CAPTIVITY AND EMPIRE: RUSSIAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES IN FACT AND FICTION

ТҰТҚЫНДЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ИМПЕРИЯ: ШЫН ДЕРЕКТЕРДЕГІ ЖӘНЕ КӨРКЕМ ӘДЕБИЕТТЕГІ ОРЫС ТҰТҚЫНДЫҚ ХИКАЯЛАРЫ

ПЛЕН И ИМПЕРИЯ: РУССКИЕ НАРРАТИВЫ О ПЛЕНУ В ФАКТАХ И В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

by

YUAN GAO

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences of Nazarbayev University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN EURASIAN STUDIES

ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN

2016

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

NAZARBAYEV UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

CAPTIVITY AND EMPIRE: RUSSIAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES IN FACT AND FICTION

ТҰТҚЫНДЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ИМПЕРИЯ: ШЫН ДЕРЕКТЕРДЕГІ ЖӘНЕ КӨРКЕМ ӘДЕБИЕТТЕГІ ОРЫС ТҰТҚЫНДЫҚ ХИКАЯЛАРЫ

ПЛЕН И ИМПЕРИЯ: РУССКИЕ НАРРАТИВЫ О ПЛЕНУ В ФАКТАХ И В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

BY

Yuan Gao
NU Student Number: 201419240

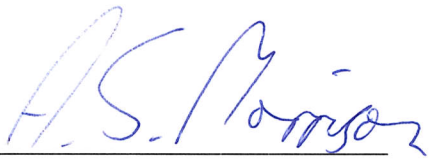
APPROVED

BY

Prof. Alexander Morrison

ON

The 10th day of June, 2016



Signature of Principal Thesis Adviser

CAPTIVITY AND EMPIRE: RUSSIAN CAPTIVITY NARRATIVES IN FACT AND FICTION

ТҰТҚЫНДЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ИМПЕРИЯ: ШЫН ДЕРЕКТЕРДЕГІ ЖӘНЕ КӨРКЕМ ӘДЕБИЕТТЕГІ ОРЫС ТҰТҚЫНДЫҚ ХИКАЯЛАРЫ

ПЛЕН И ИМПЕРИЯ: РУССКИЕ НАРРАТИВЫ О ПЛЕНУ В ФАКТАХ И В ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

by

YUAN GAO

Principal adviser: Prof. Alexander Morrison
Second reader: Dr. Victoria Thorstensson
External reviewer: Dr. Katya Hokanson

Electronic Version Approved: ✓
Prof. Alexander Morrison
Director of the MA Program in Eurasian Studies
School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Nazarbayev University
June 2016

Abstract

This thesis studies Russian captivity narratives about Central Asia produced during the nineteenth century. Focusing on the captivity theme, this thesis explores diverse individual captivity stories written within the grand context of Russia's expansion into Central Asia. It aims to show that captivity narratives not only tell of the vulnerability and uncertainty of the empire during its expansion, but also reveal the rapid shift of power in Central Asia in the nineteenth century. They witness Russian captives' growing awareness of Central Asia as a site of Russia's future colonization, and the captives' self-awareness of their Russian and imperial identity.

This thesis is organized according to various themes that appear repeatedly in the narratives examined. The Introduction chapter introduces the general historical background of Russia's expansion into Central Asia in the nineteenth century, summarizes relevant existing studies about captivity narratives and Russia's writings of the Orient, and lays out the primary texts used in this thesis. Chapter one focuses on the captives' resistance to the encroachment of the alien captive-taking cultures. The captors' violence and their torturing of the captives are consciously highlighted to follow the conventions of the genre, and to foreground the threat from captive-taking cultures that Russia was facing in its expansion. The captors' benevolence is portrayed as undesirable confinement for the captives, who see the captors' cultures as inhospitable. By writing about their endurance and resistance, the narrators depict Russian captives as heroes who are able to demarcate themselves from the captive-taking cultures and

keep their Russian spirit intact. The second chapter examines the male and female images of captives and captors portrayed in captivity stories. This chapter will show that the images of Russian male captives and Central Asian females are overall persistent. Russian captives are usually capable of outmanoeuvring their Central Asian captors in love and civilization. Central Asian females, following Pushkin's Caucasian convention, are depicted as devoted lovers with ardent Oriental passion. They are portrayed as both fruit and victim of the clashes between Russian and Oriental civilizations. The representation of Central Asian masculinity was apparently enriched along with the empire's actual expansion into the steppe. In the 1820s, the captors were described as alien and threatening neighbours who were dominant in violence, yet impotent in love and civilization. In the middle of the century some admiration and sympathy towards Central Asian male heroes appeared. Chapter three examines captivity narrative as an equivalent to travelogue and ethnography. Captivity narratives were being written and read as a unique type of ethnographic and scientific works. With land and medicine as two specific examples, this chapter aims to reveal that the captives' gaze is unequal - during the captivity, the captive-narrators were confined and restrained; nevertheless, under the disguise of passive suffering, the imperial captives were the ones who were ultimately free to judge and construct their captors' identity. They managed to turn trauma into a sense of superiority. They were both victims and vanguards of Russia's expansion into and colonization of Central Asia.

Table of Contents

Introduction

"History should remember these humble names."[1] - in *Istoriia Pugacheva*, Pushkin makes this his conclusion to an incident when two Russian captives refuse to swear allegiance to Pugachev. As Pushkin records, in November of 1773, Pugachev took the Il'inskaya fortress, located on the Orenburg steppe, and captured all the Russian soldiers in this fortress. Two Russian officers, captain Kameshkov and lieutenant Voronov, were taken to Pugachev, and he asked them: "Why were you against me, against your sovereign?" The officers answered: "You are not our sovereign. In Russia we have Empress Catherine Alekseevna and Prince Pavel Petrovich, and you are just a thief and impostor." They were hanged immediately for these words.[2] In this episode, the captives show their absolute loyalty to the empire and heroic resistance to the captor's overwhelming power at the cost of their lives. The tension of identity and loyalty, resistance and sacrifice shown during the empire's encounter with the insurgents attracted Pushkin to record these two "humble names".

There are more "humble names" of Russian captives that seem to be lost in history. While captivity narratives had developed as a popular genre in Europe and in America since sixteenth century, for instance, Barbary captivity in British culture and Indian captivity in American culture, the genre seems underdeveloped in Russian

[1] "История должна сохранить сии смиренные имена." Pushkin, A.S., *Sobraniye sochinenii v 10 tomakh*, Vol. 7 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1962), 45.

[2] Ibid., 45.

culture.[3] It gained prominence only in the nineteenth century. The twelfth-century epic poem *The Tale of Igor's Campaign*, which records the Rus' prince Igor's captivity by the Polovtsians of the Don region, was discovered in 1800 and was adapted by the composer Alexander Borodin into a popular opera in 1890. In the 1820s, during Russia's penetration into the Caucasus, Pushkin created the most prominent image of a Russian captive among the Circassian mountaineers in *Kavkazskii plennik.* Apart from these two works, other captivity stories, both fictional and non-fictional, remain obscure. It is the aim of this thesis to explore some of the "humble names" and captivity narratives that were published, reprinted and read in nineteenth-century Russia, and to examine their significance for understanding the Russian presence in Central Asia and the representations of Central Asia in Russian culture.

The main focus of this thesis is the relationship between Russian imperial expansion and the writings about captivity experiences. Geographically, I concentrate on Russia's frontier in Central Asia. As Alexander Morrison points out, Russia's military expansion into Central Asia was one of the "most rapid and dramatic examples of imperial conquest" in the nineteenth century.[4] The logistical problems in the vast territories of the Kirgiz steppe, and the "porous and indefensible nature of the steppe frontier", as Mikhail Khodarkovsky identifies, made Central Asia "the worst

[3] For the popularity of captivity narratives in British and American cultures, see for instance: Pearce, Roy Harvey, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative", *American Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Mar., 1947), 1-20; Starr, G. A. , "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Nov., 1965), 35-52.

[4] Morrison, Alexander, "Introduction: Killing the Cotton Canard and getting rid of the Great Game: rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814–1895", *Central Asian Survey*, 33:2 (2014), 131-142.

possible place to try to build a frontier", which was both difficult and expensive to maintain.[5] Yet driven by the yearning for prestige to compete with the other European empires, the quest for a secure frontier and trade routes, Russia kept advancing into Central Asia, and transformed the entire region from a volatile borderland into a part of a colonial empire towards the end of this century.[6] Towards the middle of the nineteenth century the imperial army established lines of fortresses and took control of the Kirgiz (i.e. Kazakh) steppe. In the 1860s Russian conquered Tashkent, turned the Khanate of Kokand and the Emirate of Bukhara into protectorates, and established the Governor-Generalship of Russian Turkestan in 1867. The Khivan Khanate was conquered in 1873 and Russia fully annexed the Transcaspian Region in the beginning of the 1880s.[7] Besides the rapid expansion, another reason why Central Asia can be an illuminating setting for the study of Russian captivity narratives is the constant threat from slave raiding activities conducted by the steppe nomads that Russia had been facing since the sixteenth century. As Khodarkovsky puts it, if the steppe was akin to the sea, the nomads were seamen, many of whom were "pirates" living off looting the passing ships.[8] The

---

[5] Khodarkovsky, Mikhail, *Russia's steppe frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Indiana University Press, 2004), 7; Morrison, Alexander, "'Nechto eroticheskoe', 'courir après l'ombre'? – logistical imperatives and the fall of Tashkent, 1859–1865", *Central Asian Survey*, 33:2 (2014) , 165.

