped that the path which was proposed by Lenin would be continued and that, despite his premature death, his legacy would be carried on. This legacy, in particular industrialization, the one-ness of the Soviet people and the development of Kazakh culture and language is deeply set in the poetry of Zhansugurov.



### 3.2 Soviet modernity in Iliyas Zhansugurov's poetry

The three main issues which are of particular importance to Iliyas Zhansugurov are visibly traceable throughout his poetry, especially in the 1920s. During this time, even his language echoes the language used by the Bolsheviks. He is excited for a new future and he wants everyone to get behind the ideas of modernization. The three key areas which he focuses on in particular is the need for industrialization, positioning Kazakhs in the context of a one-Soviet Union and the need for Kazakh cultural development in particular literacy.

The need for industrialization is most clearly portrayed in the poem, *На заводе (In the Factory)*, which Zhansugurov wrote after visiting the factory, *Serp i Molot*, based in Moscow in 1927.

*Железо в форме бревна  
Вытягивается длинней;  
Скоро получит страна  
Тонны звонких гвоздей.*

*Чугун клокочет все злей,  
Все громче машинный шум...  
Казаху, сыну степей,  
Такое приходит на ум:*

*Огнями мрак разогнав,  
Заводы везде загудят,  
И здание Равных Прав  
Вот эти гвозди скрепят.*

*В просторах степей седых  
Гудки возвестят восход,  
И в строй народов больших  
Ты встанешь, родной народ!*

(Zhansugurov, 1962, pg.17)

Iron in the form of a log  
It stretches longer;  
Soon the country will receive  
Tons of ringing nails.

The cast iron bubbles more and more bitterly,  
The machine noise is getting louder and louder...  
To a Kazakh, the son of the steppes,  
Such comes to mind:

With the fires, darkness breaking away,  
The factories will be ringing everywhere,  
And in the Equal Rights Building  
These nails are creaking.

In the expanses of the gray steppes  
The beeps will announce the rise,  
And in the ranks of big nations  
You're going to get up, my people!

In this extract from the poem *In the Factory*, the philosophy of the Bolsheviks, of advancement and climbing the ladder of great nations, is clearly felt. Although, the description of the heavy work, the roughness of the material and sparks is romanticized, the purpose of such heavy work for the Soviet Union is also expressed, in particular through the words “Soon the country will receive tons of ringing nails” and “in the Equal Rights Building these nails are creaking”. What is also exceptional striking is the care that Zhansugurov takes to position himself, as a common Kazakh man, in this process and to urge all others like him, the Kazakh people to stand behind this industrialization and what great future this process promises, “And in the ranks of big nations you’re going to get up, my people!”, up the ladder of progression. It is the Kazakh people which, as part of the Soviet Union will rise up as one.

This emphasis of the one-ness of the Kazakh people together with the Soviet Union is felt not only in poems such as *In the Factory* where the emphasis is placed on advancement and coming together, but also in poems such as *Моя Степь (My Stepp)*, where Zhansugurov cleverly connects the rich Kazakh history, way of life and culture as a part of the Soviet Union.

*Позволь мне в стихах о былом народу, рассказывать, мать.  
Пиши же, перо! И вещай, что в силах ты нынче вещать.  
И сердце и песни мои кипят, как весною вода.  
Твои они, добрая степь, навеки твои, навсегда.  
Ты - мать мне, советская степь! Так в сердце мое постучу,  
И, благословляя меня, как сыну, перо мне вручи.*

(Ilyas Zhansugurov Fund, 2019)

Let me tell about the past people in poems, Mother.  
Write it down, pen! And tell, what you can, now.  
My heart and my songs boil like spring water.  
They are yours, good steppe, for centuries yours, forever.  
You are my mother, the Soviet steppe! So know on my heart,  
And by blessing me as a son, hand me the pen.

In this extract from the poem *My Steppe* Zhansugurov refers to the Steppe as his Mother. He begs her to give him a feather to write down his poetry, for everyone to read later, once they

can. The emphasis is on the importance of bringing everything on to paper, while there is still time. He wants to save what there is left and give it onto the next generation, which it is assumed, will be able to read. Zhansugurov begins the poem by emphasizing his strong relationship with the Kazakh soil, the ground, the steppe and how he was born and raised on this soil. He connects the lives of all Kazakhs to the Steppe and addresses her as if she was a person. He creates a strong connection between the history of the Kazakhs and the steppe and begs the steppe to let him express this strong connection, through his written poetry. This connection between the Kazakh nature, most notably the Steppe, and the Kazakh people is a relationship which Zhansugurov emphasizes in a number of poems and throughout the years, yet, he has chosen to add another dimension to this connection in this poem. He does not simply refer to the Steppe emphasizing the Kazakh-ness of it but he uses the word “Soviet steppe” instead. This simple, yet not very noticeable change constructs an allegiance towards the Soviet Union right away and acknowledges the position of the Kazakh people and Kazakhstan within this country. It is clearly part of the Soviet Union, yet there are certain markers which only Kazakhs will understand and belong to.

These kinds of markers include the culture of the Kazakh people. The state of this culture is a heatedly debated subject within the poems of Zhansugurov. As a poet and singer with scholarly experience in Kazakh oral culture, he is very well placed to make an academic judgment on the state of Kazakh culture, and it is a sobering one this is particularly due to the importance that Zhansugurov sees in the role of poets and singers. There are countless poems in which Zhansugurov emphasizes this importance and urges Kazakhs to be able to produce and access the works which are able to capture Kazakh culture and identity. The importance of the role of the poet is visible in his poem, *Желание (The wish)*, in which Zhansugurov expressed the wish for a Kazakh enlightenment.

*И когда над осколками  
старого мира вспыхнет новое солнце,  
и с радостью свежей зазвонит,  
как родник, сладкозвучная лира.  
И народ обратится к поэту  
с надеждой -  
вот тогда, вот тогда  
взор мой орлиный насытится,  
успокоится сердце  
при взгляде на синее утро.*

*Вот тогда, вот тогда  
сила черная опрокинется  
и в дома возвратится*

*забытая мудрость.*

(Ilyas Zhansugurov Fund, 2019)

And when over the shards  
of the old world a new sun will blaze,  
and gladly ring a bell,  
like a spring, a sweet-sounding lira.  
And people will turn to the poet  
with hope -  
that's when, that's when  
my eagle's eyes will be full,  
the heart will calm down  
when you look at the blue morning.

