



# Caucasus and Central Asia Newsletter

The Caucasus and Central Asia Program

at the University of California, Berkeley

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## Issue 7, Spring 2005:

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## Notes from the Executive Director

*Sanjyot Mehendale*

We have come to the end of another exciting, but somewhat quieter than usual, spring semester. As some of you may have noted, this year CCASP did not present its annual conference in its usual March time-slot. After some deliberation we decided to move our conference to fall because the academic calendar of events at UCB in general, and ISEEEES in particular, is extremely crowded during the spring semester.

The postponement of CCASP's conference, however, did not mean a dearth of programmatic activities on Central Asia and the Caucasus. In addition to visiting speakers and the monthly gatherings of the Identity in Central Asia working group, on March 4th the XXIXth Annual Berkeley-Stanford Conference titled "The Caucasus: Culture, History, Politics" brought together a number of scholars to discuss recent research on the region. Two of the excellent papers presented at this conference are included in this issue of the CCASP newsletter: "Griboedov's Piano" by Dan Brower (Professor of History, UC Davis) and "A Culture of Corruption? Anti-Corruption Rhetoric and Revolution in Georgia" by Erik R. Scott (Ph.D. candidate, Department of History, UCB).

We are now very much looking forward to our fall semester. In this regard, we are pleased to announce a new Central Asia course to be taught by Dr. Edward Walker, through the Political Science Department: an upper division undergraduate course titled "Challenges of State and Nation Building in Post-Soviet Central Asia."

As mentioned above, CCASP's fifth annual conference titled "Modes of Contemporary Central Asian Culture," will be held on September 24-25, 2005 as part of a larger program on Central Asian culture which will blend the creative work of contemporary artists with arts and humanities and social science scholarship.

Most of the few Central Asia arts and humanities programs in the U.S. have tended to focus on the region's pre-Islamic periods, in particular on the ancient Silk Roads, with an emphasis on Buddhist and "traditional" culture of the region. The social sciences, on the other hand, have tended to concentrate on Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia's political, economic and strategic transformation, without scrutinizing the cultural arenas in which these changes are reflected. The Modes of Contemporary Central Asian Culture (see program on p. 13) program, however, seeks to examine the cultural manifestations of Soviet and post-Soviet transformation in Central Asia in several different ways. First, in collaboration with the Pacific Film Archive at UCB, a series of films produced in Central Asia will provide audiences with a glimpse into filmmaking during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Secondly, exhibits of contemporary art will provide a venue to discuss recent cultural manifestations in the region. In particular, the ways in which the fall of Communism has shifted the parameters for creative endeavors will be examined. Finally, a two-day symposium will bring together scholars, visual artists, film directors and students to participate in an innovative forum on contemporary Central Asian culture.

To introduce our audience to some of the 'modes' of Central Asian modern art which will be featured during the fall program, we have included in this newsletter a brief article on modern Mongolian painting by UC Berkeley Ph.D. candidate Ts. Uranchimeg, who has been instrumental in the organization of the Mongolian painting exhibit as part of the larger Modes of Contemporary Central Asian Culture program.

For updates on the Modes of Contemporary Central Asia Culture program, please check the CCAsP website over the summer.



*Meeting in Gobi, Sodnomin Tugs-Oyun*

# Griboedov's Piano

Daniel Brower

The piano stands against a wall in the large reception room on the second floor of the Chavchavadze mansion at Tsinandali. Just outside this room is a long porch, where the visitor has a spectacular view of peaks of the Greater Caucasus Mountain Range, twenty miles to the north beyond the valley of the Alazan River. In 1854, a raiding party from mountain tribes allied with Imam Shamil descended from those mountains to capture there in a celebrated—or notorious—exploit the Princesses Orbeliani and Chavchavadze, most of their children, their French governess and their servants. Prince David Chavchavadze raised the enormous sum needed to ransom the hostages from Shamil only by mortgaging the Tsinandali estate to the tsarist government. He was unable to repay his mortgage and the estate passed into the hands of the state twenty years later. It still is public property, now a Republic of Georgia museum and shrine to the memory of the Chavchadaze family.

That's why, I presume, my guide stopped during our tour in front of the piano, explaining that it was a wedding gift from Alexander Griboedov to his 16-year-old bride Nina Chavchavadze. The wedding, at the cathedral of Sion in Tiflis in August 1828, occurred only four weeks after she accepted his proposal, as he was on his way to Teheran with plenipotentiary powers of ambassador to conclude the final arrangements for the Turkmenchai Treaty, ending the brief Russo-Persian war. Their honeymoon, if that's the word, was spent in Tabriz, which they reached after stopping in Erevan, where her father Alexander Chavchavadze was governor of the newly conquered territory. She stayed in Tabriz while her husband proceeded to the Persian capital. There, in February 1829, he was assassinated by a mob in circumstances that are still obscure. Nina survived, but shortly after her return to Tiflis lost the infant that she had been carrying. She never remarried, but did adopt in 1850 the youngest daughter of her brother David. At the time of the hostage raid in 1854, she had left the estate with her adopted daughter to spend time with family elsewhere in Georgia; otherwise, she too would have become a prisoner of Shamil. Three years

later she died in the typhoid epidemic that swept Tiflis.

Perhaps the guide's story of the piano-wedding gift belongs to local folklore. I've found no evidence that Griboedov actually gave his bride such a cumbersome wedding gift, and even if he did, there's good reason to think that the piano (if indeed it was at Tsinandali) disappeared in the 1854 fire, set by the raiders, that destroyed the mansion. Still, I'm sufficiently freed from objectivist, factological prejudices to be ready to use the story for my own inquiry. It is rich in romantic overtones (inspiring at least one opera, and numerous semi-fictitious retellings). I come to the field of Caucasian history after spending years conducting research, and writing about Russian colonialism in Turkestan. I don't think it's stretching a point to view early 19th century Transcaucasia as another colonial territory of the empire, presenting its new rulers with immensely challenging tasks of governance, and perhaps becoming a trying-ground for new ideas about ruling a multiethnic, multireligious population. For Russians at the time, the land was "Asian" as were most of its peoples. The Georgian people occupied to be sure a special, in-between site between "East" and "West"—close to Russia by their Orthodox religion, the long wars with the Persian and Ottoman enemies, and the thousands of exiles who had lived in Russia prior to annexation. Still, I'm prepared to include the Georgian population in this colonial category for two reasons: because of their isolation from Western cultural movements—the Russian Empire was an occupying power from an alien world; and because, from the Russian perspective, this people was an unknown and backward society somewhat like the Turkish peoples in the eastern regions. Thus from both sides I find it useful to think of the cross-cultural encounter of Russians and Georgians (and of Alexander Griboedov and Nina Chavchavadze) in the imperial terms of metropole and colony.

