

Hospitality in Kazakhstan: The Empire Sings Back

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Abstract. The paper inquiries into the changing patterns of national construction and the importance of hospitality and music in Kazakh culture. In particular, the argument presented here unveils the fundamental role of folk cultural practices and Kazakh nomad heritage in the making of the new nation after independence from the Soviet Union. The paper argues that aspects of the Kazakh hospitality and music tradition serve the purpose of postcolonial national construction. Scholars such as Benita Parry (1994), Partha Chatterjee (1986), or David Lloyd (1997) have argued that nationalism may be a strategy of emancipation from colonial rule. This paper takes this perspective.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, folklore, hospitality, humanism, music, nation building, postcolonization

INTRODUCTION

The social identity of a nation refers to the establishment of difference and similarity relations between who we are and who others are. It is the result of agreement and disagreement negotiated among the members of the communities involved. Frequently, social identity is subjected to power relationships among the members of a society, dependent on differences that can range from biophysical elements, such as ethnicity, sex or age, to socio-economic factors such as class or education level, and finally cultural, such as tradition, religion, etc. The contact between ethnos and civilization inevitably led to the world of artistic values and representations of the culture of others, based however on our own system of aesthetic categories, philosophical constructs, poetics, arts, language.

Modern nations were born at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century. In the period that followed the unification of

each nation, the surfacing of discourses tied directly the national belonging could be witnessed. Cultural objects and attitudes – artistic activities, systems of beliefs, religious and everyday rituals, gestures, attitudes, symbols etc. were used to convey national belonging. In the Western world, the birth of nations had as a theoretical basis the works of the German philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Immanuel Kant, and Johann Gottfried Herder, the first thinkers who highlighted the identity elements of a nation. In turn, the Germans inspired the Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, and Greek intellectual elites. Scholars in various disciplines such as archaeology, history or philology were involved in the definition of the constitutive elements of each nation. During a conference held at Sorbonne on March 11, 1882, with the theme *Qu'estqu' une nation (What is a nation)*, Ernest Renan, stated that “the nation is the result of a long past of endeavors, sacrifices and abnegation.” He also added: “the cult of ancestors is, among all, the most legitimate; the ancestors made us what we are”. Thus, every nation began to retrace its history, that is, the relationship between its present, past and future, by means of elements such as language, cultural representations – including art, architecture, and so on –, folklore, geophysical characteristics which include territory, landscape, scenery, climate, and so on.

The unification of nations usually puts in place mechanisms destined to create uniformity, inserting this common ideology in the education system, in literary forms and other types of artistic representation, and in the cultural life of the nation, making occasional use of the patriotic and allegoric formulas that point to the common history by way of myths, metaphors, and comparisons. Cultural identity hierarchies and power relationships were defined at crucial historical moments, built upon the basis of fundamental premises such as the fact there nations have a specific peculiar character, that the interest and values of the nation take priority over all other interests and values, and that the nation should be as independent as possible, requiring at least the attainment of political sovereignty (Breuilly, 1993: 2). Nations were redefined within political and symbolic borders upon the basis of the constant inclusion and exclusion of certain communities and social groups, and upon a series of distinctions founded on religious affiliation, belonging to a certain geographical area, linguistic and historical traits, and so on (Berger and Lorenz, 2008: 24).

It was not until the 20th century when representations of difference and otherness, the way nations viewed themselves different to others,

began to be contemplated as circumstantial and dependent upon the observer's cultural, ideological and political background and intentionality. Within interpretive anthropology, as defined by Clifford Geertz, special attention was paid to the comparative analysis of local difference:

To see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes. If interpretive anthropology has any general office in the world it is to keep re-teaching this fugitive truth. (Geertz, 1983: 16)

Contemporary cultural anthropology strives for the empirical study of the culture of “the Other” under the recognition of the existence of numerous ethno-cultural communities with inherent traditions and customs which differ from each other. This attitude suggests the removal of polarities within ethnocentric principles and the need for communication between the various ethnic, gender and age subcultures. In his remarkable analysis of identity representations in the context of the relationship between *Culture and Imperialism*, the subject of one of his most significant works, Edward Said asserts that “we face as a nation the deep, profoundly perturbed and perturbing question of our relationship to others – other cultures, states, histories, experiences, traditions, peoples, and destinies” (Said, 1994: 65).