[6] The motivation of Russia's conquest of Central Asia is examined in Morrison's articles. See: Morrison, "Introduction", 137 and "'Nechto eroticheskoe'", 165.

[7] For a brief chronology of Russian conquest of Central Asia after 1865 see Encausse, Hélène Carrère, "Systematic Conquest, 1865 to 1884" in Allworth, Edward (ed.), *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, *A Historical Overview* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994),131-150.

[8] Khodarkovsky, *Russia's steppe frontier*, 29.

Steppe nomads' high speed and mobility appeared to be great advantages in guerrilla warfare and raiding activities. Captives, who can be kept as labor or for ransom, or sold to slave markets for income, were an important revenue source and item of trade for the steppe captors. Russia's construction of fortification lines in the steppe region succeeded in reducing the number of Russians falling into captivity, but sporadic raiding activities still threatened Russian travelers to the steppe.[9]

Focusing on the captivity theme, this thesis explores diverse individual captivity stories written within this grand context of imperial expansion. It aims to show that captivity narratives not only tell of the vulnerability and uncertainty of the empire during its expansion, but also reveal the rapid shift of power in Central Asia in the nineteenth century. They witness Russian captives' growing awareness of Central Asia as a site of Russia's future colonization, and the captives' self-awareness of their Russian and imperial identity. This thesis also aims to contribute to existing studies of imperial Russia's frontier and Russian Orientalism.

The existing studies on American and British captivity narratives have paid considerable attention to examining captivity as an imperial and colonial enterprise.

---

[9] Khodarkovsky summarizes steppe nomads' slave raiding activities from the sixteenth to eighteenth century. See: Khodarkovsky , 21-26. For Russia the biggest threat was the Crimean Tatars since the sixteenth century. Before the annexation of Crimea in 1783, Crimean Tatars, sometimes allied with Nogays, conducted almost annual raids in the Pontic steppe. For the slave trade by Crimean Tatars see: Fisher, Alan, "Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade", Canadian-American Slavic Studies, 6:4 (1972), 575-594. For the captives and slaves in Central Asia see: Stanziani, Alessandro, "Chapter Three: Slavery and Bondage in Central Asia and Russia from the Fourteenth to the Nineteenth Century" in *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Berghahn Books, 2004), 63-100; Hopkins B. D., "Race, Sex and Slavery: 'Forced Labour in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the Early 19th Century", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Jul., 2008), pp. 629-671.

Pauline Turner Strong studies captivity as represented in a "selective or hegemonic tradition" in her monograph about colonial American captivity narratives.[10] As she examines, in the writing of captivity narratives, "certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices are neglected or excluded". This process creates "a discourse of domination" over the shaping of the images of "captive selves" and "captivating others".[11] Linda Colley's comprehensive study of British captivity narratives about the Mediterranean, America and India from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century effectively reveals the dynamics of power of the British Empire in its overseas expansion. As she examines, captivity narratives are "imperfect, idiosyncratic, and sometimes violently slanted texts", but they are also "astonishingly rich and revealing, both about the British themselves, and about the mixed fortunes and complexities of their dealings with other peoples."[12] They not only tell about the opposition and antagonism between the British captives and their captors, but also reveal the interdependence between the British Empire and its colonies. Joe Snader's study on British non-fictional and fictional captivity narratives examines the genre as a "reminder of the threat faced by colonists in any alien environment".[13] Captivity narratives provide "a model for the skills of colonial

---

10 Strong, Pauline Turner, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 3.

11 Ibid., 200.

12 Colley, Linda, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600- 1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), 15.

13 Snader, Joe, *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington:University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 142.

heroism", in which the captive-protagonist is portrayed as a man of science, an entrepreneur, or an agent of colonial expansion who is capable of mastering the complexities he faces in an alien culture, and turning his alienated experience of cultural abjection into a personal and national triumph.[14] These studies provide illuminating references for studying the writings about alien captivity in imperial Russia's context.

Regarding the captivity theme in Russian literature and culture, extensive studies on Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik* and Caucasian captivity offer enlightening approaches for the study of Central Asian captivity. Besides this, the issue of imperial expansion and the imagining of the "Other" land are best examined through several studies of Russian Orientalism.

Studies of *Kavkazskii plennik,* the most prominent captivity story in Russian culture, have pointed out that the poem is closely connected to Russia's expansion. As Susan Layton points out, *Kavkazskii plennik* successfully constructed the "poetics of space" of the region where the military expedition was taking place and which the nineteenth-century Russian public used to be unaware of. It filled the emptiness of newspaper coverage about the empire's military march in the Caucasus when it was first published.[15] Based on Pushkin's factual trip to the Caucasus, *Kavkazskii plennik* provided specific evocations of tsarist armies in combat against the tribes along with

[14] Ibid., 10.

[15] Layton, Susan*, Russian Literature and Empire: The Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22, 34.

the dramatic tale of love and adventure. The anthropomorphic depiction of borderlands and the romanticizing of mountaineers increased the "self-interested curiosity" among Russians about the empire's periphery.[16] By "filling a geographical location with powerful affective meanings generated by rhetoric, tropes, patterns of symbolism and the free violation of actual topographical relations", Pushkin's poem discovered and made the *terra incognita* into an detailed imaginary geographical space, namely, the "poetics of space".[17] Layton argues that *Kavkazskii plennik* aroused Russians' ambivalent attitudes towards the conquest of the Caucasus. The representation of the ennobled Caucasian landscapes and Muslim tribes questioned the rectitude of Russia's military expansion. The plot of the Russian captive's interaction with the nurturing native woman constructed a Russian's romantic engagement with the Caucasian mountaineers and created "a myth of cultural harmony" that displaced the actual reality of the colonial conquest.[18] Harsha Ram challenges Layton's argument on Pushkin's ambivalence towards the conquest of the Caucasus. He argues that *Kavkazskii plennik* neither avoids nor underwrites the imperial project, but supports its benign necessity.[19] Captivity is in fact an alienated form of the imperial expansion. It celebrates the imperial sublimity in an elegiac form.

---

[16] Ibid., p. 89.

[17] Ibid., p. 51.

[18] Ibid., 98.

[19] Ram, Harsha, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 194.

Ram points out the extraordinary consistency in the elegiac poems written by Derzhavin, Pushkin, Küchelbecker and Lermontov: by depicting the captivity or paralysis of a Russian hero, the poets portray themselves as prophets who foresee the ultimate subordination of the Orient.[20] The physical confinement leads the captive-hero to elegiac longing for his past, because the power of the empire lies in another place where he cannot reach. Katya Hokanson has also pointed out that *Kavkazskii plennik* should be read in the context of the Russian quest to control the Caucasus. The poem is not only an "outcome" of Russian colonization but also a "requirement" of it.[21] It broadened the definition of *narodnost'*, namely Russian identity, and the scope of "truly Russian" poetry by showing that foreign subjects could be "adopted, embraced, *colonized*" while the essential "Russianness" could be preserved in Russian poetry.[22] Bruce Grant examines the issue of captivity, theft and gift in the Caucasus on historical, literary and anthropological levels. He suggests that the image of the Russian captives constructed in these captivity stories, for instance, in Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*, can be termed as "the good Russian prisoner", a Promethean figure who suffers from his generosity, and the Russian captives are a

[20] Specifically, Derzhavin's "Na vziatie Izmaila" (1790), Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*, Küchelbecker's "Prorochestvo" (1822) and Lermontov's "Son" (1841). The consistency lies in (1) the Russian body lies prostrate in a place remote from Russia; (2) the Russian is portrayed as being asleep, as if he is in a dream between life and death; (3) the Russian's body is violated or challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy; (4) the Russian's captivity is shown to precipitate a historical change, e.g. Russia's imperial aggression to the Caucasus. Ram, 173.

[21] Hokanson, Katya, "Literary Imperialism, Narodnost', and Pushkin's Invention of the Caucasus," *The Russian Review*, vol. 53 (July 1994), 341.

[22] Ibid., 342. See also: Hokanson, Katya, *Writing at Russia's Borders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 28-41.

"Promethean gift to the Caucasus of the Russian empire".[23] The myth about the good Russian prisoner naturalizes Russia's violent military actions in the Caucasian mountains and justifies this violence.

Apart from the studies of *Kavkazskii plennik*, some studies have also shown the role of alien captivity theme in forming and expressing Russian identity. Paul Austin focuses on the theme of the exotic prisoner in Russian romanticism in the 1820s to 1840s from Pushkin to Lermontov. As he points out, the expansion of the Empire, the general development of science in Europe and the influence of western European literature stimulated Russian society's interest in exotic themes in the nineteenth century.[24] *Kavkazskii plennik* combined exoticism with the figure of the prisoner and popularized the symbolism of captivity in Russian culture. Pushkin's success was extensively followed by Russian writers in poetry and prose during the 1820s and 1830s, which he describes as writing "in the shadow of Pushkin".[25] Lermontov further enriched the exotic prisoner theme in "Bela" by adding a psychological depth to Pechorin, who is not a captive *per se*, but gains a clear self-awareness during his stay in the Caucasus that life itself is an imprisonment. This self-awareness developed in Russian Romanticism in general and in the exotic prisoner theme in particular contributed to the subsequent great psychological novels of Turgenev, Tolstoy and

---

[23] Grant, Bruce, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 18.