With that premise, then, I propose to make Griboedov's piano a colonial symbol—to explore briefly the context, implications, and meaning that we



might attribute to it and to the two individuals directly involved. I have three hypotheses to suggest along these lines: that Griboedov fit so well (and quickly) into the Chavchavadze family because Georgian society permitted him to experience “perceptions of affinity” (the term is from an English historian writing of the British Empire) between himself, a young Russian aristocrat, and that princely family; that he sought through his abortive “Russian-Transcaucasian Company” to bring his superior knowledge and imperial backing to remake this Transcaucasian land into a better (and profitable) place—a civilizing mission; that Nina made of herself—and her image among Russians became—an iconic figure whose symbolic behavior was understandable in the empire’s cultural environment of the years after her husband’s death.

The ease with which Griboedov moved into Georgian high society is notable. Like Great

Britain’s overseas Empire, Russia’s occupation of Georgia lent itself to illusions of social similarity. David Cannadine’s book *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford, 2001) is my inspiration here. Key to his argument is that nineteenth-century Britishers, in India as elsewhere, viewed their subjects “on the presumption that society on the periphery was the same as, or even on occasions superior to, society in the metropolis” (p.9). That Griboedov shared the repugnance of other liberal nobles toward his caste-ridden, obsequious Russian peers seems a very plausible assumption. This attitude emerges in the words of Chatsky, the alienated hero from his play “Woe from Wit,” who finds on his return to Moscow “enthusiasts everywhere for acting viciously” (*Sochineniia* [Moscow, 2001], 40 [Act II, Scene 2]. One could say of Griboedov, as did Chatsky of himself, that this “homeland” was not a place for him.

The Georgian territory had, in this light, a special attraction. The Russian state had already decreed that the Georgian upper class had legitimate claim to

noble rank (that is, occupied a similar rank in the social hierarchy of their country as Russian nobles in the metropole) and had set up schools for them in Tiflis. That this congruence of social hierarchy might not have actually been the case is irrelevant. It suited Russian purposes that this be so, and the imperial authorities “constructed social affinities”—in this case by law—to make it so. Griboedov reached Tiflis first in 1818 on his way to Teheran and his diplomatic post. In the ten years that followed, Tiflis was for him partly a way-station, partly a residence. He rented an apartment in the center of town next door to the Orbeliani brothers, bought a piano (he was an accomplished pianist), and was

reported seen during his long stay there from late 1821 to early 1823 “dressed in native robes [*arkhaluk*], while he was at home composing his play, as well as playing the piano.” He had no trouble feeling at home “in all the aristocratic homes of Tiflis,” including the Chavchavadze residence



*Tsinandali*, courtesy of author

(D. G. Eristavi, *Tiflisskii vestnik*, 1874 [#24], quoted in *Tam, gde v’etsia Alazan’*, ed. T. Buachidze [Tbilisi, 1977], 32-33). He might even have been flattered to be accepted by a princely family, outranking by title his own, and best of all to have been accepted by Alexander Chavchavadze as son-in-law. He was between two cultures, between Asia and Europe.

This manner of interpreting Griboedov’s attraction to Georgian society has implications beyond his own personal development. I believe that it gives his plan for rational, progressive rule of the region its full meaning as a colonial project. His proposed joint-stock company, the Russian-Transcaucasian (*Rossiiskaia Zakavkazskaia*) Company, has been something of an embarrassment for Russian literary scholars, for whom the author of “Woe from Wit” ought to have possessed a cultural outlook worlds apart from colonial profit-making. Recent Western authors have taken a more broad-minded view of Griboedov’s colonial vision. Harsha Ram suggests that his approach to reforming the Caucasian borderland was a form of “progressive imperialism” (The

*Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* [Madison WI, 2003], 137-42). A close reading of the proposal suggests that Griboedov, like other Russian adherents to Enlightenment theories of humanity, possessed an awareness of culture (civilization) as a moral imperative, which, I believe, implied in his mind a uniquely Russian imperial mission to reform Russian society as well as the colonial peoples.

His proposal, read as a European colonial text, yields all the catch words and symbols typical of the colonial hierarchical ordering of humanity, and evolutionary vision of human progress, expressed in terms adapted to the Russian encounter with the Caucasus. The brief text constructs a picture of the “natives” of Transcaucasia that includes “mountain peoples who reach out to their lowland neighbors only to destroy their peace,” traders notable mainly for their “hunger for profits,” and Muslim and Georgian warriors, “hostile to Russians,” who “on return from their campaigns, place their swords in their scabbard, and refuse any other occupation.” All suffered from “ignorance [*neprosveshchenie*],” but their new rulers were eliminating this “darkness [*mrak*]” thanks to “statistics, ethnography, administration, financial order, [understanding] the people’s needs and [providing] the means to meet them.” The promise of his proposed “agricultural, manufacturing, and trading company” included, beside the obvious profits for its shareholders (including Griboedov) and increased taxes for the state, the improved “well being” and “reconciliation” among the peoples of the Caucasus (“Zapiska ob uchrezhdenii Rossiiskoi zakavkazskoi kompanii” in *Sochineniia* [Moscow, 1959], 472, 483, 490, 492, 494). It was a utopian project, especially for the time and place, far removed from the realities of General Paskevich’s rule. His “Russian-Transcaucasian Company” remained a dead letter.

But Griboedov was, in my opinion, a precursor. His formula for colonial development echoed later in the words and deeds of Count Vorontsov when viceroy of Caucasia, and Governor General von Kaufman in Turkestan. One can even find in his project a precocious awareness of the links between progressive imperialism and reform for Russia, anticipating efforts of subsequent generations to bring to life a reform agenda for the metropole. A compa-

table, and in their case real, effort at using “knowledge for the benefit of society” appeared in the last decade of Nicholas I’s reign among the “enlightened bureaucrats” (Bruce Lincoln’s term), in the Imperial Geographical Society, and in their ministries of Internal Affairs and State Domains (*In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia’s Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1825-1861* [Dekalb Ill., 1982], esp. ch. 2 & 3). Griboedov in his capacity as colonial official could promise improvements in the life of Caucasian natives, in a manner that he (alienated yet liberal by persuasion) could imagine suitable for the homeland. His piano was one minor part of a larger civilizing undertaking.

According to memoirs of the time, Tiflis had in the 1820s three pianos: one in Griboedov’s apartment (that he purchased from a fellow officer), another in the Chavchavadze residence, and the third in the Akhverdova home where Nina (as well as her sister) learned the piano and dancing, and became fluent in Russian and in French. Her father Alexander Chavchavadze, following the example of his own father (who had been Georgian ambassador to Russia under Catherine II), made a concerted effort to open his family to Western culture (and became a valued collaborator in the Caucasian administration). His daughters’ upbringing was modeled on that of the well-brought-up young women of Russian aristocratic families. Griboedov had sarcastic words on this upbringing in “Woe from Wit,” placed in the mouth of the compliant Famusov speaking of his daughter Sofiia:

“We’re all too precocious, all too clever...

We teach our daughters everything—,

Dances and songs, gentleness and sighs,

As if we mean them to be strolling actors’ wives.”

(Griboedov, “Gore ot uma,” *Sochineniia*, 23-24

[Act I, Scene 4].