That's when, that's when  
the black power will overturn  
and return to their homes  
forgotten wisdom.

The extract from the poem *The wish* clearly illustrates the role which Zhansugurov sees the poet having with Kazakh society, culture and enlightenment. As a part of the intelligentsia of his time, it is not surprising that Zhansugurov acknowledged the political expression in poetry and it also seems that there are multiple factors at play in the motivation behind writing this passage. One of which could be the emphasis of the role of poetry and songs within the traditional Kazakh culture as a means to spread information and knowledge. On the other hand, it could also be emphasizing the transition away from oral Kazakh culture on to written culture together with making it more accessible to the public through literacy. The third option seems to be most likely since the extract starts with “of the old world a new sun will blaze”, alluding to a new world under the Soviet regime which brings modernization in the form of poetry, which will be accepted by the people. This modernization would once again give power to what was once forgotten, since it was never written down.

### **3.3 Denouncing Stalinism**

While Ilyas Zhansugurov started as a communist and as a strong supporter of Lenin and Lenin’s policies and plans, it is clear in the poetry and epic poetry which he wrote that with the rise of Stalin and the change of the Soviet Regime’s approach, he became more skeptical. This is particularly visible in his poem, Темп Октября (*Speed of October*), which he wrote in 1931. This poem clearly questions the harshness of the new Soviet mentality and questions the accomplishments of the regime since the last 14 years.

Мы четырнадцать лет в пути!  
 Сколько нам  
     эти годы стоили!  
 Как живой коммунизм во плоти,  
 Мы ведем  
     бронепоезд Истории.  
 Нас ничем беда не возьмет -  
 Ни разрухой,  
     ни зноем,  
     ни стужею....  
 Трактор,  
     молот  
     и пулемет -  
 Боевое наше оружие.  
 Этот путь -  
     наша гордость и слава.  
 Он проложен в грядущие дни.  
 Отмечаем  
     и левых  
     и правых,  
 Чтобы нам  
     не мешали они.  
 Помним каждый час  
     о врагах,  
 Не ослабнет бдительность памяти.  
 Руки тверды  
     на рычагах  
 Машинуста великого -  
     Партии.

(Zhansugurov, 1962 ,pg.53-54)

We've been on the road for fourteen years!  
 How much  
     have these years cost us!  
 Like living communism in the flesh,  
 We're leading  
     the armored train of History.  
 We won't be in trouble -  
 No ruin,  
     no scorching heat,  
     or icy cold...  
 Tractors,  
     hammers  
     and a machine guns -  
 Our weapons of war.  
 This is the way -  
     our pride and glory.  
 It is laid out in the coming days.  
 Sweeping away  
     the left ones

and the right ones,  
 So that they didn't interfere.  
 Remembering every hour  
 about our enemies,  
 Our memory's vigilance won't be weakened.  
 Hands are firm  
 on the levers  
 Of the great machine operator -  
 the Party.

While it might appear at first glance that Zhansugurov is supportive of the Soviet cause, at second glance it becomes clear that there is a deep critique of the harshness of Stalin. The Soviet party here is portrayed as the head of a machine, made up completely of people. A machine which has no feelings of pity and a strong focus on the ones which would stand in the way of the Soviet goal, “enemies”. The machine-like pictures comes to mind in particular through the emphasis of the unstoppable force which drives it, since “No ruin, no scorching heat, or icy cold...” could stop it. A human would have already succumbed to the pressure of the elements and other obstacles, but not the machine. And while the party does promise a revolution of the proletariat, it will accomplish this through “machine guns”, a seemingly unfitting third tool to accomplish communism. In the verses that follow it also becomes clear what the purpose of such machine guns would be, to “sweep away” anyone who would stand in the way. It is striking for the reader to have to see such imaginary of a machine made up of people and guns, which also impacts heavily the mood of the poem, making it quite sinister. This feeling of ruthlessness and harshness is attributed to the party and in particular the one person whose “Hands are firm on the levers”, “the great machine operator”. Without being able to put Josef Stalin’s name in his poem directly, it is crystal clear that Zhansugurov is referring to him, the mastermind behind the machine, the one in the control room and also the one at fault for the harshness of the party policies.

(...)

*И не плачьте в жилетку нам -  
 падайте*

*Те, кто должен упасть под откос!*

*Для любого,  
 кто в деле нам  
 враг,*

*Мы найдем  
 подходящий овраг!*

*Вдаль мы смотрим,  
 на все готовые,*

*И сметаем*

любые преграды,  
 И все новые,  
 И все новые  
 К нам приходят отряды,  
 отряды.

(Zhansugurov, 1962, pg.55)

And don't cry in our vests -  
                   fall off  
 Those who must, fall under the slope!  
 For anyone,  
                   who in our work is  
                   an enemy,  
 We'll find  
                   the right ravine!  
 In the distance we look,  
                   on all that's finished,  
 And sweep away  
                   any obstacles,  
 And they're all new,  
                   and they're all new  
 We've got troops coming in,  
                   troops.

In the continuation of the poem the consequences for the enemies of the human machine and the party are made abundantly clear. Even though, in 1931, the worst years of Stalin's repressions have not come, the dekulakization and other strong mechanisms were put into place which started a purge within the Soviet society. In the poem, Zhansugurov is well aware of these events and he offers words of profound critique of the situation. This critique is written between the lines, since there was no opportunity to openly express these sentiments. Being able to now know the tactics that Stalin employed towards his enemies, it is particularly striking that Zhansugurov uses the words "ravine" and "slope", as places where these enemies will rest. It is as if he knew what would come under the leadership of Stalin and the horrible purges and consequences for anybody who did not agree with him. The poem *Speed of October* makes it abundantly clear that Zhansugurov does not stand behind the ideological discourse of Stalin and openly questions his tactics and harshness. This appears to be the time when Zhansugurov starts to also then, question his allegiance with the Soviet Union, which has been changing too drastically away from Lenin's Soviet Union, which he supports. Iliyas Zhansugurov, argues in favor of Lenin's conception of modernity and solidifies this claim through supporting Soviet policies of industrialization, transition away from the oral culture to a written culture, emphasizing the need of education and the one-ness of the Kazakh people within the Soviet Union.