[24] Austin, Paul, *The Exotic Prisoner in Russian Romanticism* (NY: Peter Lang, 1997), 34

[25] Ibid., 91.

Dostoevsky.[26] Jeffery Brooks mentions the popularity of captivity tales in *lubok* literature, the single booklets that were extensively read by the lower-classes, in the second half of the nineteenth century. He summarizes that captivity stories in popular literature tell more about the issue of national identity than the experience of imprisonment. They reveal "a sense of Russianness defined in relation to particular foreign cultures that were both alluring and threatening".[27] They were a platform to celebrate the newly conquered land as "a garden of plenty" and emphasize "the enormity and diversity of the empire".[28]

There are certainly more studies on Russia's frontier and Russian Orientalism that are relevant for this thesis.[29] The above-mentioned studies provide sufficient methodological inspiration and also a space of critique. Based on the narratives that remain relatively unexplored in these studies, this thesis will both test and challenge some of the conclusions made by the existing studies.

---

[26] Ibid., 4, 9.

[27] Brooks, Jeffery, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 226.

[28] Ibid., 242.

[29] Just to name a few: Dickinson, Sara, "Russia's First 'Orient': Characterising the Crimea in 1787", *Kritika* 3, 1 (2002); Layton, Susan, "Russian Military Tourism: The Crisis of the Crimean War Period", in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch, Diane Koenker (NY, Cornell University Press, 2006); Andreeva, Elena, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007); David Schimmelpennnck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asian in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 2010; Tolz, Vera, *Russia's own Orient: the politics of identity and Oriental studies in the late Imperial and early Soviet periods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,2011).

This thesis examines both "factual" captivity narratives based on Russian captives' actual captivity experiences and the "fictional" stories that incorporated Central Asian captivity theme. As Colley mentions, in supposedly factual captivity narratives highly factual and invaluable material is intercut with fictional or pirated episodes: "Political, religious, cultural and racial bias is combined with reportage that can be substantially verified; and terrible ignorance is exhibited side by side with rare perceptiveness and serious insights."[30] Andrew Wachtel's analysis of literary travelogues also applies to the studying of fictional captivity stories. As he argues, in literary travelogues, the primary purpose is not the presentation of factual material, but rather "the play with genre and readers' expectation" and more importantly, "the creation of a narrative persona and a poetic geographical space".[31] By examining both factual and fictional captivity stories, this thesis shows that these two groups of writings, factual and fictional captivity, influence and inspire each other. While writers of fictional captivity culled materials from first-hand accounts, the way in which the captive-narrators constructed their experiences were also shaped by literary precursors, especially by Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*.

An overview of the narratives might be necessary before analyzing them. Here they are categorized chronologically by the time they were published, and more

---

[30] Colley, 93.

[31] Wachtel, Andrew, "Voyages of Escape, Voyages of Discovery: The Transformation of the Travelogue", Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age. ed. B. Gasparov, R. Hughes, I. Paperno. *California Slavic Studies*, vol. 15. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 135.

precisely, in relation to the publication of *Kavkazskii plennik* and the timeline of Russia's expansion into Central Asia.

Two factual narratives published in the beginning of nineteenth century are Filipp Efremov's narrative about his own captivity in the Kazakh steppe and Bukhara and a narrative about Vasilii Mikhailov's captivity among the Kalmyks, Kazakhs and Khivans written by the ethnographer Benjamin Bergmann. Published before *Kavkazskii plennik* and Russia's major campaigns in Central Asia, these two narratives reflect the tension in Russia's clashes with Central Asian cultures. As the following analysis shows, writing prior to the convention of the captivity theme Pushkin established in the 1820s, these two authors intended to construct their narratives as a unique type of travelogue and ethnography.

Filipp Efremov, the author of *Stranstvovanie nadvornogo Filippa Efremova v Kirgizskoi stepi, Bukharii, Khive, Persii, Tibete i Indii i vozvrashchenie ego ottuda chrez Angliiu v Rossiiu* (*The Travels of Filipp Efremov in the Kirgiz steppe, Bukhara, Khiva, Persia, Tibet and India, and His Return from Britain to Russia*, published in 1786, 1794, 1811 and 1893; hereafter *Stranstvovanie*), was a corporal in the Nizhny Novgorod infantry regiment. In 1774, as a non-commissioned officer in the regiment, Efremov was sent to *Donguz*, an outpost in the Kazakh steppe which lies south of Orenburg, during the climax of the Pugachev rebellion to protect the vulnerable borderland from the uprising. Soon after their arrival the outpost was attacked by a group of Pugachev's followers. The Russian soldiers were defeated by five hundred rebels, and

Efremov was captured together with his companions. After their first escape from the rebels, they tried to go back to Orenburg from the steppe, but were soon captured by Kazakh tribesmen. After two months Efremov was sold to the Bukharan *ataliq* Daniyal-*biy,* the second Manghit ruler of Bukhara, and served in the Bukharan army for at least two years before he managed to escape.[32] Subsequently he visited Khiva, Persia and India, and from India he took a boat to London and finally returned to Saint-Petersburg in 1782. Overall there are four publications of the *Stranstvovanie* and three versions of the text. The manuscript was written by Efremov in 1784, yet this version was published only over a century later in 1893 in *Russkaia starina*.[33] Compared to the subsequent versions, the manuscript is the most concise and the least polished. It contains the travel's main plot and serves as the base for the subsequent editions. The second version was published in the editions of 1786 and 1794. There is no significant difference between these two editions, but compared to the manuscript, the structure of the narrative has been changed. While the first version was written as a whole, the latter was divided into two sections. The first section is Efremov's narrative of his nine-year captivity and travel experience, and the description and observation of the Kirgiz steppe, Bukhara, Khiva, Persia and India was

[32] For more information about Daniyal-*biy* and the changing role of the rank *ataliq* in Bukhara in the eighteenth century, see: Holzwarth, Wolfgang, "The Uzbek State as Reflected in Eighteenth Century Bukharan Sources" in: Thomas Herzog, Wolfgang Holzwarth (Hg.): *Nomaden und Sesshafte - Fragen, Methoden, Ergebnisse*. Teil 2. Halle 2004 (Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte 15; Mitteilungen des SFB "Differenz und Integration" 4/2), 107-109.

[33] Efremov, Filipp, "Rossiiskogo unter-ofitsera geviatletnee stranstvovanie i prikliucheniia v Bukharii, Khive, Persii i indii i vozvrashchenie v Rossiiu, napisannoe im samim v sanktpeterburge v 1784 g.", *Russkaia starina*, 1893, №.7, 125-149.

separated from the narrative and collected in the second section as an ethnographic record. The second version is apparently more carefully worked by Efremov as the description of his capture, enslavement and escape is more detailed than the previous one, and the figure of Efremov himself is more distinctive as well. This version also includes a map of Efremov's itinerary and a *Slovarik bukharskikh slov*, a glossary of 625 Bukharan words, which Efremov was able to recall.[34] The third version was published in 1811, after Efremov and his family moved from Saint-Petersburg to Kazan. It was edited by Petr Kondyrev, one of Efremov's friends and a lecturer in history and geography at Kazan University at that time. The view of this version changes at times from the third person ("Mr. Efremov") to the first person, as if Kondyrev is the writer who recorded Efremov's oral account and wrote it down. The end of the narrative provides an updated account of Efremov's situation during his service in the imperial administration from 1782 to 1810. Kondyrev also put his own supplements in the ethnographic part. In this thesis all editions will be examined, as they offer a rare opportunity to examine the narrator's attempt to retell, reconstruct and polish the captivity experience.

Adventures of Michailow, a Russian captive, among the Kalmucs, Kirghiz, and Kiwenses (1803, hereafter *Adventures*) is written by Benjamin Bergmann, a Lutheran pastor born in the Governorate of Livonia. In 1802 Bergmann was sent on an scientific expedition to the Kalmyk steppe by the commission of the Imperial Academy of

[34] Most of those words are Persian/Tajik words. See: Efremov, Fillip, "Perevod buharskikh slov" in *Puteshestviia po vostoku v epokhu Ekateriny II* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 1995), 246.

Sciences. During this two-year expedition he learned Kalmyk and collected rich ethnographic sources, among which the most prominent one is the Oirat epic *Jangar*.[35] Besides that, Bergmann also translated and published numerous studies on Kalmyk history and customs.[36] This captivity narrative was one of his results of this expedition. As Bergmann explained in the German preface, during the expedition he met an aged man with "a distinctive appearance". This aged man, Vasilii Mikhailov, explained that he was originally from Persia and he was sold to Russia when he was still a child. Then he served in the Astrakhan Cossack Host and in 1770 he was captured by the Kalmyks during a military mission against the Kalmyk Khan Ubashi.[37] Subsequently he was sold to Kazakhs and then to Khivans, and after numerous failed attempts at escape he finally returned to Russia by himself. Bergmann was very interested in Mikhailov's life so he recorded the whole experience of his captivity by Kalmyks, Kirgiz and Khivans. In 1803 Bergmann handed the notes to Alexander I, and then, with the approval of the tsar, he translated and published the notes in German in Riga.[38] After the 1804 German publication, this account was translated into English in

---

[35] Benjamin Bergmann recorded *Jangar* from the oral account of Kalmyk *Jangarchi*, the singers and narrators of this Oirat epic. He was the first person to record and publish this epic and translate it into a European language. See: Bergmann B., *Nomadische unter den Kalmüken*/ Bd. II, Riga, 1804, pp. 205—211B.