As a portrait of Nina Chavchavadze, we might easily make of her life story a model of idealized Romantic womanhood: At age 16 a bride, then within a few months a widow, mourning her husband and very soon afterwards her son. A few months after the wedding, Griboedov offered his own vision of her in a letter written to a St. Petersburg friend, suggesting that, if he wished to see her “likeness,” he should go to the Hermitage to contemplate a painting, by the 17th century Spanish artist Bartolome Murillo, which he described as the “Virgin in the garb of a shepherd-

ess—that's her" (Letter of 24 December 1828 to B.S. Miklashevich, in A. S. *Griboedov v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, ed. V. E. Vatsura [Moscow, 1980], 355 [n. 13]). I doubt that the ideal of Romantic love could be visually encapsulated in a more vivid manner.

But I'd like to suggest another way (or perhaps an additional manner) to view her, particularly in the years that followed her husband's death. Her own education and family upbringing placed her between two cultures, and her dramatic encounter with Griboedov, first in real life and then under his shadow as his widow, made her an emblematic figure certainly for those Russians whom she met, and I believe for herself. Iurii Lotman is my guide here, in particular his essay "The Decembrists in Daily Life" subtitled "Everyday Behavior as a Historical-Psychological Category." His argument that the liberal noblemen of the Decembrist generation created a particular style of "signifying behavior" relies on Griboedov's characterization of Chatsky for keys signifying traits. I don't think that I'm stretching a point to suggest that Griboedov embodied in his own conduct elements of that unique "behavioral style" whose "severe look and sharp tone" (Sofiiia's description of Chatsky) sought to bring qualities of civic virtue, independence, and sincerity (and much more) into everyday life (*The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, ed. A. Nakhimovsky [Ithaca, 1985], esp. 135-45).

Nina had known Griboedov since she was 10 years old; in the intervals when he was in Tiflis, he frequently spent time in the house where she and several other girls received private lessons, dancing with them, giving her lessons in piano playing, and insisting on speaking only French with her (D. F. Kharlamova, "Eshche neskol'ko slov o Griboedove," in *Griboedov v vospominaniakh*, 193-94.). His writings and his conduct (as well as that of other Russians whom she met) became for her a form of cross-cultural education, before and after his death, in the profoundly symbolic behavior that Lotman associates with the liberal nobles around the Decembrists.

Nina herself left few papers (almost entirely letters in the published sources available to me), and none provide direct evidence to support my argument. My

only clues come from a few demonstrative acts on her part that were recorded by contemporaries. These bear the mark of that "theatricality" that Lotman argues was the characteristic of the liberal nobles of that generation, and—most suggestive to me—of the Decembrist wives. She recognized (as did others) that her person and her persona as Griboedov's widow were indissolubly united. In 1856 she attended Alexander II's coronation in Moscow, where a theater had already placed "Woe from Wit" on its repertory. She had never seen a public performance before and, though the director had not scheduled it to be played at the time, he agreed to her request for a special performance. The presence of the author's widow in the audience turned the performance into a public recognition of her unique status in Russia's cultural world.

Her most theatrical gesture that I have discovered was her gift of a Georgian dagger to Mikhail Lermontov. Their meeting in 1837 left a powerful impression on the poet, who dedicated to her the poem "The Dagger [*Kinzhal*]." She appears there as "dark eyes [*chernye glaza*]...filled with secret sadness," and a "lily-white hand" whose gift was an act of "remembrance at the moment of separation." His dagger's blade was not streaked with the blood of its victims, but with her "bright tears—pearls of suffering" (M. Lermontov, "Kinzhal," in *Tam, gde v'etsia Alazan'*, 70-71.) Romantic imagery, yes, but as well homage to her own dramatic presence within the corpus of memories (and mythologizing) surrounding Griboedov.

Perhaps she did find in the dedication of the Decembrists' wives, accompanying their husbands to Siberia, a model of signifying behavior, transposed to the Caucasian borderlands and recreated to fit her playwright husband's legacy of courageous intellectual protest. She was integral to memories of him, just as he was part of her persona as tragic Georgian heroine. If so, her persona was in that Georgian context an extraordinary creation, turning one brief moment of cultural encounter under colonial rule

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# A Culture of Corruption? Anti-Corruption Rhetoric and Revolution in Georgia

Erik R. Scott

## The Rose Revolution

In November 2003, thousands of Georgians took to the streets to protest rigged parliamentary elections. Demonstrations grew as the television network Rustavi 2 beamed images of them throughout Georgia. Rallied by a disciplined coalition of opposition politicians, including the “troika” of Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, and Zurab Zhvania, the non-violent protests culminated in the resignation of Eduard Shevardnadze, who had led Georgia first in the position of Communist Party chief from 1972 to 1985, and then as the second president of an independent Georgia from 1992 onwards.

At the time of Shevardnadze’s ouster, I was working for American University’s Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, a Washington-based NGO dedicated to conducting research on organized crime and corruption. For the previous fifteen months, I had collaborated with a group of Georgian scholars and activists to establish Georgia’s first think tank on corruption, money laundering, and organized crime. During the time I spent in Georgia, I was struck at how effectively the opposition utilized anti-corruption rhetoric to indict the ruling government and gain popular support. This led a colleague and me to label the peaceful overthrow of Shevardnadze as an anti-corruption revolution in a *Washington Post* op-ed piece published shortly thereafter. As we saw it, the rhetoric of anti-corruption had succeeded in achieving a seemingly

impossible goal: of uniting Georgians across the political spectrum to seek the overthrow of their president, a bloodless revolution in a country with a long history of political violence.

To many familiar with Georgia and the Caucasus in general, the idea of an anti-corruption revolution in Tbilisi might raise a few eyebrows. However the

concept is defined, the level of corruption in Georgia is one of the highest in the world. According to Transparency International’s 2003 *Corruption Perceptions Index*, Georgia ranked in 124th place out of 133 countries in terms of perceived corruption. This is not a new trend. In his study of the Soviet Union’s “second economy” in the 1970s, UC Berkeley’s Gregory



Thousands protested rigged elections and demanded the resignation of President Shevardnadze. [photo: Civil.Ge]

Grossman noted that when it came to illegality Georgia had a “reputation second to none,” and that black market activity there seemed to be “carried out on an unparalleled scale and with unrivaled scope and daring.” Shevardnadze himself first came to power in the early 1970s as a campaigner against rampant corruption in Georgia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, corruption continued to be a defining factor for Georgia. Some might argue that this was due to poor leadership, or to structural or institutional factors. Others might take another view, and speak of a culture of corruption that pervades every aspect of life in Georgia. In such

a culture, clientelism and patronage determine outcomes, and informal norms of reciprocity hold more sway than the rule of law. Although some might argue that clientelism is a much different phenomenon than corruption, both create a closed system where the rules of the game change depending on the actors involved. While one should be wary of historical determinism, looking at Georgia's history of invasions and rule by foreign powers, it is not surprising that a culture of "getting around the rules" might arise. The state was never seen as constituted by or for the people but was instead a force imposed from the outside. Was it corrupt to cheat such a state? Well, perhaps corrupt, but maybe not immoral.