As a subfield within the humanities, cultural studies were and continue to be dedicated to deciphering the limits of hegemonic discourses about otherness. Post-colonial studies, in particular, referred to this relativization of the power relationships within differences (cultural, national, ethnic, sexual, or class and age, etc.), in favour of diversity, multi-culturalism and multidisciplinary approaches. Several attempts were made in the search for connections in the exchange of cultural values within different socio-cultural situations. As research on psychology indicated that understanding of others serves as a condition for the comprehension of our own identity, whether individual or collective, cultural studies also moved towards the exploration of the contact among diverse communities –whether ethnic groups, differences based on gender, age, etc. In-betweenness is a term that was first coined and explored within the cultural studies. A valuable approach to the topic was undertaken by Homi

K. Bhabha in his *Location of Culture* where the Indian critic defined a “third space,” visible in cultural representations, particularly in oral and written discourse, where differences meet, coexist or clash, giving way to communication or conflict. In-betweenness, argued Bhabha, is able to expose and break cultural representations based on dichotomies such as subjective/objective, sameness/otherness, active/passive, agent/subject, centre/margin, etc.

In-betweenness is a condition that keeps in mind that post-colonial theory and methodology do not necessarily aim at exposing the colonial history of a nation, frequently understood *ad literam*, but at the deconstruction of the imperialism of cultural representations or imperialism of the imagination, if we bear in mind Benedict Anderson’s views, expressed in his now canonical volume *Imagined Communities* (Anderson, 1991: 3). Anderson also argues that in 19th century the relationship between national identity and religion – a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, set apart from everyday life that unite the community in a single moral entity – as one of the foremost characteristics in the construction and definition of Western nations (Anderson, 1991: 11).

However, after a century in which institutional religion was pushed at the margins of the public life, a century of anti-clericalism and political secularization, the 19th century witnesses the return of religion in relation to the constitution of nation-states. In the efforts to find a common ground for unification, the understanding of religion is brought closer to civil and political discourses that aimed at the process of national building in European nations and their overseas colonial territories, which upon Independence, maintained similar cultural values to that of their original “motherland”. This situation was maintained until after the World War I. Only in the second half of the 20th century, after World War II, the concept of nation began to be questioned, no longer understood as absolute, unquestionable truth, but as “imagined community,” “coming into being” as “a system of cultural signification” (Bhabha, 1990: 1-2) where the “ambivalent margin of the nation-space” is hybrid space of cultural communication and transfer, where differences are negotiated, and not set in fixed hierarchies (Bhabha, 1990: 4).

Unlike other diasporic communities who might prefer integration in multicultural pluralist societies or assimilation in melting-pot situations, syncretism is a predominant feature of the nomadic framework, and,

thus, a defining principle of the creative realizations of folks in the Great Steppe. Despite, or perhaps as a form of resistance to contemporary globalization tendencies, the Central Asia region has chosen a way of life that combines modern conditions with deeply ingrained ancient customs and traditions, some of which remain largely unexplored. This paper deals with the national construction of the Republic of Kazakhstan, a multiethnic and multicultural society primarily founded upon folk sources and a nomad heritage. The paper explores how the competing claims of local communities, as well as their shared histories and strategies of representation and empowerment, are formulated in a lively dialogue, based primarily upon a common spirit of hospitality passed on for generations among Kazakhstani people. As Homi Bhabha would put it, it is “on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences,” where “the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value” are negotiated (Bhabha, 1994: 1). Kazakh hospitality is articulated as an in-between quality, the most essential condition for the preservation of friendship, and the main prerequisite for social security within the nation.

KAZAKHSTANI FOLK MEMORY

Oral folklore has been the main source of historical and cultural knowledge for the nomadic Kazakhs, formed and preserved for centuries by the collective efforts of many generations. Oral folklore comprehends traditions, customs, rituals, views, beliefs, proverbs and sayings, music, choreography and other forms of artistic representation that constitute communal historical memory. Memories are, in fact, the traces of “webs of significance,” to use Max Weber’s expression, of the cultural activities of human groups, which include systems of beliefs, symbols, rituals, intellectual and artistic activities (Geertz 1973: 5).