[36] For more information about Bergmann's expedition to Kalmyk steppe, see: Bergmann, Benjamin, *Nomadische Streifereinen unter den Kalmücken, in den Iahren 1802 und 1803*; Bd. I u. II, Riga, 1804; Bd. III u. IV, 1805; "Liubopytnye izvestiia o kalmykakh", *Vestnik evropy*, 1805, № 21, ch. XXIV, 269-283; "Puteshestvie Bergmana k kalmykam", *Aziatskii vestnik*, 1826, kn. 3, 187-189.

[37] This military mission took place when the Kalmyks in Russia started to depart for Jungaria. Michael Khodarkovsky has a thorough study about the tension between Russian authorities and Kalmyks in 1770-1771. See in Khodarkovsky, Michael, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads*, 1600-1771 (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 230-232.

[38] Bergmann, Benjamin (trans.), *Schicksale des Persers Wassilij Michailow unter den Kalmüken, Kirgisen und*

1822, and was published at least twice in London - first in the journal *New Voyages and Travels,* then as an individual account.[39] This narrative was published in German and English, thus Bergmann's intended audience was probably the European readers who knew little about Central Asia and who were curious about this vast land. The tension between "Russianness" and "Otherness" is reflected in this narrative, yet compared with other narratives published in Russian, for instance, with Efremov's narrative, there is less expressing of Mikhailov's imperial and religious identity.

The second group of three narratives, two fictional captivities written by Petr Kudriashev and Nikolai Nazar'evich Murav'ev and one account about the doctor Savva Bol'shoi's captivity in the Kazakh steppe, were published in the 1820s after *Kavkazskiii plennik*, and at a time when the Russian authorities were trying to extend a more regularized form of administration over the Kazakh steppe.[40] From the same title of Kudriashev's short story and Murav'ev's poem, *Kirgizskii plennik* (*Prisoner of the Kirgiz*), it can be seen that they were, according to Austin's definition, written "in the shadow of Pushkin". These two authors showed attempt to adapt the convention of *Kavkazskii plennik* to Russia's encounter with Central Asian tribesmen, especially with the Kazakhs close to the empire's southern borderlands, and to create a "poetic geographical space" of the Kazakh steppe in Russian readers' imagination. Yet as the

---

Chiwensern [Written from notes furnished by Mikhailow](Riga: BartmannschenBuchhandlung, 1804), pp.9-12.

[39] *New Voyages and Travels; consisting of originals and translations*. Vol.7 (London: Sir Richard Phillips & Co., 1822).

[40] See, for instance, M. M. Speransky's *Ustav o sibirskikh kirgizakh* (*Regulations on Siberian Kirgiz*) in 1822.

following chapters will show, the places for the Caucasus and Central Asia in Russian Romanticism are significantly different. While Russian military forces had already deeply penetrated into the Caucasus in the 1820s, the major campaigns of the Russian conquest of Central Asia had not yet begun at that time, thus Central Asian cultures seemed to have less space for romanticizing. The Kazakh tribesmen were mainly portrayed as alien and threatening neighbours of the Russian Empire.

With slight differences, the two *Kirgizskii plennik* narratives are telling the same story: a group of Ural Cossacks are attacked by Kazakh tribesmen; all but one of them, Fedor, are killed. He is then taken captive by the Kazakhs and is forced to work as a slave for a Kazakh *batyr* for a whole year. During this year Fedor and the *batyr*'s daughter, Bayana, fall in love with each other, and eventually, one night when *batyr* is out, Fedor and Bayana escape together. In the end they get married in the Orthodox rite. Kudriashev's short story was published two years prior to Murav'ev's poem, thus Murav'ev apparently borrowed the content of the story and the form of *Kavkazskii plennik* to create his own version as a poem. Telling the same story, the two works are written for slightly different purposes. Being mainly an ethnographer of *inorodtsy*, Kudriashev uses the genre of the captivity narrative as a means to popularize his ethnographic materials. Born in Verkhneuralsk, and then moving to Orenburg and Astrakhan, Kudriashev worked as a translator of the Bashkir language in the Astrakhan Governorate. He published many novels, poems and ethnographic records based on his study of the steppe population along the southern borderlands in the

1820s. Thus the ethnographic record is the major difference between Kudriashev's *Kirgizskii plennik* and *Kavkazskii plennik.* Borrowing Kudriashev's story, the poem *Kirgizskii plennik* seems to be written for the purposes of entertainment. Its author, Nikolai Nazar'evich Murav'ev, was Nikolai Murav'ev-Amurskii's father and the head of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery during the reign of Nicholas I. As a historian and an archaeologist, Murav'ev's *Kirgizskii plennik* is almost his only literary work among his other studies on history.

In Savva Bol'shoi's account about his nine-month captivity by the Kazakh tribesmen, the Kazakh captors were also portrayed as alien neighbours of the Empire. Bol'shoi was a prominent Russian doctor.[41] In 1803 he was commissioned to join Iakov Gaverdovskii's diplomatic mission to Bukhara.[42] When the mission set out from Orenburg, it consisted of ninety camels and fifty people, including a Russian caravan, Tatar merchants, interpreters, Cossacks, and doctor Savva Bol'shoi. After one and a half months, when the mission was about to cross the Syr-Darya, a group of Kazakh raiders were found blocking their way to Bukhara. The Kazakh raiders attacked the mission for the goods it was carrying. During this time doctor Bol'shoi was captured

[41] In 1802 Savva Bol'shoi went through the first thesis defense in the Academy of Medicine and Surgery in St. Petersburg, and became the first doctor with a doctor's degree in Russia. See in Zmeev, L. F., *Istoriia imperskoi voenno-meditsinskoi akagemii* (Saint-Petersburg, 1898),148.

[42] The background of this mission is that in 1802 Nikolai Rumyantsev, the Rusian minister of commerce, got a report about a Bashkir counterfeit money maker hiding in Bukhara. The Russian government asked the Bukharans to turn over the criminal to them, but the Bukharan amir refused, so Rumyantsev proposed a diplomatic mission to Bukhara, and this proposal was sanctioned by tsar Alexander I. Lieutenant Iakov Gaverdovskii was then appointed by Rumyantsev as the leader of this diplomatic mission. Besides diplomatic tasks, the aim of the mission also included a geographical survey of the Kazakh steppe and the Bukhara khanate. See in Khalfin N. A., *Rossiia i khanstva srednei azii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), 63-64.

by the raiders, and he then spent nine months in the Kazakh steppe as a slave laborer, being transferred from one host to another. After he was released and returned to Russia, he finished *Zapiski doktora Savvy Bol'shogo o prikliucheniiakh ego v plenu u kirgiz-kaisakov v 1803 g. i 1804 g.* (Doctor Savva Bol'shoi's notes about his adventure and captivity among the Kirgiz-Kaisak in 1803 and 1804, hereafter *Zapiski*) and published it in 1822 in *Syn otechestva*.[43]

The third group of one factual and two fictional captivities were published during and after the major campaigns of Russia's conquest of Central Asia from the 1860s to the 1890s. Compared to earlier writings, captivity stories produced in this period of time show a clearer awareness of Central Asian civilizations as Russia's subjects; at the same time, the enduring influence of *Kavkazskii plennik* can still be traced.

The factual captivity is written by Nikolai Severtsov, a well-known Russian zoologist. In 1856, Severtsov won the Demidov Prize, an annual national scientific prize of the Russian Empire, for his zoological study of Voronezh Governorate. After that Severtsov was commissioned by the Imperial Academy of Sciences to join a two-year scientific mission in the Lower Syr-Darya to conduct geographical and zoological surveys of the steppe. In 1858, Severtsov was captured by the Kokandis during his survey near Fort Perovsky. He spent a month in captivity and then was

[43] This failed mission generated other narratives apart from Bol'shoi's. After Gaverdovskii returned to Saint-Petersburg, he began to publish journals, reports and accounts about the mission and about the risk of traveling on the Kazakh steppe. His most prominent text is *Obozrenie Kirgiz-kaisatskoi stepi*. Though the diplomatic task was not completed, Gaverdovskii still managed to finish the geographical survey, and his record provides materials for the subsequent studies on the Kazakh steppe, for instance, A. I. Levshin's *Opisanie kirgiz-kaisatskikh ord i stepei*. See in *Istoriia kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov*, vol. 5, p. 15.

released owing to negotiations between Kokandi tribesmen and the Russian commanding general of the Syr Darya line Alexander Danzas. Severtsov returned to Russia at the end of 1858 and he published his captivity experience and the observation of the tribesmen in *Mesiats plena u kokantsev* (*A Month of Captivity Among the Kokandis*) in 1860. As the second chapter shows, writing during Russia's engagement with the Kokandi tribesmen, Severtsov foresaw his captors' inevitable submission to Russian and expressed sympathy towards his captors as Central Asian "noble savage". Compared to earlier factual captivity narratives, such as Efremov's and Bol'shoi's, Severtsov's representation of Central Asian peoples is closer to Pushkin's and Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's Circassian mountaineers, and this shift took place along with the Empire's expansion.

