

Preface

One of the most abiding images of modern Uzbekistan and one that is regularly on the cover of books on the state is the imposing statue of Amir Timur, astride a horse, located in the Amir Timur Square in central Tashkent. While the park surrounding the statue itself has been significantly reduced in size by the addition of the Forum's Palace—which in addition to the Amir Timur Museum now crowds the square—and the ancient *chinar* (maple) trees have been replaced by firs, the statue itself remains a point of reference for the state. Time and again the casual visitor who may remember very little of the city otherwise would refer to the statue with the assumption that Timur remains the referent for the state. And in this they are partially correct. While Amir Timur's legacy is no longer the subject of discussion, academic or otherwise, his abiding legacy that of a strong centralized state continues to be significant for Uzbekistan's brand equity. The most enduring image for the Kazakh state, on the other hand, was generally a combination of vast steppes, yurts, apples, and the Aral Sea. Today it is represented by the city of Astana, compared to modern cities of the oil rich states of the UAE and identified as symbolic of the Kazakh state. Eclectic in design and cosmopolitan in form, it is symbolic of the inclusiveness that the Kazakh state portrays as its essential image. While most states actively promote an international 'image', in the Eurasian space the Uzbek and the Kazakh cases are interesting since they provide remarkable contrasts that are largely reflective of their heritage.

The two abiding 'images' that the two states portray are indicative of the way they wish to position themselves in the global arena. Uzbekistan positions itself as an ancient civilization at the crossroads of history while Kazakhstan promotes itself as a significant geostrategic player and a multicultural and multiethnic society. While both images are actively promoted by the state and reinforced by diplomatic campaigns, they are also occasionally challenged by alternative reporting and reflections that influence external perception of the states. International reporting about the Andijan incident in 2005 and the British-American film *Borat* (2006) are examples that affected the image of the Uzbek and Kazakh states respectively. On the other hand there are certain enduring images of the states, the blue domes of Samarkand or the vast Kazakh steppes for instance, that are clearly identified and

utilized by the state for tourism but have very little to do with recent state propaganda. The extent to which these images have impacted on the international standing of the states, however, still remains debated. *Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia* is an attempt at examining how post Soviet Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan legitimized their existence as separate states, redefined themselves in a 'new' form and projected national images for the global arena but also in the domestic context. In the course of this redefinition, the relationship between politics and cultural symbols/images acquired multiple possibilities. It goes on to argue that this image was also largely determined by the legacy of the states—an ancient state with a 'homogenous' people for Uzbekistan reflected in the image of a strong centralized state and the legacy of a constant process of negotiation among the *Zhuz* reflected in the cosmopolitan image that the Kazakh state subsequently portrayed. **The book went to press before 2 September 2016, the officially declared day of Uzbek President Islam Karimov's demise and so it refers to him as President and not late President throughout.**

The manuscript was written as a project for the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata. The author remains grateful to the Institute for the support extended to her for the completion of the manuscript. During the course of the research the author interacted with a number of scholars and researchers in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A field trip was undertaken in Almaty, Kazakhstan in 2012 during which various departments of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, like International Relations, Resource Centre for American and Democratic Studies, Department of Korean Studies were visited and a number of meetings were held with scholars. Meetings were also held at the R.B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies. Interaction was held at various institutes/universities with scholars like Prof. Baizakova Kuralay Irtysova Dean of the Department of International Relations, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Prof. Kukeyeva Fatima Turarovna, Kazakhstan Chair of International Relations, and Foreign Policy of Kazakhstan, Department of International Relations of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, German Nikolaevich Kim Head of the Department of Korean Studies at Al-Farabi Kazakh National University and one of the leading internationally recognized scholars of the Korean diaspora in Kazakhstan, Galymzhan M. Duisen, Deputy Director, R.B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies, Nazigul Shaimardanova, Deputy Director of International Cooperation at the R.B. Suleimanov Institute of Oriental Studies, Leyla Muzaparova, First Deputy Director, Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Studies, and Prof. Dr. Azhigali S. Eskendiruli, Professor of Archaeology and Ethnography at the Valikhanov Institute of History and Ethnology, Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty. The author also benefited from participating for a day at the University of Turan Regional Seminar for Excellence in teaching project, on *Writing History from Below: The New Social History of Central Asia*, being held at the Altyn Karghalay Sanatorium in the outskirts of Almaty. During a field trip to Tashkent, Bukhara and Samarkand in 2013 the author benefited from interaction with faculty

and students of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent and the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Tashkent. The author is particularly grateful to Prof. P.L. Dash, the then Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) India Chair at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy Tashkent, Murat M. Bakhadirov, Head, Department of International Relations, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent and Mirzokhid Rakhimov, Head, Department of Contemporary History and International Relations at the Institute of History, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Tashkent for their support during the visit and subsequent research. Meetings were also held at the Al Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent with Prof. Bakhtiyor Abidov, Head of the Department of South Asian countries and Deputy Director of International Cooperation. At Samarkand meetings were held at the Institute of Central Asian Studies with the Director, Shahin Mustafayev. Discussions were also held with Ambassador Yusuf Abdullaev, Director of the El Mirosi theatre, Samarkand, and with Qazaqov Bahodir, former Uzbek Ambassador to Iran. The author remains grateful to all of them for sharing their knowledge, research, information and in many cases documents, books and articles.

The author wishes to thank Shinjini Chatterjee, Senior Editor, Springer for her support in the publication of the volume. She also wishes to thank Rita Banerjee for her assistance.

As always the book is for Rajarshi, Paramita, Kana and most importantly Nayantara.

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<http://www.springer.com/978-981-10-2391-0>

Symbols and the Image of the State in Eurasia

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2017, XI, 138 p., Softcover

ISBN: 978-981-10-2391-0