## Chapter 4. Identity in Magzhan Zhumabaev's Poetry

Magzhan Zhumabaev is a very important figure in Kazakh literature and in the discussion around Kazakh identity. His poetry is filled to the rim with political discourse and Kazakh culture. Kazakh identity, society, culture, history, traditions and customs play a central role in his poetry. Magzhan Zhumabaev was an avid student for most of his life, starting his education in his "aul" in the North of Kazakhstan where he studied Turkic, Arabic, Persian and Russian. He was born on the 25th of June 1893 into a large and wealthy family, which made his education possible in the first place. After finishing his basic education studying in Petropavlosk in a Madrasa, he continued to study in Madrasas in both Astana and Ufa, where he published his first poetic works in 1912. He then continued his education in Omsk in 1913 and progressed to try to quench his thirst for knowledge in Tashkent at the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Institute in 1922 and in Moscow at the Institute of Literature in the Name of V.Bryusov in 1928 (Satpaeva and Adibaeva, 2002). The following chapter will be analyzing the view Magzhan Zhumabaev had concerning the path which Kazakhstan should follow to modernize. Thus he strongly defended a Kazakh modernity view on the development of the Kazakh people and nation which was characterized by the belief that there were certain conditions which applied only to Kazakhstan and that there could not be one universal approach which works for all cases. Furthermore, this Kazakh modernity path recognized Kazakh culture, society and way of life as an equal to the Russian culture, society and way of life and opposes Russian chauvinism. Keeping in mind, the *multiple modernity* theory, stating that there is no one true modernity, despite the overarching domination of the Western understanding of modernity. This is exactly the case in the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev who supports a Kazakh modernity. This Kazakh modernity view is formed in his poetry, through the support of key beliefs proposed by Alash Orda in particular concerning freedom and the need for modernization, his personal beliefs of education and language development and situating Kazakhstan, and himself, in between different dichotomies; the East and West and Religion and Atheism.

### 4.1. Magzhan Zhumabaev and Alash Orda

Kazakh modernity as an alternative to Soviet proposed modernity is a key theme in Magzhan Zhumabaev's poetry. As a member of Alash Orda, certain beliefs and goals of the party are traceable within his poetry. While Alash Orda is a party with a longer tradition than the existence of the Soviet Union, the emergence of the Soviet Union changed the political goals of the party considerably. Certain beliefs which the Alash Orda Party advocated for would



be a lot easier to reach with the help of the Bolsheviks, although there were still areas of dispute. Magzhan Zhumabaev, in his poetry, takes some clear stances on some of the goals of the Alash Orda Party which are not always different from the goals of the Soviet Union.

The intellectuals that made up the Alash Orda Party were interested in offering a new conception of Kazakh identity. The Alash Orda party was created during the Tsarist times and continued to exist into the Soviet Union, it came out of the two ideological strands of the elite which were mentioned earlier: the islamist and the secular Russia friendly group. The Alash Orda party came out of the Secular-Russia friendly group. Their core beliefs and goals are clearly outlined in their Party Program of 1917 around which most of the Kazakh intelligentsia and supporters united. This Party Program placed great emphasis on modernization and grounded their view of modernization in the Kazakh context and case. Even though, later the Alash Orda Party would collaborate with the Bolsheviks, as they had many aspirations in common but also due to political constraints, the Party Program was written in a time when there was no collaboration with the Bolsheviks and thus demonstrates their own proposed Kazakh way towards modernity. These ambitions were driven by the belief that Kazakhstan would have to become a nation in the modern world of nations in order to be saved from destruction (Gürbüz, 2007). The particular goals were to free the Kazakhs from Russia, to unite Kazakhs into an understanding of a one-Kazakh and nation, to modernize Kazakhstan and to end nomadism and foster the sedentarization of its population (Galick, 2014). More specifically though, they were concerned with the issue of nomadism. As a party made up of Kazakh intellectuals they were eager to question the Russian proposed version of modernity. Even though, most of the Kazakh intelligentsia of the time were studying in Russia and strongly associated their idea of modernity with it, they also were aware of key Kazakh differences and threats that neither the Tsarist regime or the Soviet Union considered. In the time of Alash Orda, Kazakh-ness was strongly tied to nomadism. The members making up Alash Orda believed in the Russian theory of linear historical development of nations, which impacted heavily their view of history and the role this played in Kazakh identity. According to Alash Orda, Kazakh history was able to both pinpoint and conceptualize the roots of Kazakh identity. The knowledge of such roots would then be able to guarantee a future for Kazakh identity. This view is also reflected in the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev. He was incredibly hopeful for the future of the Kazakhs, he loved and advocated a respect and use of the past and rejected the present, as he states in his poem Печальная Песнь (*Sad Song*) that “today is just a myth” (“Сегодня это только миф”). As part of the Alash Orda party, they believed in a similar conception of identity as members of the current field of Cultural Studies, that identities develop

and change. Thus they believed they could change Kazakh identity which they very much wanted to. The Alash Orda party saw the central position of nomadism in Kazakh identity as highly problematic, this was due to the fear that Kazakh culture and identity would vanish once nomadism would vanish. They set out to change that in the name of modernization and advocated for a steady move away from nomadism to sedentarization. They advocated this through the use of history and their understanding of identity as changing in order to present sedentarization as the natural progression of Kazakh identity (Galick, 2014). These views are also reflected within the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev. In his poem, Родная Земля (*Homeland*), Magzhan Zhumabaev clearly attempts to illustrate the goal of Alash Orda to restructure the relationship with the land and foster a natural sedentarization.