Leskov created a captivity episode in *The Enchanted Pilgrim* (1873). In this novella, the Russian monk Ivan Severyanych Flyagin, "Ivan Northson Flaskman" as Hugh McLean translates his super-Russian name, starts to tell his story to the passengers on a ship sailing over Lake Ladoga.[44] In his childhood, as a son "promised to God" by his mother, he gets a sign in a dream that he will finally go to the monastery. But before that, he will "be dying many times...until real death comes".[45] Thus the story he tells is mainly about his many struggles between life and death, and all of them take place near the imperial southern borderland. He serves imperial officers,

[44] McLean, Hugh, *Nikolai Leskov: The Man and His Art* (Harvard:Harvard University Press, 1977).

[45] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer and other stories* (London: Vintage Books, 2014), 121.

spends ten years in captivity among the "Tatar" tribesmen (it is not clear from the description whether they are Noghais or Kazakhs), and takes part in the Caucasian war. In the captivity episode, Flyagin is forced to spend ten years in imprisonment among the "Tatars" in the Ryn Desert, the desert on the northern shore of the Caspian Sea, until he finally escapes. As the first chapter analyzes, Flyagin is constructed by Leskov as a Russian *bogatyr*, an epitome of simple "Russianness". He is, just as Walter Benjamin's characterization of many Leskov's heroes, "a righteous man ... a simple, active man who becomes a saint apparently in the most natural way in the world".[46] In this novella the empire is portrayed as an enormous and diverse unity. Flyagin, a simple and ordinary Russian serf, is both a conqueror and a captive, a witness and a participant of many imperial experiences.

Another fictional captivity story written after Russia's conquest of Central Asia is Victor Lunin's *lubok* fiction *Nevol'nichestvo u aziatov* (*Slavery among the Asiatics,* 1895). Written at the end of the nineteenth century and reprinted several times in pre-revolutionary period, this fiction is an example of adapting the convention of Oriental captivity theme to popular literature to attract a wide readership.[47] In this fiction, the aged sailor Vikula in a Russian village near the Caspian tells of his captivity among the "half-savage Asiatic nations" to a group of fellow-peasants. He recalls being captured and taken to "the other side of the Caspian sea, where Russians have rarely

[46] Benjamin, Walter, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov" (Harry Zohn trans.), *Chicago Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter - Spring, 1963), 82

[47] First published in 1895, *Nevol'nichestvo u aziatov* was reprinted in 1898, 1908, 1911, 1913 and 1914.

been to". Vikula is sold to Khiva and works as a slave laborer for many years. During his captivity, he observes the customs of the Khivans and has a tragic romance with his owner's daughter Fat'ma. In the end he redeems himself from his owner and returns to Russia. This fiction, according to Jeffery Brooks' examination, is an expressing of "the expanse of Russia" and "the unfolding of the empire to the south".[48] Vikula, like Leskov's Flyagin, tells his captivity experience from the past, when the frontier was still volatile and uncertain; it is now incorporated into Russia's vast land.

The limit of this thesis is that it certainly does not cover all Russia's captivity narratives about Central Asia. While I focus on published narratives written by captive-narrators and authors who had the intention to retell and construct captivity experiences, there are much more unpublished archival materials about ordinary peasants or fishermen from the Astrakhan, Ural'sk or Orenburg regions, carried off during Central Asian steppe nomads' raids on Russian settlements.[49] Also in selecting narratives based on factual captivities, I focus on those writings that attempt not only to record, but also to narrate and construct first-hand experiences of capture, enslavement and escape/release, which means they were written consciously for a broad readership, rather than just for the purpose of reportage.[50] There are surely

---

[48] Brooks, 242.

[49] For instance, during my research I have come across some archival materials from *Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan* in Almaty (Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, TsGARKaz). There are numerous official reports and records about the situation of slaves (*nevol'niki*) in Central Asia, especially in the Kazakh steppe. These archival sources not only include information about Russian slaves, but also non-Russians, such as Kalmyks. See, for instance: "Vedomosti o 'nevol'nikakh', nakhodiashchikhsia u kazakhov", TsGARKaz, f. 345, op. 1, d. 1377. I thank Jeff Eden for providing the information about the archival sources in TsGARKaz.

[50] One example of the reportage about Russian captives in Central Asia is: "Nevol'niki v Khive", *Vestnik evropy*, 1815,

more issues to be explored in the field of Russian captives in Central Asia, and this thesis intends to reveal part of the picture by exploring published writings about Central Asian captivity in dynamic nineteenth-century Russia: before and after Pushkin and Russia's conquest of this vast land.

This thesis is organized according to various themes that appear repeatedly in the narratives examined. Chapter one, "The Making of a Russian Hero: Force, Benevolence and Resistance in the Writing of Captivity", focuses on the captives' resistance to the encroachment of the alien captive-taking cultures. The captors' violence and their torturing of the captives are consciously highlighted to follow the conventions of the genre, and to foreground the threat from captive-taking cultures that Russia was facing in its expansion. The captors' benevolence is portrayed as undesirable confinement for the captives, who see the captors' cultures as inhospitable. By writing about their endurance and resistance, the narrators depict Russian captives as heroes who are able to demarcate themselves from the captive-taking cultures and keep their Russian spirit intact. The second chapter, "Building a Romantic Fantasy: Femininity and Masculinity in Captivity Narratives", examines the male and female images of captives and captors portrayed in captivity stories. This chapter will show that the images of Russian male captives and Central Asian females are overall persistent. Russian captives are usually capable of

---

No. 7, Part 80. Another example of official report on captivity is Mikhail Galkin's records on Russian captives who were released by the Bukharan Khanate in 1858 after Ignat'ev's diplomatic mission in *Etnograficheskie i istoricheskie materialy po rednei azii i orenburgskomu kraiu* (1868).

outmanoeuvring their Central Asian captors in love and civilization. Central Asian females, following Pushkin's Caucasian convention, are depicted as devoted lovers with ardent Oriental passion. They are portrayed as both fruit and victim of the clashes between Russian and Oriental civilizations. The representation of Central Asian masculinity was apparently enriched along with the empire's actual expansion into the steppe. In the 1820s, the captors were described as alien and threatening neighbours who were dominant in violence, yet impotent in love and civilization. In the middle of the century some admiration and sympathy towards Central Asian male heroes appeared. This chapter reveals a dynamic of "first feared, then despised, finally pitied", as Khodarkovsky puts it, in Russia's imagining of the Central Asian Orient.[51] Chapter three, "Captive's gaze: Russian Captives' Superior Knowledge in Land and Medicine", examines captivity narrative as an equivalent to travelogue and ethnography. Captivity narratives were being written and read as a unique type of ethnographic and scientific works. For captive-narrators of factual narratives, captivity experiences provide unparalleled opportunities to engage with captive-taking cultures. Fictional captivity stories also serve as a ground for writers to incorporate their travel experiences and ethnographic knowledge. With land and medicine as two specific examples, this chapter aims to reveal that the captives' gaze is unequal - during the captivity, the captive-narrators were confined and restrained; nevertheless, under the disguise of passive suffering, the imperial captives were the

[51] Khodarkovsky, *Russia's steppe frontier*, 186.

ones who were ultimately free to judge and construct their captors' identity. They managed to turn trauma into a sense of superiority. They were both victims and vanguards of Russia's expansion into and colonization of Central Asia.

Chapter I

The Making of a Russian Captive Hero: Force, Benevolence and Resistance in the Writing of Captivity

What kind of "humble names", if we use Pushkin's word in his retelling of two Pugachev's Russian captives, among the Russian captives in Central Asia attracted nineteenth-century Russian authors? How should a "real" Russian and Christian captive act in their encounters' with captors from an alien culture? This chapter approaches these questions by exploring the omnipresent tension that appeared in the captivity narratives - the captors' attempts to tame the captives, and the captives' effort to resist it. Using force or benevolence, the Central Asian captors in these narratives try to transform their captives into submissive servants or subjects of their societies. The Russian captive-heroes, on the other hand, passively or actively resist the possibility of conversion, accommodation or transculturation to show their religious faith and loyalty to the empire. By writing about their endurance and resistance, the narrators portray the Russian captives as heroes who are able to demarcate themselves from the tyrannical and backward captive-taking cultures and show their true "Russianness".

The Construction of Captors' Violence and Torture

Violence and torture have long been a dominating theme in the genre of captivity narrative to emphasis the tyrannical "Otherness" of the captive-taking culture. The narrators were keen to record not only the torture applied to them, but also the native violence they had witnessed. As far back as the seventeenth century, some British captivity narratives, for instance, Francis Brooks's *Barbarian Cruelty* (1693), are simply organized as a catalog of the torture and physical punishment of the captive-taking cultures.[52] Torture is also the central theme in the most frequently published American captivity narrative, Peter Williamson's *French and Indian Cruelty, exemplified in the Life and various Vicissitudes of Fortune of Peter Williamson, who was carried off from Aberdeen in his Infancy and sold as a slave in Pennsylvania* (1757).[53] In this narrative, Williamson gives a gory description on the Native Americans' treatment of the captives. As he writes, the Indians "not only scalped [one victim], but immediately roasted him, before he was dead; then like Cannibals, for want of other Food, eat his whole Body, and of his Head, made what they call'd, an Indian Pudding".[54] The popularity of this account shows the eighteenth-century readers' interest in seeing how alien and barbarous the captive-taking cultures are. However, while this description of cannibalism surely constructs an image of savage cruelty, it also reveals a certain level of manipulation of the captivity experience by this "Indian Peter". As Indian Pudding is now known as a kind of American dessert introduced by British

[52] Snader, 75.