Semiotically conceived as webs, memories are mediators between individual and collective experiences, real and imaginary; that is, between past, present and future. In written culture, the word embodies ideology by abstracting, fixing and neutralizing it into a consensual and exportable body of memory. *La mémoire collective*, published by Maurice Halbwachs after World War II, contended that memories are collectively articulated. Walter Mignolo has also shown that cultural memory has evolved from an indigenous memory fundamentally oral, to a national and colonial

history fundamentally written. This evolution confirms the role of memory in nation and empire building. In his studies on the Amerindian oral legacy, Mignolo has unveiled the ways in which the dominant socio-political models imposed by the colonizers aimed at the substitution of indigenous oral forms by written forms of memory preservation, silencing and destroying Mesoamerican culture (Mignolo, 1989: 58, 62).

Today, to think of the realms of memory, to borrow Pierre Nora's title, involves the hybridization of subjects and regions as well as the intertwining of writing and orality, the sacred and the everyday. In oral stories, memory is preserved in the mythic-poetic and allegorical realm, frequently related to the folk spirit of a certain community. Indeed, the anthropological and religious roots of memory lie in the fundamental worship of the dead. Private and familiar, but also collective, and even political in the case of famous institutional figures of a community, the process of mourning frequently involves rites and cultural representations in the form of physical traces that range from the tomb to the family grave and the memorial monument. However, in nomadic societies, with no room for urban art forms, such as sculpture or architecture, the relationship between location and identity is not established by means of monuments or buildings. Their conception of changing space surrounding the community is embodied in forever vibrating and fleeting symbols like music, songs, poems and other oral forms of recollection.

Thus, in this ancient nomadic cultures, the oral and collective reading of sacred texts was accompanied by the rhythm of musical instruments. Other myths, legends and historical events of the community were preserved in the same way. Raised in the spirit of freedom and boundless space, the musicological discourse of nomads was divorced from the abstract context of the concert hall (Vilas Bohlman, 2011: 155). Their musical compositions were frequently inspired in the sounds of nature (Sultanova, 2009: 77-82). Famous compositions recreate the sound of flying insects and butterflies, waterfalls and running water, and other common elements near to the everyday life of nomad Kazakhs (Orynbekov, 1994: 318).

Some scholars have speculated that term Kazakh comes from the Turkish verb *qaz* (to wander), because the Kazakhs were wandering steppe-men. Others believe that it derives from the proto-turkic word *khasaq* (a wheeled cart used by the Kazakhs to transport their belongings; see Olcott, 1995: 4). The Saks or Scythians were the first historically

significant regional culture to occupy the area during the 1st millennium B.C.E. Originating in Iran, the Saks developed an empire that encompassed much of Central Asia and southern Russia, including the territory around the Black and Caspian seas. They were a nomadic people and skilful equestrians and warriors. In the 2nd century B.C.E., control of eastern Kazakhstan fell to the Usun (*Wusun*), a group of Turkic-speaking Mongol tribes from the east. They were a mixture of nomads and sedentary farmers, related to the Huns, a tribal confederation of nomadic pastoralists and warriors who migrated throughout Central Asia at this time. After expanding westward from the Central Asian steppes, the Huns' empire collapsed following the death of their leader, the notorious warrior, Attila, in 453 C.E. In the 5th and 6th centuries, repeated attacks from the Altai Turks in the east weakened the smaller, regional domain of the Usun (see Olcott, 1995: 5 and Fergus & Jandosova, 2003: 103).

Over the next centuries, power shifted between various confederations of Turkic tribes and settlements in southern Kazakhstan, an area which served as important connection with Asia. In the 8th-century, Arabs took control of portions of the south, marking the introduction of Islam into the region, perpetuated by the Persian Samanids, who conquered the far south in the 9th-century, and the presence of Karakhanid Turks in the 10th-century. In the early 13th-century, Mongol armies under the command of Genghis Khan swept through the Kazakhstan region, razing numerous settlements in the south and killing or enslaving much of the local population (Olcott, 1995: 5-8). After Genghis Khan died in 1227, the Mongol empire, which at that time stretched from the Caspian Sea to the eastern coast of China, was divided among his male heirs. His son, Chagatai, and grandson, Batu, split the Kazakhstan region. Batu's empire became known as the Golden Horde and Chagatai's territory became known as the Chagatai Khanate.