How could an anti-corruption revolution take place amidst a culture of corruption and/or clientelism? If we take a closer look at how the phenomenon of corruption is understood in the former Soviet Union—particularly in Georgia—and how the term was used in public debates leading up to the Rose Revolution, we can see the emergence of anti-corruption rhetoric as a powerful political tool.

The potency of such rhetoric in Georgia, and most recently in Ukraine, begs further examination.

### Defining Corruption

While few would seriously argue that the states of the South Caucasus are not deeply corrupt, defining what this means is a tricky matter. The term of corruption carries with it heavy normative connotations. As Akos Szilagyí has commented: "corruption exists in the way, at the time, and to the degree that it is openly brought up in conversation or rather...as often as it is exposed. The question actually is in what way, for what reason, by whom and when is the word 'corruption' brought up."

Let us begin by looking at how the term is used and defined by what might be described as the

international community of Western donor governments, multilateral institutions, and international organizations, who see corruption as an obstacle to prescribed notions of good governance and economic and political reform. Here the most appropriate definition is the one used by the World Bank, which defines corruption as "abuse of public office for private gain." However, this depends on how one divides the public from the private, bringing us to some of the problems with this definition. What is public office—can it include the leadership of major corporations whose decisions affect the lives of millions—and what is private gain?

### Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Georgia



The flag of the opposition National Movement party hangs over the Presidential Office. The new leadership adopted this design, originally employed by medieval Georgian kings, for the national flag. [photo: Civil.ge]

Debates over the dividing line between public and private space are crucial to understanding the discourse of corruption, particularly in the former Soviet Union, where the collapse of the Soviet project to render everything public has led to an emphasis on privatization, civil society and private sector development.

People in the former Soviet Union have appropriated the discourse of corruption

used by the international community. Back and forth charges of corruption are part of almost any political campaign in the region. Terms like "mafia" are frequently used in popular parlance. Corruption is in this sense a moral judgment, and a battle with corruption, if won, would mean the realization of ideals of social justice.

Perhaps nowhere was this more the case than in Georgia. In public debate, in the press, and in conversations, corruption was framed as the main impediment to the achievement of a "normal" and "civilized" society. A number of developments were effectively joined together under the rubric of corruption. These included both the illegal acts committed by government officials, including bribe-taking, participation in smuggling, and links with organized



crime, as well as acts that were not always illegal, such as the massive accumulation of wealth by a small elite and the cutting of public services. However, many practices common in Georgia that we might describe as clientelistic were not exposed as corrupt, such as helping relatives get jobs. Nor was the paying of bribes to “get by,” to avoid paying traffic tickets, or to secure one’s child’s admission into university. Instead of the bribe-givers, the bribe-takers were targeted. Over time, charges of corruption seemed to focus more and more on the small circle of people ruling the country. Domestic political debates were framed in terms appropriated from the international community.

During my time in Georgia, I held numerous meetings with Georgian anti-corruption activists, government officials, and prominent opposition members. Doing so gave me a chance to witness first-hand the increasingly heated debates over corruption taking place there, and its relationship to the atmosphere of lawlessness and decay in the country.

The sense of decay in Georgia was almost palpable. Years of asset stripping and corrupt energy deals led to frequent power outages that disrupted everyday life and demoralized the population. In the country’s second largest city, Kutaisi, cattle roamed the streets, no longer confined to their grazing areas. The country’s roads were in various states of disrepair, and traffic police collected bribes in the open. The country’s institutions of higher education were hampered by bribe-taking and the misuse of university property and assets. In one case, a restaurant and casino were built illegally on university owned property. The country’s decline could also be expressed in human terms. Over a ten year period, over twenty percent of the country’s population had emigrated.

Corruption came to be seen by the population as the root cause of Georgia’s decay and decline. It was often framed in pathological terms, as an illness afflicting the country, causing stagnation and leading to a “rotten” system. Over time, Georgians began to associate this pervasive corruption with leadership at the top. The discussion was set in terms of a parent-child relationship. If those at the top set a bad example, the rest of the population could not help but

follow. If corruption was to be stopped, those responsible (at the top) needed to be punished. The problem was that despite repeated government promises to “get tough” with corruption, the worst offenders went unpunished. Even government officials linked with violent practices, such as kidnapping and arms smuggling, were left untouched.

The anti-corruption revolution that overthrew Shevardnadze was facilitated by two major factors. The first is the role of popular expectations; the second is that of nationalism. As for popular expectations, it is important to remember that Georgia was relatively prosperous in the Soviet period, enjoying a standard of living just behind that of the Baltic republics. At the outset of independence, many Georgians felt that they would enjoy continued economic prosperity, along with the benefits of independence and national sovereignty. Instead, the Georgian economy collapsed and the Georgians faced civil war and entrenched conflicts.

Despite the hardships of independence, Georgians retained hope that their nation was bound for a brighter future. Part of this hopefulness was sustained by massive Western assistance for the small South Caucasus nation. In recent years, Georgia became the third largest recipient of per capita assistance from the United States. Thousands of young Georgians studied and participated in training programs in the US. The current president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, received a US-sponsored fellowship to study law at Columbia University. Foreign assistance financed the creation of hundreds of NGOs, which among other things employed what remained of Georgia’s Soviet-era intelligentsia, as well as their children. These programs created a new generation of Georgians confident that it possessed the skills necessary to lead their country toward integration into Western structures like the EU and NATO.

Education and training in the West helped these Georgians build contacts with Western colleagues and created a certain cohesiveness among them. Bolstered by confidence that they possessed a more worldly perspective, they did not hesitate to confront the authorities and claim that they knew

better how to build a prosperous and free Georgia. Although often trained in the West, they were seen as representatives of a new Georgia, untainted by Soviet rule.

Nationalism is the second factor that facilitated the anti-corruption revolution. Corruption scandals were depicted as evidence of national decline. The ruling elite under Shevardnadze, mainly composed of a semi-Russified, Soviet-era nomenklatura, was portrayed as a bunch of corrupt stooges of Moscow. Many Georgians believed ties with Russia had prevented Georgia from taking its rightful place among the nations of Europe. The Rose Revolution was in some ways a self-conscious imitation of Prague's Velvet Revolution that happened more than a decade earlier. No longer a backward nation, Georgia was to be at the vanguard of a "second wave" of revolution in Eastern Europe.

The opposition that eventually replaced Shevardnadze's circle did an expert job of framing its campaign against corruption in nationalist terms. Assuming the role of nationalist moral crusaders, the opposition spoke of restoring Georgia to its rightful place and rightful glory. It was the opposition that defined anti-corruption as a struggle against evil, as a struggle against the Soviet past, and as a struggle against an aggressive Russia that represented the worst of the Soviet past. It was the opposition that successfully defined corruption in terms of the system of Shevardnadze's regime, not in terms of culture. Instead, the opposition extolled the virtues of Georgian culture, while excoriating the "corrupt" elite that prevented Georgia from realizing its potential. Capitalizing on their prestige as Western-educated experts, they diagnosed corruption as the source of the country's ills, and while its symptoms were pervasive, its causes were ascribed to Georgia's northerly neighbor, as well as the Soviet legacy, and the ruling elite that embodied this legacy.