[53] This narrative has forty-one reprints. See: Snaer, 25, 76.

[54] Snaer, p. 79.

colonists during the colonial period, it is highly unlikely that the native Americans of the eighteenth century would use the word. "Indian Pudding", as well as Williamson's pseudonym "Indian Peter", are both techniques to color the account and to impress his readership.

The same focus on the captors' cruelty can be found in nineteenth-century Russian captivity narratives about Central Asia. Most Russian captives of this period were captured during raids and military operations. Force is applied by the captors to intimidate and tame the captives, so that they will give up struggling and be obedient. The depiction of violence is a vital element that explains the reason why it is impossible for the captives to escape, and creates a setting that foregrounds the heroic resistance that the narrator depicts in the text that follows.

An example of the emphasis on torture and the cruelty of the captors is the representation of Foma Danilov's captivity among the Kokandis. This incident was first reported in the newspapers, then discussed in *A Writer's Diary* and incorporated in *The Brothers of Karamazov* by Dostoevskii. In the 1877 issue of *A Writer's Diary*, Dostoevskii discusses a newspaper article from *Russkii invalid* about Foma Danilov, a Russian solider from the Turkestan infantry battalion, who was captured in the Ferghana valley in 1875 by the Qipchaq leader Pulat-Khan during General M. D. Skobelev's conquest of the Kokand Khanate.[55] As the newspaper article records,

[55] In 1875 Pulat-Khan rebelled against the ruling of the Khanate, and Russian armies, led by Skobelev with the authorization of Konstantin von Kaufman, attacked Kokand at the same time. The Ferghana valley was incorporated into Russian Turkestan right after the campaign in 1876. The records about Foma Danilov can be seen in: "O geroicheskoi smerti unter-ofitsera Danilova", *Russkii ivalid*, 1876, April 27, No. 90, p.2 and in *Turkestanskii sbornik*, vol. 424, pp. 78-80; Dostoevsky, Fyodor, "Foma Danilov, a Russian Hero Tortured to Death" in *A Writer's*

Pulat-Khan was so savage that "slaughtering people, like slaughtering sheep, gave him great pleasure". He threatened Foma Danilov and promised wealth to him if he would be willing to convert to Islam, while the Russian solider answered: "I was born with this faith, and I will die with it; I swore an oath to my tsar and I will never betray Him." He was then seriously wounded by shooting and suffered torture until he died. The "natives" (*tuzemtsy*) commented on his heroic death: "This Russian soldier died like a *bogatyr*".[56] By attributing the collection of the materials about Foma Danilov to the military commander Skobelev, who had already completed the annexation of Kokand and captured Pulat-Khan when the article was published, this article apparently intends to both justify and celebrate Russia's accomplished conquest of Kokand. The Khan's brutality exaggerates the threat of Skobelev's adversary in this expedition, while the indigenous people's appreciation of the *bogatyr* implies a certain acceptance of Russia's presence.

Dostoevskii is impressed by this episode from Russia's military campaigns in Central Asia. He sees in Danilov's heroic martyrdom the "genuine image of the whole of our People's Russia", where there is "no falsity, no compromise with the conscience", but "only an astounding, primitive, elemental honesty".[57] Dostoevskii represents the incident again in *The Brothers of Karamazov* in a discussion that takes place at the

---

Diary, Volume 2: 1877-1881(Translated by Kenneth Lantz) (Illinos: Northwestern University Press, 1997), pp. 820-825.

[56] "O geroicheskoi smerti unter-ofitsera Danilova", pp. 78-79.

[57] Dostoevskii, *A Writer's Diary,* pp. 822-823.

Karamazovs. The incident - a Russian soldier captured by "Asians" and "flayed alive" - is brought out by Fedor Karamazov's religious servant Grigory and leads to Smerdiakov's first speech in the novel. This disputation between Grigory and Smerdiakov opens the novel's central conflict between faith and reason. While Grigory (faith) admires the soldier's martyrdom, Smerdiakov (reason) asserts that the Russian captive could have given up his faith to save his life, because there is "no sin ... to save his life for good deeds with which to atone in the course of the years for his faintheartedness".[58] Smerdiakov makes the nihilist claim that if everybody has a firm faith, then everybody should have the power to move a mountain as the Bible says; but since no one can really move mountains, then it means no one has real faith, so a one-time betrayal of faith in the captive's case can be forgiven as well. Aliosha concludes that "Smerdiakov's faith is not Russian at all."[59] This disputation reflects one of the central themes that Dostoevskii intends to represent in his last novel - as Joseph Frank notes, it is faith as "the irrational core of the Christian commitment" that was "posed centrally in Russian culture".[60]

In Dostoevskii's incorporation of Foma Danilov's captivity, certain details are consciously blurred or dramatized to highlight the gist of the narrative - the universal and unshakable faith that is deeply embedded in Russian people. The brutality of the

---

[58] Dostoevskii, Fedor, *The Brothers of Karamazov* (translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky) (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), p. 107.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[60] Frank, Joseph, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 570.

"Asian" captors is dramatized (Foma Danilov was executed by shooting; Dostoevskii's Russian soldier is "flayed alive" by the "Asians"), while a historical coloring is blurred (the captive and the captors are nameless).[61] As Dostoevskii asserts in *A Writer's Diary*, "the people have Foma Danilovs by the thousands." He sees in Foma Danilov, "one of the most ordinary and unremarkable representatives of the Russian People", the universal greatness of Russian spirit that challenges Smerdiakov's sophistry. By contrasting the captors' atrocity and captive's heroic martyrdom, Dostoevskii turns the captivity story into a symbol of the fundamental dichotomy between reason and faith, Christian and Islam, Russians and Asians in the nineteenth-century Russian culture.

A thought-provoking comparison might be made between Foma Danilov's captivity story and Efremov's self-fashioning in his *Stranstvovanie*. Efremov provides a vivid torture scene that took place during his captivity in Bukhara in the 1770s. As Efremov records, after he was sold by Kazakh tribesmen to the Bukharan *atalyk* Daniyal-*biy*, one day a Bukharan envoy returned from Russia and brought a Russian letter for the *atalyk*. Efremov was called by the *atalyk* to translate the letter. Seeing "the title of Her Most Gracious Majesty" on the letter, Efremov cried with joy, while the *atalyk* was not sympathetic at all towards Efremov's tears. On the contrary, Efremov's tears aroused the *atalyk*'s interest in converting Efremov to Islam. Then Efremov

[61] Joseph Frank has analyzed the setting of the novel and concluded that Dostoevsky deliberately blurs its historical context: "The book [*The Brothers of Karamazov*] recounts events that supposedly occurred thirteen years earlier, although no attempt is made to preserve a strict historical coloring (as can be seen from the reference to Foma Danilov, whom Dostoevsky wrote about in the 1877 *Diary*)." See in Frank, p. 571.

provides a lively description of how *Daniyal-biy* attempted to convert him to Islam by torturing him for three days, while he withstands and shows his complete adherence to Orthodoxy. As he records:

> Мучение со мною отправлялось следующим образом: положив в большое деревянное корыто с пуд соли, налили в оное горячей воды; когда же соль разошлась и вода остыла, тогда связав меня в утку, всунули в рот деревянную палку и, повалив на спину в корыто, лили мне в рот соленую воду. От такого мучения чрез день умирают, но меня хотели спасти и для того после каждого мучения, продолжавшегося с час, давали пить топленого овечьего сала по три чашки, из коих каждая величиною с нашу полоскательницу; сие вбирает в себя всю соль и очищает живот верхом и низом... Три дня я был так мучим. Аталык, видя свое мучение, со мною делаемое, тщетным, убеждал по крайней мере в верной службе дать присягу, которую я по необходимости наружно учинил.
>
> (The torture of me went in this way: They put a *pood* of salt in a large wooden tub, then poured hot water into it. After the salt dissolved and the water cooled down, they tied me up, stuck a wooden stick into my mouth, and started to flush the salty water down my throat. People usually die from this torture after one day, but they intended to keep me alive, thus after each hour's torture they let me drink three cups of melted sheep fat, which would absorb all the salt and clear the stomach from top to bottom... I was tortured like this for three days. Seeing that the torture done to me was futile, the *Atalyk* tried to persuade me to at least swear allegiance to serve [him], which I had to do outwardly.)[62]

Through this paragraph Efremov intends to convey two messages about his captivity to his readers. The first is that the *atalyk*'s attempt to convert Efremov to Islam failed, because the protagonist withstood the torture heroically. His heroism even made the *atalyk* make a concession so that Efremov could keep his faith. The second is that his service in the Bukharan army was just an outward compromise. As he explains, under the captor's threats, he had to swear allegiance to Daniyal-*biy*, but "I made the oath only by my tongue, but not by my soul, for my soul can only feel the zeal to serve the

[62] Efremov, Fillip, "Stranstvovanie Filippa Efremova v Kirgizskoi stepi, Bukharii, Khive, Persii, Tibete i Indii i vozvreshenie ego ottuda cherez angliiu v rossiiu", *Puteshestviia po vostoku v epokhu Ekateriny II* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 1995), 185.

Empress of All Russia".[63] This outward compromise makes the setting of his subsequent heroic feats in the *atalyk*'s army and his tactful escape from Bukhara. By justifying his physical service to the *atalyk* and emphasizing his psychological loyalty to the Empress and Orthodoxy, Efremov depicts himself as a multi-faced captive-protagonist, who is capable of serving his Central Asian captors as a military professional, while keeping his Russian identity. He portrays himself as the kind of tactful captive-hero who would wait for years among the captors for the chance of escape.