Around 1465, two Uzbeks, Janibek and Kirai, led an estimated 200,000 followers into the region between the Chu and Talas rivers in south-eastern Kazakhstan. Their followers became known as Kazakhs, a term that likely referred to their independent, nomadic ways, in contrast to those of the Uzbeks, who practiced a more settled, agricultural lifestyle. Kazakh became a common term throughout medieval Central Asia, generally with regard to individuals or groups who had taken or achieved independence from a figure of authority. The Turko-Mongol ruler who conquered West, South and Central Asia, Timur or

Tarmashirin Khan, also known as Tamerlane and the *Sword of Islam*, described his own youth without directory authority as his Qazaqness (see Subtelny, 1988: 123-151). After expanding their nomadic pastoral empire to include most of modern-day Kazakhstan, the Kazakhs faced encroaching powers in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Today, Kazakhstan is a multiethnic country, with a colorful life and multifaceted mentality. Home to over one hundred and ethnic groups, Kazakh, Turkic and many other tribes have coexisted for centuries in these territories. Kazakhs make the largest part of the population – 58.9%, while Russian – 25.9%, Ukrainians – 2.9%, Uzbeks – 2.8%, Uighur, Tatar and German – 1.5% each, and other groups – 4.3%, according to Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. Kazakhstan was populated first by tribes from Turkic origins – Argyns, Khazars, Qarluqs, and of the Wusuns, Kipchaks and Cumans. The formation of the Kazakh Khanate began when several tribes under the rule of sultans Janybek and Kerey departed from the Khanate of Abu'l-Khayr Khan and settled in the territory in 1456-1465. Tatar missionaries who preached Islam were also instrumental in the spread of cultural traditions and inter-ethnic relations across the steppes of Central Asia.

Beginning in the 17th century, Russia gradually colonized the region, when trading and military outposts were established along the Ural River, north of the Caspian Sea. The process that resulted in the total annexation of Kazakhlands by mid 19th century. During this time, large numbers of Russians and other ethnic groups began to settle in the region. In the following decades, the leaders of the Lesser, Middle, and some factions of the Great Horde, signed treaties of protection with Russia. Over the course of the following century, Russia took advantage of its treaties of protection over the Kazakh Hordes to gradually annex their territories, a process that included the steady construction of additional defensive lines throughout the region. These developments disrupted traditional Kazakh migratory patterns. The corresponding introduction of sedentary agriculture and industry led to the deterioration of the Kazakhs' traditional nomadic pastoral lifestyle. This process culminated in the Soviet era, when over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, Stalin consolidated his power. A brutal program of collectivization in the countryside was followed by massive purges of suspected enemies within the government, and the establishment of prison and labour camps, known as *gulags*. The territory was used by the Soviet regime to send

colonists, dissidents, and minority groups from its other frontiers. Large numbers of ethnic Germans, Chechens, Tatars, Kalmyks, and other groups were exiled to Kazakhstan. Thus, even before globalization, Kazakhstan englobed disparate groups – Germanic, Indo-Iranian, Koreans, Chechen, and Turkic in rural settings. The Kazakhs, however, became a minority due to the influxes of other ethnic groups, mainly Slavs (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian) and the large scale losses of Kazakhs in the collectivization period and during the rule of Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev in the 1960s and 70s. Nursultan Nazarbayev, won an uncontested presidential election on 1 December 1991, and Kazakhstan formally declared its independence 15 days later, on 16 December 1991.

Still today, most of the population speaks Russian and only half of ethnic Kazakhs speak Kazakh fluently. Both languages have official status, and since independence Khrushchev's government has initiated a recovery of the language, folklore, epics, superstitions, proverbs, and other cultural expressions and different world perceptions that have co-existed within the cultural and historical continuum of Kazakhstan. Nowadays the recognition of this pluralism of codes and multiplicity of meanings is an integral part of Kazakh socio-cultural situation. This multicultural heritage simultaneously seeks to maintain certain unifying values within the national identity of the country, particularly after independence. Two aspects presented in this paper are of particular importance, the nomadic way of life and the condition of hospitality in Kazakhstani culture (see for instance Jonathan Aitken report on Kazakh Hospitality in the September 2009 issue of *The American Spectator*).

The idea of unity, friendship and alliance is the most painful issue for Kazakhs. Unity to Kazakh people is the source of peace, strength and abundance. Thus, the strengthening neighbourly relations is one of the most important traditions for the Kazakh people, having existed for centuries. Despite urbanization in the Soviet era, this ritual did not become extinct.