*Земля, где я увидел белый свет,  
Где пуповину мне отрезал дед.  
Где я играл, гоняя мух, слепней,  
В эпоху детства, коей лучшие нет.*

*В твоей я почве порожден, ты - дно,  
И плоть, и дух мой с тобой - одно.  
В другой земле мне кажутся темны  
Светила все, и с Солнцем мне темно.*

*Я помню небом сладость вод твоих,  
Твои леса и степи, твой тростник.  
Мальчишкой мне остаться бы  
в степи,  
Который детства красотой велик.*

*Забыв про дом, гонять в степи  
ягнят,  
Дружков своих в грязи степной  
валять.  
Играть в качели или кость ночами,  
Днем стригунка - неужа усмирять.*

*Но «Голова - Аллаха мяч» ... Куда  
Направит Он, туда мы мчим  
всегда.*

*Могу и я уйти в далекий край,  
Но знай, к тебе любовь моя  
тверда.*

(Zhumabaev, 2005, pg.24)

The land where I saw the white light,  
Where my grandfather cut off my umbilical cord.



to travel without a good reason. This poem illustrates not only the wish of Magzhan Zhumabaev to rethink nomadism but also the gentle approach he has towards it. Rather than, like the Soviet Regime, force a sedentarization, he aims to convince the public of the need for a sedentarization. Much like the Alash Orda Party, he is in favor of sedentarization but he takes a clear stance against the brutal measures employed by the Soviet Union and advocated for the reshaping of thinking and mentality of the people.

#### 4.2. Eastern modernity and Western modernity

As part of the introduction of a Kazakh identity, Magzhan Zhumabaev questions the validity of the discourses on modernity proposed by the West and opens up a way to look at modernity also from the East. He expresses this idea in his poetry by presenting an interesting recurring dichotomy between the West and the East. In these poems the West, usually seen as a bloody, vulgar, poor and violent place, gets enlightened through the ideas and people from the East. Thus, he argues in favor of a rethinking of where the modernity fitting for Kazakhstan comes from and urges for a shift away from looking towards the West for modernization but rather looking towards the East instead. In his poem, *Пророк (The Prophet)*, he paints a very dark picture of the West, closely resembling hell and using colorful and vivid language which reminds one of the painting *Hell on Earth* by Pieter Bruegel. A world full of demons, darkness and the lack of God. The poem is based around the Huns coming to the West to save the people from the hellish conditions they are living under.

*Я - свет с Востока, радостный  
восход,  
Мой голос сотрясает небосвод.  
Над миром всем сгустился мрак  
Дам миру свет я, Солнце вновь  
Взойдет.*

(Zhumabaev, 2005, pg. 114)

I am the light from the East, joyful.  
The sunrise,  
My voice is trembling in the heavens.  
The world is dusky with darkness  
Above the world is the light I, the sun will  
Rise again.

The excerpt from the poem, *The Prophet*, demonstrates a refreshing and new view in a time when Kazakhstan was dominated by a Western discourse of modernity claiming that it is superior to other forms of modernity. Through this poem, Zhumabaev reminds the reader that this was not the case and returns the gaze to the golden years of the Central Asia. He also uses

the recurring symbol of the sun and light, in contrast to the darkness of the West. Here the sun is the all knowing which will spread the enlightenment amongst all and does so, from the East to the West, instead of the other way around. While this poem examines more closely the conquest of the Huns, which plays an important part in the history of the world, its focus is on the past. This past position which the East had, as an enlightener and equal to the West, is an idea which Zhumabaev projects into the present. He expressed in his poem *Восток* (*The East*), that the East is a valid and important player in history and modernity and that there might even be a more suitable understanding of modernity than the West proposes.

*Восток раскосый, что стоишь?  
Ты же гора тут, а не мышь!  
Очнись же, великан!  
Пусть стонет вновь земля! Вперед!  
На Запад будет твой поход!  
В крови там много стран.*

(Zhumabaev, 2005, pg.127)

Splintering East, what are you standing there for?  
You're a mountain here, not a mouse!  
Wake up, giant!  
Let the earth moan again! Let's go!  
Your march will be to the West!  
There are many countries there in the blood.

In the extract of the poem, *The East*, it is clear that Magzhan Zhumabaev is calling for the recognition of the greatness of the East, not accepting the arrogant treatment that much of Kazakh culture and identity has received in the past. He illustrates that the East is by no means inferior to the West but on the contrary, a force to be reckoned with and with an even better counter proposition to the beaten path which the West has fallen victim to. This becomes abundantly clear within the rest of the poem when he says “The poor fellow (West) who got lost and off his way” (Бедняг заблудших, что с пути). This dichotomy between the East and the West begs to question the power relations between the two and proposes an empowerment of the East, Kazakhstan as part of it.

#### **4.3. Magzhan Zhumabaev’s relationship with God**

Magzhan Zhumabaev, as a former student of a madrasa in Petropavlovsk and Ufa, was well acquainted with religious schooling. This intimate and scholarly relationship seems to cause a conflict inside of the author. He himself, addresses God frequently in his poetry, whether it is to scold him over the unfortunate position he has placed the Kazakh people in

Господь великий (Great God), or to work out his personal relationship with God. Zhumabaev also frequently uses the symbol of fire for God and equates him to fire. This could be an illusion to the old ways of believing, tengriism and questioning the fundamental role of God, Allah, in muslim Kazakh society. The relationship which Zhumabaev has with God, personally, is quite unclear as he seems to be unsure of this role himself. In the poem, *Я поверяю вам (I'll trust you)*, this uncertainty over the role that God should have and does have in his own life is apparent.

*«Я сам Господь и сам себе слуга»,  
Порой и Бога числю во врагах.  
Но если что случится вдруг со  
мной,  
К нему иду я в горестных слезах.*

*Ну вот читатель, я раскрылся  
весь,  
Ты красок лишних, лжи  
не встретишь здесь.*

(Zhumabaev, 2005, pg.174)

"I am my God and my own servant",  
Sometimes even God is my enemy.  
But if anything happens to  
me,  
I go to him with sorrowful tears.  
Well here, reader, I've opened up  
all of it,  
Unnecessary paint and lies  
you won't find it here.