Compared with Pushkin's writing about the two Russian officers in *Istoriia Pugacheva* and Dostoevskii's highlighting of Foma Danilov, Efremov's political compromise seems less ideal for a Russian hero, since both Pushkin and Dostoevskii choose to portray the kind of Russian captives who would be loyal to the emperor/empress and Orthodoxy even when their lives are threatened. Efremov might have the same understanding of a real Russian's heroism, but as a survivor of Asian captivity, in his writing he needs to justify his service in the Bukharan army at the same time, thus he approaches the issue of loyalty from a different perspective - he splits religiosity and political loyalty. The heroism shown under torture demonstrates his absolute adherence to Orthodoxy, while the "outward" compromise he had to make provided him with the ethnographic knowledge of Oriental cultures that allowed him

[63] "Ту присягу я сделал только из пристрастия языком, а не душою, ибо душа моя более в себе ощущала ревности единственно к службе всероссийское императрице."Ibid., 150.

to serve the Empress after he returned to Russia.[64] This perspective shows the multi-faced features of a non-fictional captivity narrative. It can be written as an adventure, a tale of a *bogatyr*, and at the same time it is also serves as an ethnographic record. Being aware of the significance of loyalty to one's faith and sovereign, Efremov incorporates the self-fashioning of his heroism into his writing of a vivid ethnographic account of an Oriental torture.

Among the fictional works on the captivity theme, the most vivid torture picture might be that in Leskov's *The Enchanted Pilgrim*. The novel's contemporary critic Nikolai Mikhailovskii points out its elements of "a national epos", and Lev Anninsky characterizes the protagonist, the monk Ivan Severyanych Flyagin, as "an epitome of 'Russianness'" and "the embodiment of *bogatyr*".[65] In this novel, Flyagin, tells of his many sufferings and struggles between life and death, all of which take place near the imperial southern borderland. He is both a conqueror and a captive, a witness and a participant of many imperial experiences. A focus on the captivity episode might help us to understand how the captivity experience contributes to Leskov's construction of a Russian *bogatyr*.

The captors' violent "operation" to enslave Flyagin is an impressive highlight in this novel. The captivity starts with a flogging competition among the Tatars. On the

---

[64] Efremov worked as an translater of Bukharan, Persian and other Asian languages after he returned to Russia. See ibid., p. 191.

[65] Nikolai, Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol.5 (with the introduction by Lev Anninsky) (Moscow:EKRAN, 1993), p. 54.

steppe near Penza, the nomadic 'Tatars' (these could be either Noghais or Kazakhs) are gathering at a horse market. Flyagin witnesses how two Tatars compete for a good horse without paying any money, but by flogging each other. Since Flyagin is unemployed and bored at that time, he decides to take part in another flogging competition, in which he accidentally kills his competitor. To avoid a trial, Flyagin chooses to hide among the Tatars, who take him to their tribe in the Ryn Desert, the desert on the northern shore of the Caspian Sea. Flyagin is enslaved by the Tatars for ten years, and the captors accomplish this long-term physical confinement by violence. As Flyagin explains, after his first failed attempt of escape, the captors cut his heels and bristled him up, and subsequently he can only walk bowlegged on his ankle bones in the following ten year. Flyagin describes this "terrible operation":

> Very simply: ten of them pushed me to the ground and said, 'Shout, Ivan, shout louder when we start cutting. It'll be easier for you.' And they sat on me, and in a trice one master craftsman of theirs cut the skin open on my soles, put in some chopped-up horse-hair, covered it with the skin, and sewed it up with string. After that they kept my hands tied up for a few days, for fear I'd harm my wounds and the bristles would come out with the pus; but once the skin healed, they let me go: 'Now,' they say, 'greetings to you, Ivan, now you're our real friend and you'll never get away from us.' I just got to my feet then, when I went crashing to the ground again: the chopped-up hair sewn under the skin of my heels pricked the live flesh with such deadly pain that it was not only impossible to take a step, but there was even no way to stand on my feet. I had never cried in my life, but here I even howled out loud.[66]

Here, through Flyagin's narration, Leskov notes an important feature in the captors' violence: it is implemented not out of hatred or hostility towards the captives, but out of the intention to accommodate and secure them. As Flyagin tells his audience: "It's the most ordinary thing in the world for them – if they start liking you and want to

[66] Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer and Other Stories*, 148-149.

keep you around, and you're lonesome and melancholy and try to make an escape, they'll fix you up so you can never leave."[67] Flyagin is seen as the captors' friend, but the captors can only use force to keep him stay. This seemingly absurd paradox, together with Flyagin's strong longing for Russia during the whole captivity, draws an interesting dichotomy between the captive's culture and the captive-taking cultures: when the homeland, namely, Russia in these narratives, attracts the captive with its liberty and civilization psychologically, the captive-taking cultures apply force and tyranny to restrain him physically. More importantly, the ways the captors are taking to convert their captives are not only brutal, but also inefficient and ineffective.

The heroism and *bogatyrstvo* of Flyagin lies in the fact that his spirit remains unbroken despite the "terrible operation" applied to him. His faith in Orthodoxy remains unchanged, and his desire to escape from the steppe stays strong during the ten-year captivity. As Kenneth Lantz summarizes, Flyagin's story is about a Russian's "primitive energy". By creating a positive hero like Flyagin, Leskov depicts "a basic, living form of Christianity".[68] Leskov provides a different pattern of *bogatyr* from Pushkin's officers and Dostoevskii's Danilov. Flaygin's heroism is not portrayed through a heroic martyrdom, but through a sustained and tenacious effort to preserve his own spirit. This passive, yet sustained resistance to the captive-taking culture is a common theme in the writing of captivity experience.

---

[67] Leskov, 148.

[68] Lantz, K. A., *Nikolay Leskov* (Boston:Twayne Publishers, 1979), pp. 85-87.

From the three captivity stories examined above, it can be seen that the account of brutal Oriental torture is a vital element in the depiction of a captive-hero. The torture scenes are consciously constructed to play up the uncivilized features of the captors and foreground the heroism of a Russian captive, who is capable of resisting the captors' violent threat, while maintaining his "Russianness", Christian spirit and longing for his homeland. A Russian *bogatyr* is able to prove his unshakable faith to confront the captors' overwhelming power.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the dynamics of imperial expansion are also reflected in the writing of violence in captivity experiences. Russian military officers and caravans were faced with a real danger of captivity and robbery on the steppe in their journeys during the first half of the nineteenth century. Gradually the imperial army established lines of fortresses on the steppe and asserted control. By 1867 the whole steppe was under direct Russian control and administration. The increasing security and Russia's extension of colonial rule over Central Asia slightly changed the tone of captivity narratives. Not only did the number of these narratives decrease in the second half of the century, the captors' application of violence and force also became restrained.

The different experiences of Savva Bol'shoi and Nikolai Severtsov can best illustrate the dynamics of power on the steppe in the nineteenth century. In 1803, Gaverdovskii's diplomatic mission to Bukhara was attacked by Kazakh raiders and doctor Bol'shoi was captured by Kazakh tribesmen. When Bol'shoi was captured, he

was dragged to the Kazakh tribe and humiliated by the tribesmen. As he records in his *Zapiski*, in the tribe, some Kazakhs, "cursed monsters", humiliated him with "all malicious gibes and abuses", and some spat on his face and "make different grimaces". Other tribesmen threatened him by showing their weapons - some "whipped him on his naked body", and some "poked his throat, teeth and eyes with knives".[69] He was forced to work as a slave among the Kazakh tribesmen for a year. By contrast, in 1858, during a scientific expedition on the Lower Syr Darya, Nikolai Severtsov, a well-known Russian zoologist, was also captured by the Kokandis in the same region. At that time Russian army had already taken the Kokandi fortress of Ak-Mechet', but sporadic conflicts and raids by the armies of Kokand still threatened Russian control in this steppe region. The Kokandi captors were well aware of the empire's military moves. Severtsov barely encountered any violence. The tribesmen kept him for ransom and bargaining with the Russian armies, and they also tried to get some information from Severtsov about Russia's military moves. He did not work at all and he was well-treated by the leaders of the tribesmen. When Bol'shoi was only shabbily dressed during his captivity, Severtsov could even ask for a softer cushion on his saddle.[70] Severtsov also noticed this himself, as he writes: "...they still treated me humanely. In

[69] "Треклятые изуверы, желая более усугубить мою горесть, делая всякие язвительные насмешки и ругательства. Иной, скача во всю конскую прыть, и гикнуть во все горло, как будто насквозь хотел проколоть пикою; другой замахивался саблею, и как будто хотел разрубить пополам. Некоторые ударяли плетью по обнаженному телу, иные же тыкая ножем в горло, в зубы, в глаза; другие плевали в лице, делая различные кривлянья." in Bol'shoi, S., "Zapiski Savvy Bol'shogo o prikliucheniiakh ego v plenu u kirgiz-kaisakov v 1803 g. i 1804 g.", *Syn otechestva*, No. 12, 1822, 217.

[70] Severtsov, 51.