The anti-corruption rhetoric of the reformers, combined with an appeal to Georgian nationalism, formed a potent mix that would eventually lead to the ouster of Shevardnadze and his entire ruling circle in a popular and non-violent uprising which, thanks to a bit of flair on the part of its leaders, would soon after be known as the Rose Revolution.

## **Building Popular Support**

The opposition was able to broadcast its message through independent media outlets, often staffed by young Georgians who had received training in the West. Foremost among these was Rustavi 2. Financed in part by international donors and featuring a quality of production leagues ahead of other Georgian television channels, Rustavi earned a nationwide following with its hard-hitting investigative reports.

The network became seen as a bastion of freedom, an island of democratic expression. When, in October 2001, the Interior Minister ordered the station shut down, allegedly because it was about to expose his involvement in contraband trade, thousands of Georgians, many of them students and NGO activists, rallied in front of Parliament. These protests led to the resignation of the President's cabinet, including the Interior Minister. Meanwhile, Rustavi 2 remained on the air. As a result of these protests, the population, and in particular young activists and students, had a sense of their own power in the face of the authorities. No government crackdown had taken place, and some results had been achieved as a result of the protests. This sense of empowerment would greatly influence the events of November 2003.

Again and again, the opposition proved itself more skillful in utilizing the medium of television to build support. Saakashvili stimulated public discussions by appearing on television and showing photographs of the private homes of top officials, homes whose cost far exceeded the officials' meager salaries.

The young generation of opposition politicians rebelled more and more openly against Shevardnadze, who had once cast himself in the role of their mentor. Although many of them first gained political experience as part of Shevardnadze's government in the late 1990s, they increasingly distanced themselves from it. When Saakashvili left his post as Shevardnadze's Justice Minister in 2001, he stated: "I suppose I should resign because it is impossible to do anything in the conditions of the present regime when everybody's corrupted and no one desires to make real steps." This rhetoric of total corruption among the ruling class meant that cooperation was impossible. As Saakashvili went on to declare, "ahead there

is a decisive battle for forming a normal civilized country.” The ruling class was cast as the main impediment to Georgia’s civilizational progress. What is perhaps more extraordinary here is the use of the term “normal country.” One might argue that a high level of some form of corruption, however defined, is the norm in Georgia. As Saakashvili defines corruption, however, it is synonymous with backwardness and inaction, and thus an impediment to Georgia’s “normal” place as a member of Europe.

Corruption—at least among those in positions of authority—was also labeled as treason. Corruption needed to be “rooted out,” and as Saakashvili stated, “as far as I am concerned, every corrupt official is a traitor who betrays the national interest.” Framing corruption as treason was made easier by Shevardnadze’s turn to Russia as domestic and Western support for the leader dwindled. However, much as Putin’s interference in the recent presidential elections in Ukraine galvanized the Ukrainian opposition, Russia’s initial support for flawed parliamentary elections in Georgia proved to be the kiss of death for Shevardnadze.

The national prominence that Saakashvili had gained through his prolonged anti-corruption campaign, his skills as orator, and his prominent role in the demonstrations allowed him to easily gain victory in the ensuing presidential elections. At his inauguration, Saakashvili combined the promise of the new generation of Georgian leaders with an appeal to Georgia’s past. While stating that the success or failure of Georgia’s transformation would depend on the “new educated, energetic, and patriotic generation,” he took a “spiritual oath” at the tomb of one of Georgia’s national heroes, King David the Builder, whose rule in the twelfth century succeeded in creating a united Georgia. The new national flag adopted under Saakashvili—formerly that of his party—features five red crosses on a white background and was used by medieval Georgian kings. Through the use of national and religious symbolism, Saakashvili hopes to frame development as the “restoration” of Georgia, a new “golden age.” A prosperous and corruption-free Georgia is to be a re-assertion of their nation’s greatness, which many Georgians see as embodied in the Georgian kingdom of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, an era enshrined in Georgian

poetry and literature, a time before foreign invasion and foreign rule supposedly distanced Georgians from their state.

Ironically—and perhaps this might not bode well for the new Georgian leadership—this concept of “restoring” Georgia’s honor through anti-corruption measures was once held by Shevardnadze himself. During his campaign against corruption in the 1970s, Shevardnadze commented bitterly in a closed meeting: “Once, the Georgians were known throughout the world as a nation of warriors and poets; now they are known as swindlers.”

How can we gauge the success of Georgia’s recent anti-corruption campaign? Many of the top offenders under Shevardnadze have been called in for questioning or placed under arrest by the new leadership. Some of those sought by the authorities, including regional governor Levan Mamaladze and the ousted Adjarian leader Aslan Abashidze, fled to Moscow to seek refuge, confirming in the minds of Georgians the link between the corrupt aspects of the Shevardnadze regime and Georgia’s large neighbor to the north.

Yet, to the dismay of international advisors, the anti-corruption campaign seldom went fully through the courts. Instead, former officials suspected of corruption were held in pre-trial detention until they compensated the state for the amount of money they were accused of embezzling. Then, for the most part, they were let go. Meanwhile, Saakashvili’s approval rating remained high. This might speak to the fact that for many Georgians, the anti-corruption campaign is not so much about the rule of law, but more about bringing those who abused power to justice. After several meetings my colleagues and I held with the new administration, it became clear that the need to show results quickly in their anti-corruption campaign often outweighed for them the possible long-term benefits of taking everything through the courts, especially before the implementation of planned judicial reforms.

What the new leadership hoped to eventually create was a new relationship between the Georgian state and its people. Instead of being the representative of a foreign power, the state was to be something which the Georgian people felt belonged to them.



They hoped to show that they represented a break with the past, a new era for Georgia and for state-society relations. They brought in new, young faces that represented Georgia's young generation. This was noticeable from the very moment we arrived in the "new" Georgia, and met with the 32-year-old Minister of Justice, a graduate of American University, and his team, largely composed of former NGO activists. The new leadership also took several symbolic actions to bring the point home that there was a break with the past. Alongside the new flag, the EU flag now flies from all government buildings—perhaps a sign of wishful thinking on the part of the leadership. The government also adopted a new state seal, one which shed all vestiges of the Soviet-era seal in favor of a modified version of the coat of arms of Georgia's old ruling dynasty. Finally, they erected a monument to Georgians who had died in the entrenched conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This monument, attended by two Georgian soldiers in ceremonial uniform, was placed prominently in the center of Tbilisi to instill a sense of pride in the new Georgian state.

Now that the new leadership has been in power for a year and a half, we can cite a few major accomplishments. The entire traffic police force has been dismissed, and cadres of newly trained and better paid officers have been recruited in their place. The Georgians are finding that fewer, but more highly paid, officers can do a better job than a horde of underpaid ones. The system of permissiveness that prevailed under Shevardnadze has been eliminated, and an important precedent has been set with the recent arrest of an MP of the ruling party for extortion, showing that members of the new leadership are not above the law. Anecdotal evidence suggests that corruption has become more costly, and as a result, more rare.