In these verses from *I'll trust you*, Magzhan Zhumanbaev lays himself bare and honestly discusses his doubts surrounding his religion and God. This complex relationship is quite clearly visible in this stanza as Zhumabaev wants to believe that he is the one to be in full control of his life, being the one who is his own God and servant. However, in practice this is not the case, since when something goes terribly wrong, he turns to God again and when he is unsatisfied, he also blames God. This relationship implies a certain autonomy and ability to distance oneself from God and take control of one's own fate in life but yet not being able to be fully independent and to take responsibility for the difficult situations that arise. In the life of Zhumabaev the complexity of the relationship he has with God is quite understandable, as he is influenced by the secular thinking of the Alash Orda movement while also being raised within a theological context and having a complicated and difficult life, spending most of his life in and out of prison. Therefore it is not surprising that he struggled to clearly pinpoint a

certain relationship with God. The first three verses also illustrate the presence of God in his poetry since, at times he advocates for a remembrance of Allah, while at other times he denounces him and the role he played in Kazakh society. Even though, here Zhumabaev does not have a clear stance which he would like to advocate to the Kazakh people, it seems that this debate which he has with himself is quite a good representation of an average Kazakh which could be modernized.

#### 4.4. Magzhan Zhumabaev poetry and the need for Education

Wanting to modernize the Kazakh identity is a very strong motivation for Magzhan Zhumabaev and he criticizes certain aspects of Kazakh culture, social structures and ignorance because he wanted to modernize and improve the Kazakh culture and way of life in order for it to survive. In his poetry he advocated in particular for literacy and education. In the poem, *Осень (Autumn)*, one of the four poems which Zhumabaev dedicated to the seasons, he describes the importance of literacy and the access to knowledge, in particular for the Kazakh people.

*А в ауле на взрослых людей  
И на их босоногих детей  
Наглядишься, и в сердце проснется  
Боль-тоска незапамятных дней.*

*Здесь наук ремесел не чтут,  
Здесь невеждами с детства живут.  
Как огня, избегающий знаний,  
Всяк умен лишь на выборах тут.*

*Обучать сыновей им когда?  
Ссоры, той, байга, барымта...  
Глазом в завтрашний день ненароком  
Хоть один заглянул бы из ста!*

*Там, где все обучают детей,  
Там и облик народа светлей.  
Как скотина, жующий да пьющий  
Оскорбляют собою людей.*

*Край невежд, ты себя погубил!  
Кто не грабил тебя, не гнобил?  
Смерть близка, замирает дыханье,  
Пот со лба утереть нету сил...*

(Zhumabaev, 2006, pg.84)

And in the aul, the adults

And their barefoot kids  
 You look, and you'll wake in your heart  
 The pain and longing for days to come.

Here the craft of knowledge is not respected,  
 Ignorant people have lived here since they were kids.  
 Like fire, avoiding knowledge,  
 Everyone's clever during the election here.

When should I teach my sons?  
 A fight, a toi, a baiga, a barymta...  
 With the eye on tomorrow, by chance.  
 At least one in a hundred should have looked!

Where everybody teaches children,  
 That's where the people are lighter.  
 Like cattle chewing and drinking  
 Insulting people with themselves.

The land of the ignorant, you have ruined yourself!  
 Who didn't mug you, didn't fester?  
 Death is near, the breath stops,  
 Sweat on your forehead, no strength...

In the extract from the poem, *Autumn*, it is visible that Zhumabaev contrasts the Kazakh people, who are ignorant and stuck in traditions which are debilitating, and the enlightened and educated people. He expresses the view that Kazakh society needs education through the comparison to the people which are educated and enlightened who are “lighter” than the Kazakh who “like cattle” chew and drink and run around barefoot. This inability to become educated is also the reason for the cultural and linguistic demise of the Kazakhs, “the land of the ignorant, you have ruined yourself!”.

In his poetry, Magzhan Zhumabaev makes it abundantly clear that Kazakh culture, society and people have to change and he supports the Kazakh modernity view in order to accomplish this. He questions the Western conception of modernity and advocated for a modernity conception which is fitting for the Kazakh case and which takes account of the Kazakh circumstances. This view is expressed through the beliefs of Alash Orda in rewriting history and sedentarization and, instead of accomplishing this by force, would take an approach of fostering a reconsideration of Kazakh traditions. The rethinking of the Western modernization and the Eastern modernization and the argumentation that Eastern modernization would bring enlightenment to the West is a testimony to the claim to being seen as equals in the discourse of modernity. His personal emphasis and views on the role of education as well as his pondering over religion give an insight into Magzhan Zhumabaev as a person with a Kazakh identity.



## **Chapter 5. Modernity and Kazakh identity in Magzhan Zhumabaevs and Iliyas Zhansugurov's poetry**

Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov demonstrate that there are differing paths towards modernity for the Kazakh people. Despite Zhumabaev supporting the Kazakh path of modernity and Zhansugurov supporting the Soviet path of modernity, there are overlapping elements in which they both agree, while also having elements which are deemed more important than others and also having ideological differences. They both do, however, agree that Kazakh identity, culture and society must be modernized. They both express that they feel the Kazakh state of identity to be lagging behind since it seems to be standing still. This final chapter will explore some of the commonalities and differences of the authors and will argue that despite differences in the paths of modernization, both poets see Kazakh identity as stagnant.

While there are many things that both the Soviet modernity approach and the Kazakh modernity approach have in common, there are also a multitude of things which differ especially when it comes to comparing the two authors which represent these two views. One of the key differences which jumps into the mind is their different upbringing which resulted in a completely different view of the world and their motivations behind modernity. While Magzhan Zhumabaev grew up in a wealthy family which had access to education and was able to afford this, Iliyas Zhanusgurov saw a very different side of Kazakh identity, growing up on the other side of the country and not being able to acquire a higher education well into his adulthood. Despite these differences in rank and wealth, both authors clearly agree that literacy should be spread and education around Kazakhstan. They both believe that this is a vital part in the modernization path, this was also one of the common grounds which the Alash Orda Party and the Bolsheviks shared (Gürbüz, 2007). They were also both patriots who loved their country deeply and were very concerned with the future of the Kazakhs, the Kazakh culture, society and subsequently identity. This final chapter will present the argumentation found within the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov individually, establishing a stagnant Kazakh identity.