HOSPITALITY AND MUSIC AS WAYS TO CONFRONT EMPIRE

One only needs to look at today's migratory movements to realize the enormous impact that nomadic ways of life have not just upon national and international economies as well as on intercultural values. Globalization has made us all more aware of our neighbouring others, and the

onset of internet communication has brought all other distant “others” closer to us. In the past, migratory movements and nomadic ways of life contributed to the spread of diverse traditions, religious creeds and cultural values across the large avenues of antiquity, like the Great Silk Road. International trade prospered in all these territories largely under the oversight of nomad people. “As a result of nomadic conquests and creation of nomadic empires the world became more open, the remote countries and lands became more accessible, and the knowledge about them increased” (Khazanov, 2008: 14). Thus, in the view of many scholars, nomad communities are *open systems*: “if we make the diagram of efficiency of such ability, nomadic cultures will be placed at the top by criterion of openness” (Shinkevich, 2008: 22).

In this context, Kazakh traditional folk culture has a great mobilizing and intercultural potential, simultaneously embodying syncretic images and memories that have served as the basis for historical recollection. The role of folklore or “folk wisdom” is significant in Kazakh cultural tradition within the Eurasian space. Myths and norms were passed on following these oral traditions. For instance, the term *biy* comes from the ancient Turkic word *bilig* which had two meanings: “rule” and “know”. The *biys* were scholars who passed on orally unwritten legal principles, habits and customs. With their wisdom and oratorical talent, they resolved all arising disputes through peaceful means and deservedly enjoyed great respect among the population. In their verbal compositions, they often entwined poetry and rhetoric, morality and law, history and genealogy, ethics and religion.

Musical scores were also constant companions to nomad peoples, travellers and migrants. In the transit of nomad peoples, these objects carried personal memories that remained a source of companionship and incarnated the cultural values of a given community. The figure of *zhyrau*, a kind of critic and visionary singer with a heroic consciousness was also very important in Kazakh folklore. He was the carrier of tribal democracy as opposed to the Khan’s profane autocracy and aristocratic stance. He widely used and targeted proverbs, riddles and tales filled with high moral and ethical sense. The poetry and songs of *zhyrau* contained possibly the highest examples of steppe intellectualism in the form of dramatic epic scenes attached to the values of each tribe (Auezhan Kodar, 2013: 144-145). Among the most famous *zhyrau* we can mention, for example Narta Bekezhanov.

Much of the spiritual power of Kazakh folklore lies in the love of nature and in its rich humanistic tradition (Rau, 2014: 25-26). For instance, in many of the epic folk songs, the epos of the Turkic peoples, is represented through the heroic characters of these works that were also performed for the community. Heroes were often treated as residents of the solar world of the East. In contrast, the West was associated with the country of the dead, located on the side of dying and setting sun. This dichotomy also corresponded to the ethical division between good and bad. The East and the South was contemplated as warm, good and beneficial. The West and north were cold regions, bad and unfavorable (Marat Sembi, 2013: 48.547).

The so-called *akyns* were improvising artists, poets and bards, often also singers and musicians. They performed without prior preparation and have always been contemplated as the carriers of this native folk spirit. Each village in the *Kazakh* and Kyrgyz cultures had its own improvisers who were distinguished for their gift of speech, oratorical ability and musical talent. Folk *akyn* singers were able to play several instruments. The use of *dombra* and accordion was widespread because they produce sounds which follow a diatonic tone row, similar to the composition of traditional Kazakh songs. The accordion became very popular because it could be played while sitting at the community gatherings, or while marching and riding. A popular legend tells of a famous *akyn* accordionist named Shashubai Koshkarbayev who was able to play the accordion while standing on the horseback at full gallop. Akhmet Zhubanov also mentions women among such *akyn* players. For instance, the scholar describes Maira Shamsutdinova “dark-haired woman in her thirties, beautiful and slim, with a serious long face and blush on her hollow cheeks. She had long oriental earrings in her ears and several rows of different necklaces on her breast (Akhmet Zhubanov, 2002: 245). The *Notes* by merchant Zharkov from Saratov who visited Urda (currently, Ural region) in the early 1850s, provide the following facts about local women players:

Women musicians appeared to vary pleasures. Several common Kirghiz (Kazakh) girls appeared at kubitka-door and started playing the balalaika (*dombra*), the *verganzhik* (*shankobyz*), and some of them played the wooden accordion. (Zatayevich 1931: 278)

Nomad Kazakh communities often used music and dancing as a form of dialogue and also of competition. In the Kazakh tradition, music

has remained alive and attached to the resonances of audiences. Trade fairs were fundamental elements in the spread of nomad cultural traditions to neighboring nations. In the second half of 19th and early 20th centuries, the largest were Koyadino-Botovskaya in Karkaralinsky district, Tainshikulskaya in Petropavlovsky, Konstantinovskaya in Akmolinsky, Petrovskaya in Atbassarsky, Karkarinskaya in Vernensky districts, some of which were in major transit points between Europe and Asia. *Akyms*, musicians, dancers, strolling actors, magicians and acrobats performed on these fairgrounds where they were able to show off their virtuoso skills and share with others their techniques, repertoire and the cultural traditions and values embedded in their compositions. Open-air contests were frequent and much encouraged by the attending crowd (The History of Kazakhstan from the Ancient Times to the Present Days 1993: 416; see also The History of Soviet Drama, vol. 2, 1966: 328). *Aitys* and collective performances of different singers in a dialogical manner became part of a very popular *live* tradition that attracted much attention.

Folk songs, sang in traditional Kazakh language, bear the invisible fingerprints, memories of past events and of the emotions associated to them. The preserved oral tradition of the Kazakhs people recreate the image of the world of these ancient inhabitants of the Eurasian steppe. Over 1000 folk songs remain and are reproduced edition after edition each year. Their performances reflect the ways of life and the perception of the world over ancient Kazakhs communities. They contain information about the social and sacral character such as gender roles, moral values, and behavior patterns (Ayazbekova, 2011: 284). These compositions bear the imprints of the development of language, modes of understanding the world, and of the moral bases of their culture and humanistic spirit. Currently, 16 national theaters, more than 40 newspapers, magazines published in the native language of ethnic groups, 87 ethno-cultural centers of the Republic are openly, freely and at a large scale promote heritage of different ethnic communities.

According to cultural anthropologist James Clifford, affective negotiations take place among human socials worlds and modes of everyday living, represented through different symbolic cultural manifestations where narrative occupies a prominent position because of the importance of language in communication and representation. In these ancient communities, everyday experiences and events took on a symbolic meaning, becoming huge reservoir of ethical and pedagogical precepts

such as respect for elders, tolerance, patience, kindness, and cooperation. The repetition of these symbolic forms in the form of poetic recitations and songs affects psychic and non-explicit levels giving way to the interiorization of cultural and spiritual values. Thus, the recovery of historical memory through the collection, study, systematization, and publication of folklore materials, rare manuscripts and artefacts, preserves also the traditions and cultural values embedded in them.

The elements listed above give an idea of the importance of folk customs, rituals, festivals, and traditional art in the formation of Kazakhstan national consciousness. In its temporary supplement condition, the folk archive becomes an important political and even moral criterion for maintaining memory records within the circle of social usefulness. Frequently, in the case of indigenous cultures, colonial powers reduced them to a matter of antiquity that remained irrelevant to the present. Not so in Kazakhstan. But in this transition towards a functional role in knowledge acquisition, the spirit of the land has also sought to maintain certain moral values, inherited from their nomadic culture and considered fundamental for their communal aspirations still today (Moldabekov, 2012: 9-16). We refer here to the notion of hospitality, possibly the most important aspect which enables the sharing of this large territory by so many ethnic and cultural communities. Hospitality is a concept originally linked to spiritual values and religious creeds. The root of spirituality lies in the recognition of a part of the human body which is everlasting and preserves components of advanced and universal knowledge, also called sacred or holy. In all religions, the *soul* or the *spirit* is recognized as a kind of superior essence that possesses these qualities. The cultivation of spiritual life is an important factor in the moral activities of human communities.

In the Kazakh society, there is an unofficial law voiced in ancient times, which says “Meet a guest as the God’s messenger”. Hospitality is considered a sacred duty in the Kazakh society. Individuals create the family. And tribes and communities consists of these families. Multiplying the efforts to build stronger intercultural ties between communities contributes to breed civilizations. Thus, the steppe inhabitants did their best to please their guests, who were divided into three types: “arnayykonak” is a specially invited guest, “kudayykonak” – a random stranger (uninvited), “kydyrmakonak” – an unexpected guest. All these guests, despite of their type are offered a rich table – Konakasy.