Yet the structural factors that contribute to corruption are still there. This is readily apparent if one looks at contraband trade. Occurring sometimes through breakaway regions outside the control of Tbilisi, though also across the border with Azerbaijan and Armenia, contraband trade in basic goods continues to flourish, as production in Georgia remains at a standstill and few alternate economic options exist for impoverished populations in these border areas. The work of my former colleagues in Georgia has

indicated that while the volume of contraband trade has decreased, small-scale trading continues and new routes have been found. The level of contraband trade is an important gauge for measuring the success of the new leadership in addressing some of the underlying issues that give rise to corruption.

A year and a half after coming to power, the new government has retreated from some of its more radical rhetoric, with Saakashvili claiming that they have delivered and established the "cleanest government in the CIS." Some more sweeping reforms that could impact Georgian society at a more fundamental level are being planned for the system of primary education. Yet although this might indicate that corruption is somehow linked to the Georgian mentality, Saakashvili has consistently denied that there exists a "culture of corruption" in Georgia. Instead, the reforms are seen as a process of "de-Sovietization," and the causes of corruption are blamed on structural factors seen as arising from the imposition of outside rule, and not from the wellsprings of Georgian society and culture.

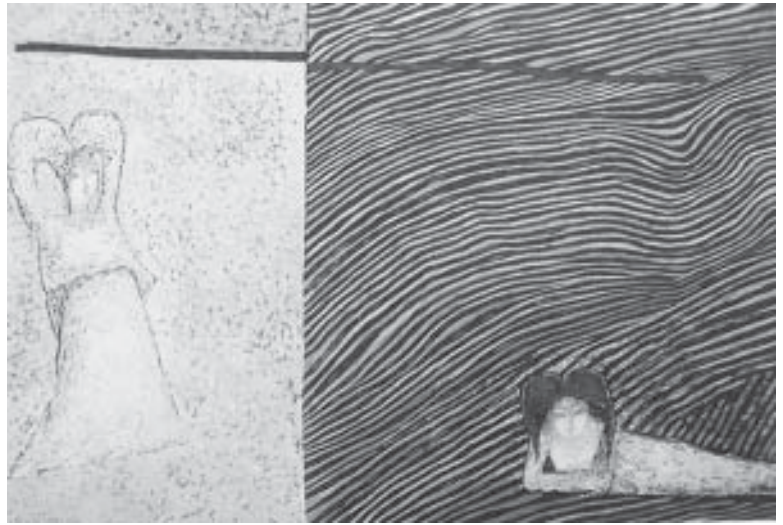
## Conclusion

Despite the persistence of clientelistic attitudes in Georgia, the nation stands as an example of the power of anti-corruption rhetoric in the former Soviet Union, especially when combined with an appeal to nationalism. It is not purely by coincidence that some of the pro-Yuschenko protestors in Ukraine waved Georgian flags. In both cases, rigged elections served as a trigger for longstanding public discontent, and in both cases the rhetoric of anti-corruption played a major role in garnering public support for the opposition. Both countries had the advantage of defining themselves, and defining corruption, vis-à-vis Russia. The discourse of corruption proved itself to be a potent force if wielded correctly, one which embraced many of the social, political, and economic complaints of the population while framing the conflict in terms understandable, and even encouraged, by the international community.

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Erik R. Scott is a graduate student in History at UC Berkeley. Paper presented at XXIXth Annual Berkeley-Stanford Conference, March 4, 2005: "The Caucasus: Culture, History, Politics."

# Modes of Contemporary Central Asian Culture



J. Munkhtsetseg, *Silence*, 2000

## **Exhibits** (September – October 2005)

In collaboration with the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities, CCAsP has planned a Fall 2005 exhibit by Kazakh painter Saule Suleimenova. Ms. Suleimenova has exhibited work in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Russia, France, the UK, and the US. In addition, a second exhibit of works by three Mongolian artists, J. Munkhtsetseg, M. Erdenebayar, and S. Tugs-Oyun, has been organized at the Worth Ryder gallery October 4 - 14. Through the work of these Central Asian artists, the modern painting exhibits at Berkeley will seek to offer the American viewer a new way of looking at Central Asian culture. In addition, the artists' presence on campus will enable scholars and the general public to meet and discuss the recent dynamic changes in art and approaches to aesthetics taken by artists within a culture so little known in the West. It is hoped that this exchange of ideas will stimulate and enhance provocative cross-cultural thinking about contemporary art.

## **Conference** (September 24 – 25, 2005)

This two-day conference will provide a forum on contemporary art and filmmaking in Central Asia.

Although much interest has been shown in the political and economic transformations of Central Asia over the course of the last century, very little attention has been paid to individual experiences resulting from these trends and influences. Through an examination of the region's arts and other cultural forms, an attempt will be made to take a different view of the changing realities of Central

Asian societies. Some of the questions the symposium will address are: What is the history and future of filmmaking in Central Asia? What are the trends in Soviet and post-Soviet filmmaking? As the Soviet myths are discarded, what new archetypes are being created? Is there a Central Asian identity and, if so, how does it manifest itself? What are some of the reflections of Islamic, Soviet, ethnic, and national identities?

## **Film Series** (September 1 – 30, 2005)

Shown at the Pacific Film Archive, the Central Asia film series will include films produced during both the Soviet and post-Soviet period, such as A. Ganiev's *Takhir and Zukhra* (Uzbekistan, 1945); I. Ishmukhametov's *Tenderness* (Uzbekistan, 1966); K. Narliev's *The Daughter-in-law* (Turkmenistan 1972); T. Okeev's *The Fierce One* (Kyrgyzstan, 1973); A. Amirkulov's *The Fall of Otrar* (Kazakhstan, 1991); and A. Aabdikalikov's *Beshkempir: The Adopted Son* (Kyrgyzstan, 1998).

*For updates on the film series, painting exhibits and conference, please check the CCAsP website over the summer, <http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~bsp/caucasus/>*

# Modern Art of Mongolia

Ts. Uranchimeg

## The Struggle Through “Socialist Realism”

During the socialist regime, so-called “socialist realism” was the official style sanctioned by the Communist Party. Although an important part of Mongolian art, “socialist realism” had never been the only style artists chose to work with. The bold start of Mongolian modernism was a notorious exhibition in 1968 when the *First Exhibition of Young Painters* opened in the Exhibition Hall of the Union of Mongolian Artists (UMA). This exhibition started a new page in the history of Mongolian art, but it also created a scandal. The Mongolian Government immediately closed the exhibition with the accusation that it was the “art of capitalists.” Both the participants and the Chairman of the UMA suffered strict punishments from the Communist Party. Young artists who had studied in Eastern European countries, notably in Czechoslovakia, were required to reside in Mongolia and prove their loyalty to the Communist Party by painting socialist posters and portraits of socialist leaders.



Ill. 1: *Lake Huvsgul*, P. Baldandorj

The exhibition in 1968 displayed abstract paintings by such artists as G. Sosai, P. Baldandorj, and O. Tsevegjav, which were truly bold both in subject

matter and freedom of stylistic approach (ill. 1).