### **5.1 Magzhan Zhumabaev and Stagnant identity**

As a highly educated member of the Kazakh elite and intelligentsia Magzhan Zhumabev was heavily involved in the discussion around the future for Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs. As an active member of the small, yet very influential Kazakh elite and intelligentsia, the emphasis

of the need for modernity in Kazakhstan is clearly interwoven into his poetry. Magzhan Zhumabaev's poetry exemplifies his worried stance on how stagnant Kazakh identity is, which is exasperated by his sincere worry that Kazakh identity will be left behind in the march of history. This fear is derived from his take on the evolution, or lack thereof, in the current state of Kazakh identity. This can be seen most effectively in his poem, *Мой Народ (My People)*:

*Другие народы, душой устремясь к небесам,  
Ключи подбирают к наукам, иным чудесам.  
И, вспыхнув во мраке Звездой, Луной или  
Солнцем,  
Они с высоты дарят свет торжествующий нам.*

*Им незачем ждать, чтоб с небес снизошла  
благодать,  
Им время дано, чтоб грядущее предугадать,  
Впрягая огонь, бороздить небосводы и воды  
И жажду познания детям своим передать.*

*И только казахи собою довольны вполне,  
Глядят безучастно, бездумно стоят в стороне,  
Живут понапрасну - иные им ведомы страсти,  
Безумные страсти ведут их по мутной волне.*

(Zhumabaev, 2003, pg.17).

Other nations, with their souls drawn to heaven,  
Choosing keys to unlock knowledge and other wonders.  
And, having flashed in the darkness as a Star, the Moon or  
The sun,  
They present us with a triumphant light from the heights.

They have no reason to wait for the light to come down from heaven  
Abundance,  
They're given time to predict what's to come,  
Bringing in the fire, ploughing the sky and water  
And the thirst to pass on the knowledge to their children.

And only the Kazakhs are pleased with themselves,  
They look indifferent, thoughtlessly stand aside,  
They live in vain- having other passions,  
The mad passions lead them on a cloudy wave.

The extract of the poem, *My People*, clearly demonstrates the problematic state of the Kazakhs, through the contrasts of the educated and striving people and nations that do exist in the world and that strive to move forward as they demand change and modernization. This demand and need is demonstrated through the embrace of science and knowledge while the

Kazakh people stand still, trapped in their past. In the following poem, it is clear that Magzhan Zhumabaev is displeased with the attitude that the Kazakhs have towards modernity and change. The poem implies that Kazakh identity is at a complete stand still at a time when the world is moving and change is in the air. The standstill of Kazakh-ness is problematic since the Kazakhs themselves are not able to recognize that they are in need of modernization and change, but they are ignorant to the wonders of knowledge and progress and instead follow old and archaic traditions and customs which others have long rejected. They are satisfied being simply traditional, at a high cost. Magzhan Zhumabaev continues the poem with an explicit listing of the problematic “passions” such as the rich striving for power and the poor having to resort to stealing to survive. This inability to see the areas which must be worked on and the sheer blinding pride as well the inability to reform traditions, in comparison to the ever-evolving contrasting people of the world, upsets Zhumabaev since he is fighting for his own idea of modernity in order to improve the lives of the Kazakh people and to direct a positive evolution of Kazakh identity.

Magzhan Zhumabaev spoke about the current form and the future of the Kazakh identity in his poetry and he made it abundantly clear that Kazakh identity was in a problematic state and this was due to the utter lack of change. Much like Stuart Hall, Magzhan Zhumabaev, well ahead of his time, emphasized the principle of difference in identity. This is visible in the extract from the poem *Братьям из Сыр-Дарьи* (*Brothers from Syr-Darya*).

*О, Сыр, ты некогда царил,  
Восстань же из своих могил.  
Люби огонь, что дед любил.  
Кто не скакал, не вздымлет пыль,  
Кто не скакал, не знает пыл,  
Ты сам сгори, чтоб внук твой жил.*

(Zhumabaev, 2005, pg.100)

Oh, Syr, you once reigned,  
Rise from your graves.  
Love the fire that grandfather loved.  
Whoever hasn't ridden, won't swell the dust,  
Who hasn't ridden, doesn't know the fervor,  
Burn yourself to let your grandson live.

Zhumabaev makes it clear, in this poem that in order for the new to survive, certain aspects of the old must be let go. He thus urges for the present, “yourself” to burn in order to create the future for the following generations. By burning he does not mean the complete destruction but rather he is referring to being cleansed through fire (Очистить чтоб ослабший дух). Therefore, Magzhan Zhumabaev makes it clear that certain aspects of Kazakh identity must go, but he also

emphasizes that some aspects of the past must return; the fire in which their ancestors believe. Fire, as a symbol, very frequently occurs within the poetry of Magzhan Zhumabaev, together with the Sun, Moon, Stars, the Steppe, the Mountains and many more. In this poem, fire is supposed to replace the position of God in the society. This is an illusion to the complicated relationship that Magzhan Zhumabaev has with religion and the role that it should play for the Kazakh people. He is not, however, unsure of what role he would like to play for the Kazakh people. In his poem, *Желание (The Wish)*, he summarizes his personal role in the modernization process of Kazakhstan:

*Пусть я сгорю, нет счастья мне,  
Пусть всё вокруг горит в огне,  
Страдание - соль земли.  
В стихах себе скажу «Вперед!»,  
Стихами пробужу народ,  
К чему мне слезы лить?*

(Zhumabaev, 2005, pg.102)

Let me burn, there is no happiness for me,  
Let everything around burn in flames,  
Suffering is the salt of the earth.  
In poems I will say to myself "Forward!",  
Through poems will I awaken the people,  
Why shed another tear?

While the flames in the poem, *Brothers of Syr-Darya* were seen as positive, in the extract of *My Wish*, they serve a completely different purpose. The extract from *The Wish*, clearly demonstrates that Magzhan Zhumabaev is suffering because he is writing this poem while being in prison and feeling completely powerless in the effort to modernize Kazakhstan. He spent a considerable amount of the last years of his life in prison and his poetry is drenched in the pain, misery and suffering which he feels in those years. He dedicates a range of poems to the loves of his life and longs to be reunited with them. Magzhan Zhumabaev gets arrested for the first time and sent to Kareliya after he finishes his studies, but luckily gets liberated and his sentence gets shortened thanks to his friend, A.M. Gorky and his wife E.Pesheikova who continuously fought for his freedom (Satpaeva and Adibaeva, 2002). His poem, *My Wish*, clearly demonstrates that he writes with a clear goal to convince the Kazakh people of his own path to modernity. He writes with a consciousness and with the intention to leave a mark. This is clearly visible since, even when he is locked up in prison while he is writing the poem, which he mentions, he does the only thing he can to help, compose poetry.