Konakkade involved a tradition under which a host asked the guest to sing a song or play a musical instrument, thus ensuring the spread of folk musical traditions, as described above, but also contributing to create a relaxed climate for conversation and cultural exchange. This play between the host and guest, executed also by means of sports as well as music and singing competitions (aitys), and horse riding were organized in addition to these gatherings (Toy dastarkhan tradition), creates felt contact between all parties. Contact between them comes alive memorably in melodies that represent lasting and bonding human values by means of the semiological system of music, privileging a construction of a contextual scene of dialogue and the music's emotional appeal.

The melodic structure of Kazakh songs, closely resembling natural sounds and emotions extends these connections beyond the aural to the visual level. Melodies are value-coded and, therefore, the hero and the heroine sing songs associated with goodness, upholding moral universal values rather than creating dissonances, conflicts or identity-based differences. The melodious sound of dombrastrings or accordion signify sentiments of peace and love. Kazakh sung poetry constitutes a textual knowledge within the mixed audience, contributing to the creation of a collective memory. Thus, these songs extend beyond the present moment because it can be recalled even when not temporally present, establishing symbiotic relations with their audiences.

The Islamic influence and culture of hospitality spread in Kazakhstan with the figure of Al-Farabi, a renowned scholar who may have been born in the territory of Turkmenistan or Kazakhtan around 870. The oldest known reference to a possible Turkic origin is given by the medieval historian Ibn Khallikān (died in 1282), who in his work *Wafayāt* (completed in 669/1271) states that Farabi was born in the small village of Wasij near Fārāb (in what is today Otrar, Kazakhstan) of Turkic parents (Rescher 1963: 11) He became known among medieval Muslim intellectuals as *The Second Teacher*, that is, successor to Aristotle, *The First Teacher*. His work, aimed at synthesis of philosophy and Sufism, paved the way for the work of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). Al-Farabi incorporated the Platonic view, drawing a parallel from within the Islamic context. His notion of spirit as a universal and holy idea (1985: 403-408) was also related to music as a form of knowledge and the therapeutic effects of music on the soul. "Seek to know by the soul" (Abay 1995: 69) Al-Farabi's treatise *Meanings of the Intellect* dealt with music therapy. With

regards to the culture of hospitality, in *Social Psychology* and *Model City*, Al-Farabi dealt with social psychology and stated that “an isolated individual could not achieve all the perfections by himself, without the aid of other individuals”. He wrote that it is the “innate disposition of every man to join another human being or other men in the labor he ought to perform”. He concluded that to “achieve what he can of that perfection, every man needs to stay in the neighborhood of others and associate with them” (quoted in Hague, 2004: 363).

Indeed, during his trips to the Republic of Kazakhstan, Petrik van Leeuwen noted that the country “is the most hospitable and multinational country among all the states I've ever lived and worked” and added that “the people of Kazakhstan are very open and friendly people” (2). The Kazakh nation has always prided on its openness, tolerance and the high spirituality of its poly-ethnic communities (Nazarbayev, 2014). In recent years, the report submitted to the Council for Human Rights in Geneva by the UN representative G. McDougall showed the same appreciation and positive remarks on the hospitability of the country.

CONCLUSION

Hospitality in Kazakh society is the best example of Kazakhstan’s way of subverting empire. The territory of Kazakhstan, home today to peoples from many nationalities, religions and world views, has a long tradition of peaceful and tolerant coexistence. After independence, Kazakhstan government is making effort to trace these roots to the countries folk heritage. As described in this paper, music has a fundamental role in the culture of hospitality and tolerance in Kazakhstan. It contributes to create a climate of understanding, benevolence, respect and empathy.

The paper has paid attention to the emotional traces of the musical folk tradition, unprinted, unrecorded for centuries, yet deposited in the margins of the oral memorial archive. It is upon these acts of restoration that resistance to oblivion is built in the new nation. It is upon these cultural remains that memory is re-inscribed as a figurative principle of history. Emotionally visualized and felt through the medium of music, always caring for the *Other*. Making one feel at home in its universal world of sounds and contesting the relation between host and guest, colonizer and colonized.

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