There were many other paintings and sculptures in the show which, although realistic in depiction, did not follow strict and uniform “socialist realism.” In the historical context of “realism” brought by the first generation of Mongolian artists from Moscow in the 1950s, the 1968 exhibition was a new phenomenon in both the intellectual and social life of the country.



Ill. 2: *Gobi*, B. Chogsom

If political democracy started in Mongolia in 1990, freedom of thought, or “democracy” in art, commenced with this historical exhibition of 1968.

During the pinnacle years of socialism, many artists produced works notable for their highly individualistic expression. Artists such as B. Chogsom and Ch. Bazarvaan, among others, were especially prolific in the 1960s-1970s and fostered the seeds of what can be seen as “Mongolian modernism” (ill. 2). The emergence of graphic artists was a significant step in the development of Mongolian modern art with D. Amgalan as a leading figure. Along with the regular techniques of printmaking, the graphic artists all worked extensively in oil, producing pictures with a flat and decorative quality, abandoning the academic conventions of socialist realism.

Artists such as D. Amgalan, Ts. Enkhjin, Do. Bold, R. Duinkhorjav, and S. Tugs-Oyun played a significant role in developing free depiction in the vogue of European modernism. In the autumn of 1980, a solo show of Ts. Enkhjin’s work opened at the Exhibition Hall of the Union of Mongolian



Artists. This display marked the unofficial end of censorship of art and was a first important step for both the artists and the audience to comprehend the qualities and ideas of modern Western art shown explicitly and blatantly in one place. Enkhjin's paintings showed a style that was distinctly different—his paintings were inescapably “modern.” Years later, many artists would recollect that being young at that time, they learnt new ways of expression and depiction through this particular show.

### Mongolian Modernism

The democratic reforms, hastened in Mongolia in the late 1980s-1990, brought to an end “socialist realism,” prompting the artists to look towards the West for new modes of expression in the modern era. As an echo of political turmoil in the late 1980s, which eventually brought to an end the socialist regime in Mongolia, the art association “Green Horse” was established in 1989 to herald anti-realistic, anti-academic, purely “new” art. Highly influenced by Western contemporary art, young artists of Green Horse aimed at working exclusively in a non-representational (abstract) style of painting and conceptual art, expressed through truly new-to-Mongolia media such as installations, Duchampian ready-mades, objet trouvé, assemblages and performance art. Green Horse was soon followed by other art



Ill. 3: *Installation*, S. Dagvadorj

societies with similar objectives, mainly to oppose the prevalence of the realist style in Mongolian art. These artists, calling themselves “Sita Art,” “Sky,” or simply the “Association of New Art,” had numerous important exhibitions in the 1990s, such as *A*

*Lucky Dashnyam Day* (1993) and *Surlug* (1998). Some of these were joint projects with German and Dutch artists. O. Dalkh-Ochir, G. Erdenebileg, B. Gansukh, and M. Khuyag-Ochir founded these anti-realist art societies and all are important artists who



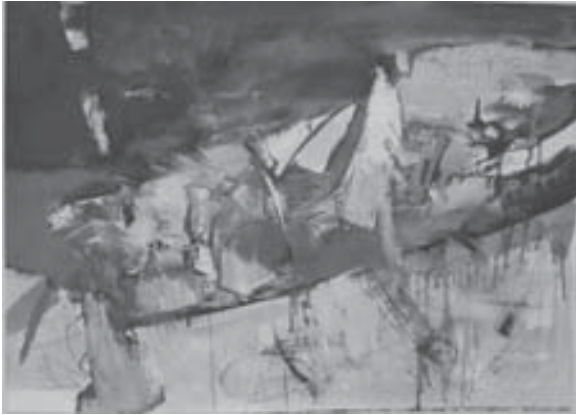
Ill. 4: *Food Abuse*, S. Sarantsatsralt

played a major role in bringing conceptual art into Mongolia.

Although Green Horse has now been inactive for many years, the ideas of conceptual art are rapidly developing in Mongolia (ill. 3). In 2000, Mongolian artist S. Dagvadorj participated in the Kwangju Biennale of International Contemporary Art in Korea, winning a prize for his installation piece. S. Sarantsatsralt is another popular artist, who works primarily in conceptual art. Her most recent solo exhibition, *Wrapped Thing*, which opened in Ulaanbaatar in June 2004, consisted mainly of installations and assemblage works. Through contemporary Western media, the artist aimed at expressing her own position, “messages” in her own words, on different aspects of modern Mongol society and general human life. Her subject matter varies from family and couple relationships to Mongolian ethics and abuses of food in modern society (ill. 4).

Despite the activities of the abovementioned artists, conceptual art is only a minor part of Mongolian art, practiced and truly understood by few artists. Precisely because Russia and Eastern Europe were for Mongolia the sole window to the world for seven decades, European modernism remains an influential source in Mongolian modern art, the artists persis-

tently preferring to work in the styles of European artists albeit using native motifs and depicting genuine Mongolian scenes.



Ill. 5: Do. Bold

The last decade of the twentieth-century bloomed with new experiments in non-representational art in Mongolia. Do. Bold and Ch. Boldbaatar are the two artists who played a major role in the development of abstract art. The process of moving from the representational picture to a complete abstraction can be visibly traced in the oeuvre of Do. Bold. His early works, such as *Morning*, and *Starry Existence*, produced in the mid-late 1980s, show a blend of objective figures with abstract forms. At the beginning of the 1990s, Do. Bold turned to complete abstraction and hence continues to be a major abstract artist in Mongolia (ill. 5).

Ch. Boldbaatar's turn to abstract style was rapid and self-confident. Even in his early works, Boldbaatar showed a deliberate and mature style salient with non-objective forms. The color, rhythms and tones, as well as compositional devices have changed over time, testifying to his artistic search and experimentation on the canvas without aiming for the representation of the visible world. Boldbaatar's research interest in Mongolian petroglyphs and prehistoric rock art influenced his new abstract compositions and new treatment of the canvas. His exhibition *Melody II*, launched in 1999 together with the sculptor G. Sereeter, was the most prodigious show of abstract art ever shown in Mongolia.

The restless nomadic spirit creates a distinctly Mongolian feeling with an outstanding, intense color spectrum, and an ever-persistent sense of motion and

space. Even in peaceful landscapes, portraits, nudes and still-lives, vivid colors are boldly juxtaposed creating the rhythmic dynamics in the piece. Consider, for instance, M. Erdenebayar's *Portrait of a Horse* (1999), an appealing idea in itself claiming to represent the individuality of a horse. Horses shown en face or in profile, in full view or partially, vibrate in his works with burning colors. Another artist to mention as a representative of new trends in Mongolian modern art is Ts. Enkhjargal, whose work buzzes with dynamic motion created by whirls of forms and flaming tones of red and green (ill. 6). The instability of the transforming Mongol society, which inevitably entails an anguished struggle for survival, is vividly depicted in numerous splendid works by Enkhjargal. He shows delicate, vulnerable people wandering through empty streets to essentially nowhere; not grotesque and without distortion, his idiosyncratic style, based on cold tones, serves as an excellent means of revealing humanity's stunning



Ill. 6: *Camels*, Ts. Enkhjargal

fragility and the miserable absence of what we understand as social welfare.