## 5.2 Ilyas Zhansugurov and the need for modernization of the Kazakh identity

In the poetry of Ilyas Zhansugurov there is an active engagement with the Kazakh people and culture and in particular the strive towards modernization and reformation through the help of the Soviet Union. In particular the poetry which Zhansugurov wrote between the years of the February Revolution and the death of Lenin, it is clearly visible that he supports the nation building project which Lenin has enacted and believes that this would be a good and viable solutions for Kazakhstan. There are countless poems in which Zhansugurov calls upon the Kazakh people to support the Soviet cause, this is also visible in one of his short poems which has no name:

*Нет горячим сражениям счёта,  
но от тьмы отстояли мы свет.  
А потом в напряжённой работе  
закрепили успех побед.*

*Расцвели наши степи и горы,  
не скрывая от глаз торжества.  
Ах, какие теперь разговоры  
и какие у песен слова!*

(Ilyas Zhansugurov Fund, 2019)

There are no scores for the feverish battles,  
but we have defended the light from the darkness.  
And then, in our hard work  
have cemented the success of the victory.

Our steppes and mountains blossomed,  
were not hiding the celebrations from the eyes of the public.  
Ah, what kind of conversations are we having  
and what kind of words are in our songs!

It is clear that this short poem, written between 1915 and 1920, was dedicated to the struggle of the Bolsheviks and the subsequent positive outcomes which the victory against the Whites would bring in particular for Kazakhstan with its “steppes and mountains blossom(ing)ed”. This blossoming consisting of education and the ability to reflect this in the Kazakh oral culture; the songs and kui. The illusion of the blossoming here indicates the blossoming of the minds of the Kazakhs as well as of the culture, which was made possible through the victory of the Bolsheviks. The blossoming is possible since the mountains as such must be barren. These barren mountains symbolize the Kazakh culture, people and way of life. It is clear that Zhansugurov support the Bolshevik cause and believes that the path which they propose is the

right path for Kazakhstan, which he illustrates most clearly within his poem Три Мечты (*Three Dreams*).

(...)  
 Пути?  
 Какие там пути!..  
 Хоть я и пил росу утрами,  
 но был не в силах расцвести  
 под неумными ветрами.

Недаром долгие года,  
 с тяжелым вздохом брови хмуря,  
 всегда стремился я туда,  
 куда меня погонит буря.

Так эбелек, колюч и наг,  
 от ошалевшей непогоды  
 спешит в какой-нибудь овраг...  
 И все-таки я был народом!

Как тот безглазый исполин,  
 я был безграмотным и серым,  
 с бескрайних пастбищ и долин  
 бедою загнанный в пещеру.  
 (...)

(Ilyas Zhansugurov Fund, 2019)

(...)  
 Ways?  
 What ways are there!...  
 Even though I drank dew in the morning,  
 but could not blossom  
 ...under the relentless winds.

It is not without reason that many years have passed,  
 with heavy sighs, tense eyebrow and frowns,  
 I've always aspired to be there,  
 where I'm going to be chased by the storm.

So the tumble-weed, prickly and naked,  
 from the dazed bad weather  
 is hurrying into any ravine...  
 And still, I was the people!

Like that eyeless giant,  
 I was illiterate and gray,  
 From the endless pastures and valleys  
 ...trapped in a cave in distress.  
 (...)

It is, particularly in this extract from the poem, *Three Wishes*, that Zhansugurov argues for a better future for the Kazakhs, away from illiteracy and on to new aspirations and a better future. This need for a better future rests in the realization that no matter how traditionally Zhansugurov, or any other Kazakh was living, they would “not blossom”. This, the Kazakh people know too, as they sit “with heavy sighs, tense eyebrow and frowns”, after many years have passed but nothing for them has changed. They still drink their dew and live their traditional life. This traditional life, however, forces them to be stuck in time, to be stagnant. The stanza, in which Zhansugurov emphasizes that he was once one of the illiterates, whom he equals to cavemen or cyclops, is especially effective, as he paints with the brush of his words, a painting of the Kazakhs who are like creatures from the ancient past of myths. He demonstrates through his own personal experience that it is possible to come out of stagnation and backwardness and to modernize. This highly unflattering image of the Kazakhs as cavemen juxtaposed with the Zhansugurov of today, literate, well-educated and communist works well to demonstrate the future which the Kazakh population could have. The poem continues with a vivid and colorful illustration of the struggle the authors faces against an evil snake, which symbolizes the ignorance and evils of the past of the Kazakh people. He is then liberated from the evil snake and awakens to the victors of the Bolsheviks.

*И так легко  
вдохнулось мне:  
как будто сказочная небыль,  
сияло солнце в вышине,  
победный стяг алел в полнеба,  
летели тучи стороной.  
Раскрыв могучие объятия,  
стояли молча  
надо мной  
мои товарищи и братья.*

*Был серп в руке у одного,  
в руке другого - тяжкий молот.  
- Вставай!  
- Включайся в торжество!  
- Забудь лишения и голод!  
- Отныне стал свободным ты!  
- Вставай!  
Я руку подал братьям,  
и три руки, как три мечты,  
слились в уверенном пожатье.*

*Мы новой видели страну:  
пастух, крестьянин и рабочий,  
Так три мечты слились в одну,*

*а путь втроем всегда короче!*

(Ilyas Zhansugurov Fund, 2019)

And so easily  
I breathed:  
like a fairy tale dream,  
the sun was shining in the heights,  
the victory flag blushed in the sky,  
clouds were flying at the side.  
Having opened their mighty arms,  
were standing there in silence  
above me  
my comrades and brothers.

There was a sickle in one hand,  
There's a heavy hammer in the other man's hand.  
- Get up!  
- Get involved in the celebration!  
- Forget about deprivation and hunger!  
- From now on, you are free!  
- Get up!  
I gave my brothers my hand,  
and three hands like three dreams,  
merged into a confident squeeze.

We have seen the country new:  
A shepherd, a farmer and a worker,  
So three dreams merged into one,  
and the path for the three of us is always shorter!

The victory of the Bolsheviks, with their triumphant welcoming of all who were oppressed and who were tortured, paves a way for a new bright future, where all will be happy and there will be no more hunger. In particular, the three dreams, which is the name of the poem as well as mentioned to be made up of the shepherd, the farmer and the worker, who together create a great future in the Soviet Union. While the role of the farmer and the worker is clear within the Bolshevik framework, the role of the shepherd is particularly interesting, as it seems Zhansugurov is trying to incorporate the particular Kazakh context into the Soviet dream. Through the incorporation of the shepherd, he is indicating the position of the Kazakh within the Soviet rhetoric, and that if the Kazakhs work together with the farmers and workers the accomplishment of the Bolshevik goals would be easier to accomplish.

Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov are both poets who actively examine in their poetry the identity of the Kazakh people and suggest certain changes that could be made within the culture and society of the Kazakh people. They both make it clear, within their poems



that the time they live in is a time which demands change. They paint this urgency for change effectively in contrast to a traditional Kazakh society which seemingly changes only very slowly if at all. They both embrace this feeling of change and both paint a vivid picture of struggle for what they individually believe to be the right path for the Kazakhs to take. Despite their differences as to what this path should be, they both agree that Kazakh identity is standing still and needs to change in order to survive.

## Conclusion

The following thesis examined the question: How did Kazakh identity evolve in the perception of the Kazakh poets Magzhan Zhumabaev and Iliyas Zhansugurov during the 1920s and 1930s? And argued that, in the poems of both authors, that Kazakh identity was stagnant and needed to be modernized. They were both adamant about improving the future of the Kazakhs and ensuring a place for them underneath the sun. Both authors were quite worried about the future of Kazakhstan and the Kazakhs and hence proposed to modernize the culture, society and way of life. While Zhumabaev believed in a Kazakh modernization path, Zhansugurov believed that the Soviet path of modernity, in particular the one proposed by Lenin, would guarantee an effective survival of the Kazakh identity and culture. In particular the policies surrounding industrialization, the transition away from oral culture and on to written culture, the importance of education and the one-ness of the Kazakh people within the Soviet Union.

His views might have been influenced by the relative period of freedom provided by Lenin's nationality policies and opportunities that allowed him to climb the social ladder. With the death of Lenin and the rise to power of Stalin, Zhansugurov however started resenting the Soviet Union's new policies characterized by a higher degree of centralization, curbed freedoms, and ruthless modernization. He later succumbed to the ruthlessness of Stalin and was executed after a good career in the Soviet cultural sphere. Zhumabaev, in contrast was in disillusionment all along. He proposed a Kazakh path to modernity, which positioned Kazakh culture, society and way of life as an equal to the Russian and the general Western notion of modernity. He advocated for an independent Kazakhstan which would adjust its modernization effort to the local conditions, such as instead of a forceful sedentarization the population, as Stalin proposed, he proposed to rethink the strong connection that Kazakh identity had with nomadism and proposed a natural evolution into a sedentary life. He attempted to connect this idea to Kazakh history, which is quite clever, as he was only able to do this knowing the full importance of history to the Kazakh people. He also underlines the importance of education and literacy of the Kazakh population in the modernization process.

The debate surrounding the modernization of Kazakh identity was heated during the 1920s and 1930s. The effects of this debate have been felt in Kazakh until today, with the newly independent Kazakhstan, which is still searching for a one, all-encompassing identity. The Kazakhstan that we know today, was formed through the policies of the Soviet Union and the brave poets, such as Magzhan Zhumabaev, who dedicated their life to safe keeping and preserving their culture and history for the next generation. Studying Kazakh poetry from this

time period yields incredibly valuable insights into understanding Kazakhstan today and remembering the Kazakhs of the past. The fact that both poets were killed by the Stalinist regime ultimately hampered the search of what it means to be Kazakh. It is only by pursuing their legacy, together with that of other Kazakh thinkers of the past that it would be possible to find a suitable answer to this timeless question. Many more studies must still be conducted to better understand the rich and beautiful relationship between Kazakh identity, politics and culture and Kazakh songs and poems.

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# Addendum

CSSREVW2MAY13



## Ethics Committee for Non Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

### NOTIFICATION OF ETHICS APPLICATION OUTCOME – UG and PGT Applications

**Application Type:** Amendments to Check **Date Application Reviewed:** 16/4/2019

**Application Number:**

**Applicant's Name:** Valentina Berndt

**Project Title:** Soviet Kazakh Identity Formation in the 1930s; Effects of Soviet Reforms

### APPLICATION OUTCOME

(A) Fully Approved  **Start Date of Approval:** 16/4/2019 **End Date of Approval:** 01/09/2019

(B) Approved subject to amendments

If the applicant has been given approval subject to amendments this means they can proceed with their data collection with effect from the date of approval, however they should note the following applies to their application:

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Approved Subject to Amendments without the need to submit amendments to the Supervisor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Approved Subject to Amendments made to the satisfaction of the applicant's Supervisor  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The College Ethics Committee expects the applicant to act responsibly in addressing the recommended amendments.

(C) Application is Not Approved at this Time

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| Subject to Amendments made to the satisfaction of the School Ethics Forum (SEF)              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Complete resubmission required. Discuss the application with supervisor before resubmitting. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please note the comments in the section below and provide further information where requested.

If you have been asked to resubmit your application in full, send it to your supervisor who will forward it to your local School Ethics Forum admin support staff.

Where resubmissions only need to be submitted to an applicant's supervisor.

This will apply to essential items that an applicant must address prior to ethics approval being granted. As the associated research ethics risks are considered to be low, the applicant's response need only be reviewed and cleared by the applicant's supervisor before the research can properly begin. For any application processed under this outcome, it is the Supervisor's responsibility to email [socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk) with confirmation of their approval of the re-submitted application.

### APPLICATION COMMENTS

**Major Recommendations:**

**Minor Recommendations:**

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact your School Ethics forum admin support staff.