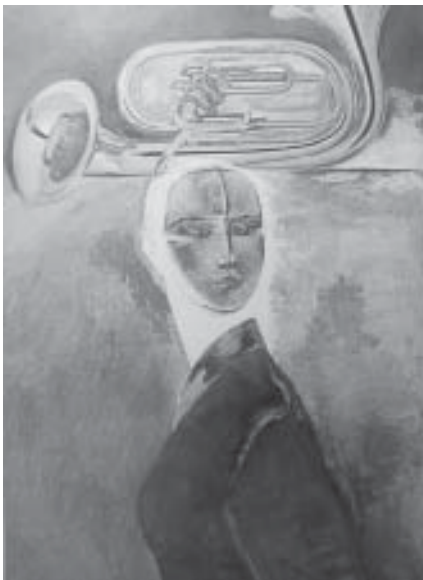
The "surreal" works of Ts. Munkhjin, on the other hand, are fraught with a most dazzling juxtaposition of cold and warm tones, behooving one to wonder whether it is a boundary of conceptualism or modernism that we encounter in his art. That is, although showing some objective figures, Munkhjin challenges the viewer with the modernity of his representation, yet traps us in an alien, unknown ideology of pictorial language. "It is a *picture*," he says, so all his works are simply named "paintings" and numbered accordingly (ill. 7).



Ill. 8: *The Land and the Sky*, Ts. Enkhjin

The open spatiality of Mongolia inspired by the steppe and the sky—infinity of horizontal or vertical space—is a frequent theme in Mongolian modern art. Thus, Ts. Enkhjin’s main objective is to capture the dimensions of time and space in Mongolia—sensed both historically and somatically. He succeeds in conveying the overwhelming scope of

revealed in his numerous *The Blue Monochromes*, as the manifestation of infinity and void in order to mentally extend himself. In other words, what meant strength and energy for Klein for his survival as an artist, is also true for Mongolian artists. The Mongols, who live under the “Blue Void” in the physical infinity and timelessness of Mongolian space, extend their minds in colors and space, as Mongolian modern artists—such as Enkhjin—express remarkably.



Ill. 7: *Painting - 70*, Ts. Munkhjin

Mongolian open space and time through seemingly simple forms and clearly structured composition (ill. 8).

This sense of movement and space, however, is not unique to the Mongols. We recall an instance with the French artist Yves Klein, who in the 1950s wanted (or better, needed) a horse to circle the globe. He, like the Mongols, desired physical, visual and mental movement. Klein needed “Blue Void”,



Ill. 9: *Blue Mongolia*, Sh. Chimeddorj



modern art, as he shows an elaborate, seamless blend of native motifs with European style. His works, such as *Yellow Day of the Autumn* or *Ger of the Father*, include elements of Mongolian traditional painting style known as Mongol Zurag. This style is characterized by flat colors and shapes, with little attention paid to depicting linear perspective. Chimeddorj is one of the first artists to transform the Mongol Zurag into what can be described as “Mongolian modernism.”



Ill. 10: *Gers in Steppe*, N. Tsultem

This style of “Mongolian modernism,” shaped under the specific perceptual processes of nature by nomads, Mongolian history and nomadic sociability, in fact dates back to the time of strict censorship during the socialist regime.

### Other Trends in Mongolian Modern Art

During the years of the socialist period, the majority of the works were made in the style of realism. Such splendid works as *Gers in Steppe* (ill. 10), and *Ensemble of Clouds* by N. Tsultem, *After the Work* by G. Odon, landscapes by G. Tserendondog and Yo. Ulziikhutag are fine pieces of refined artistry and are considered the masterpieces of Mongolian art. There are many contemporary artists who have inherited the tradition of realism and preserved it as a significant part of modern art.

However, unlike the masters of traditional realism in Mongolia, whose art was derived specifically from reality, contemporary “realist” works by Ch. Hurelbaatar and D. Erdenebileg, among others, show unreal, imaginary still-lives or landscapes, which are composed and rendered exclusively in the manner of French academism with dominant brown and dark tones, strictly adhering to linear perspective and

anatomic modeling of figures (ill. 11). The trend is more inclined towards academism, bypassing the kernels of what is understood as “realism” in the history of Mongolian art.

The Mongol Zurag has an important stronghold in modern-day Mongolian art as well. Oppressed and abandoned during the socialist era, the Mongol Zurag style resurged and developed into a higher criteria of image making. The Mongol Zurag style, originated from petroglyphs and rock drawings, was used in the art of the steppe states, and later by the monk-artists in Buddhist art. However, modern artists who choose to work in the Mongol Zurag style aspire not only to preserve the traditional features of the Mongol Zurag, but also develop it with individual expression, and thus bring the tradition into a modern era (ill. 12).

Due to the democratic changes, Mongolian artists gained complete freedom to exhibit and market their works in any country in the world. Group exhibitions of Mongolian artists are regularly organized and frequently shown in the Western galleries and museums, while individual artists travel extensively abroad to have their solo shows.



Ill. 11: *Queen Anu*, Ch. Khurelbaatar

Although the new situation has enriched Mongolian art with new genres and techniques, it has also brought serious obstacles for an artist’s survival in a new capitalist market. Yet the majority of Mongolian artists live and work wholeheartedly devoted to their art. Notions of forgery, connoisseurship, auctions, art dealers, curators and art management find their place in the contemporary art world in Mongolia, giving art

a higher esteem and a broader acclaim. Although the socialist education system has long collapsed and nowadays the artists have less—if any—chance to study abroad, the nomadic spirit is always pushing and struggling in a restless search for its bold and unique embodiment in the remarkable works by Mongolian artists.



Ill. 12, *Camel*, Sh. Baatar

Ts. Uranchimeg is an art historian and critic, and currently a Ph.D. candidate in the History of Art Department at UC Berkeley.

As part of the fall “Modes of Contemporary Central Asian Culture” program (see p. 13), CCAsP has organized an exhibit of paintings by well-known Mongolian artists Sodnomin Tugs-Oyun, Jalkhaajavin Munkhtsetseg, and Monkhorin Erdenebayar at the Worth Ryder Gallery, UC Berkeley, October 4-14, 2005.

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## Faculty & Graduate Student News

**Harsha Ram**, associate professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, had three works accepted for publication in 2004 - 05: “*Ne ia pishu stikhi*: Boris Pasternak’s translations from T’itsian T’abidze”, Conference volume, *Hostage of Eternity. An International Conference on Boris Pasternak*. “Andrei Belyi and Georgia: Georgian modernism and the reception of the ‘Petersburg text’ in peripheral space.” *Russian Literature*. “Pushkin and the Caucasus,” *The Pushkin Handbook* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming Fall 2005.

**Erik R. Scott**, a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department, attended a conference at the Center for Security Studies, Swill Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich. The conference, “Russian Business Power: The Role of Russian Business in Foreign and Security Relations,” is dedicated to bringing together academics from several countries and academic disciplines to develop a book of the same name. He presented a paper titled, “Russian Business and Conflicts in the South Caucasus: The Case of Georgia.”

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