1852 the Kokand kirgiz captured three Siberian Cossacks, who were injured as badly as I was. Before riding, they were dragged for three *verst* on lassos, but I was dragged just for ten steps".[71] Severtsov spent only a month in captivity and then was released owing to the negotiation between Kokandis and the Russian commanding general of the Syr Darya line, Alexander Danzas. Bol'shoi and Severtsov were captured almost in the same region. Their different fates certainly provide a reflection of Russia's growing presence in the Kazakh steppe.[72]

Thus toward the end of the nineteenth century, along with Russia's conquest of Central Asia and the increasing security along the borderlands, non-fictional captivity narratives gradually transformed from exotic adventure writings to ethnographic works. While the captors failed to tame the captives in the texts, the captives' empire increased its power over Asian cultures in the real world. The relationship between the writing of captivity and the empire's expansion will be further discussed in the following chapters.

---

[71] "...со мной поступили еще человеколюбиво. В 1852 году, коканские киргизы захватили трех сибирских казаков, изранивши их не хуже меня, и прежде чем посадить на лошадей, три версты тащили на арканах, а меня всего шагов десять", Severtsov, 23.

[72] One example is A. Tatarinov's *Semimesiachnyi plen v Bukharii* (1867). In 1865 Tatarinov came to Bukhara as a traveler with a Russian diplomatic mission, but their mission was imprisoned by the Emir for seven months. Although Tatarinov records the hostility towards Russians during his stay in Bukhara, the mission did not meet any violence or torture. They were overall under house arrest until the Emir released them. See Tatarinov, A. A., *Semimesiachnyi plen v Bukharii* (Moscow and Saint-Petersburg: Tip. M. O. Vol'fa, 1867). Katya Hokanson kindly provided another valuable reference about a similar "captivity" incidence that happened to the Swiss traveler Henri Moser in Bukhara in 1883. As he records, when he traveled to Bukhara in the company of a Russian envoy, they were kept by the Emir as a "virtual prisoner" for three weeks. They were probably kept as hostages as part of Bukhara's diplomatic policy in their relations with Russia. See in Becker, Seymour, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924* (Taylor & Francis, 2004), 168.

The Threat of Benevolence

While the conventional images of barbarous captors and resisting captives are deeply embedded in the notion of captivity, based on the narratives, the actual experiences are in fact diverse and complex. For instance, for the captors, force is not the only way to bring round the captives. In the narratives, there are also many descriptions about how the captors are trying to lure their slaves so they can give up thoughts of escape. This process usually involves the masters' benevolence, and the prospect of marriage. The protagonists depicted in the captivity narratives, however, always take these adaptations to their circumstances of slavery as threatening factors. They resist transculturation and stick to their objective of escaping from their captors despite the threat of discovery or being captured again. In these cases, captivity is portrayed as a trial to test to what extent the captives could stick to their pursuit of liberty and longing for their homeland. The real threat is not that of living in captivity, but of losing one's "Russianness" by succumbing to these temptations.

No matter how well the captive-protagonists live among the Central Asians, they repeatedly stress their longing for Russia and eagerness to escape. Efremov, for instance, mentions that Daniyal-*biy* awards him land and money and promotes him for his heroic feats in the Bukharan army, but he does not show appreciation for Daniyal-*biy*'s awards. On the contrary, he takes advantage of Daniyal-*biy*'s trust and his affair with a Persian bondmaid and finally escapes. What matters in his writing is that Daniyal-*biy*'s growing trust in him provides him with more freedom and the

possibility of escape.

A more explicit example of the captor's benevolence is Mikhailov's slavery in Khiva in *Adventures*. Among the narratives mentioned in this thesis, it is in this account that the most benevolent master can be found. As Mikhailov is transferred successively from Kalmyks to Kazakhs, then to Khivans, he describes the various living conditions of the slaves among the Central Asian captors. In Mikhailov's case, he suffers mostly from the treatment he receives from his Kazakh captors. While he could still eat properly among the Kalmyks, he suffers from hunger all the time with the Kazakhs, and his feet are always put in shackles and hands fastened with ropes. In Khiva he enjoys the most comfortable slave life. He happens to be purchased by a kind master, who treats him like a brother.

As Alan Fisher points out, the Koran orders Muslim slave owners to treat the slaves humanely and encourages them to free the slaves, as it is recognized as a kind of pious act.[73] This aspect can be traced in Mikhailov's slavery in Khiva. In this ordinary Khivan family, Mikhailov is assigned only some trifling domestic work to do, dresses decently and eats properly.[74] His master's family is very tolerant of his rebellion. After one failed attempt at escape, when the owner was about to flog Mikhailov, the owner's wife throws the whip away and persuades him to forgive Mikhailov: "Everybody prefers his own country to any other; how can you find fault

[73] Fisher, Alan, "Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade", *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 6:4 (1972), p. 576.

[74] *Adventures of Michailow, a Russian captive, among the Kalmucs, Kirghiz, and Kiwenses. Written by Himself* (London: Sir Richard Phillips & Co., 1822), 27.

with him for wishing to return home? Abuse him no longer, but rather endeavor, in future, to *gain his affections* by kindness; hard words make people sad." The master then treats Mikhailov as usual, or even better. After this incident, Mikhail recalls that once on the street he tries a home-made beverage from berries and he really likes it. When he tells his master, the master is very pleased to show his kindness, so he himself goes to the market immediately to shop for berries and makes the beverage for Mikhailov.[75] This episode shows the master's real endeavor to please the slave, which is a completely different picture from the torture and violent scenes examined above.

As the picturing of the captors is always intended to highlight the character of the captive-narrators, the master's unusual kindness is described as a test and a barrier that Mikhailov needs to pass to show his "Russianness". Mikhailov is very alert to the benevolence shown to him. The master once proposes Mikhailov's marriage with a Khivan woman, and he promises to provide gold and sixty sheep for this marriage, as long as Mikhailov remains in his family. Mikhailov, however, is very alarmed at the possibility of staying in Khiva permanently, so instead of securing him, his master's proposal leads directly to his first attempt to escape.[76] Here the captor's kindness is seen by the captive as something very tricky. Unlike violence, which the captives can resist by their physical strength, resisting the master's benevolence requires the

[75] *Ibid.*, 35.

[76] *Ibid.*, 31.

captives' inner strength and an extremely strong attachment to their homeland. In Mikhailov's case, this attachment is expressed in an unwillingness to stay in slavery among alien cultures. As he describes, "during the night I dreamed of nothing but the friends I had left there, that I conversed with them on the most agreeable subjects... But when I awoke, and found myself in a Kiwense hut, my sorrow was very great."[77] Mikhailov expresses his biggest concern in captivity as the fear of separation from a familiar surroundings, i.e. Russia. His attachment to the Russian land urges him many times to escape from captivity.

As mentioned above, force and violence applied by the captors are always portrayed as not only uncivilized, but also as an inefficient and ineffective means to accommodate the captives. The seductions are portrayed in the same way. The masters' intention is to secure their captives mentally, but the captive-protagonists' refusal aims to show that it is impossible to manacle their mind. Benevolence is undesirable confinement and resistance to it is the captives' last but the most important pursuit - the pursuit of freedom. This asserted longing for liberty, together with religiosity, are the captives' most frequently used tools against the captors in their writing of the captivity experiences.

Religiosity as Heroic Resistance

Unlike the two Russian officers in *Istoriia Pugacheva* and Foma Danilov, most

[77] *Ibid.*, 27.

nineteenth-century Russian captive-narrators, especially those who were able to return to Russia and record their stories, did not face the threat of death. The real threat for the captives was the harsh living conditions and the possibility of staying permanently in captivity. To prove that their stories worth recording, the captives need to show their tenacity to keep their Russian spirit intact, in spite of all the difficulties. This sustained effort highlighted in the narratives is an illuminating aspect to examine how the captives are portrayed as heroes.

For the nineteenth-century Russian captives, Orthodoxy is the key element to identify Self and Other. As mentioned above, Efremov's episode of torture presents an example of resistance to forcible conversion. Yet most narratives do not involve the episode of violent conversion. The adherence to Christianity is mainly shown in the captives' everyday life. The captive-narrators tend to demonstrate their religiosity despite the hardship of life among the infidel captors.

Bol'shoi, for instance, resists the local culture in a passive way. After he is captured, Bol'shoi refuses to have any further contact with his captors. As a slave, his main job is collecting wood, lifting water and cooking, and he suffers from hunger all the time. But even when "a day is as long as a year in hunger", he still refuses to talk with the captors. He uses silence as a weapon to confront people whom he despises, and to demarcate himself from them. In this process, religion gives him the biggest spiritual prop. He describes how the belief in Orthodoxy supports him in captivity:

> Я большую часть времени провкел там в безмолвии. Чтож я тогда делать? Первый мой долг был по утрам и вечерам приносить к Богу молитвы, которые

> совершал я большей частью в тайне. Во вторых, старался я, сколько возможно весть счисление времени, и помнить дни по порядку; зная несколько Пасхалию, мог я исчислять и годовые праздники. Удалясь от аула версты за две для собрания дров или за водою, сначала пропоешь несколько стихов; (из которых первый и всегдаший: *Молитву пролию ко Господу* и пр., проникнув до глубины души, исторгал нередко обилиные, умилительные слезы,) и плачешь. Потом вспомнишь какую-нибудь национальную песенку, и промурныкаешь ее.
>
> (I spent most of the time there in silence. What did I do, then? My first task is doing morning and evening prayers, which I did mostly in secret. Secondly, I tried to count days, and keep the order in mind. Knowing which day is Easter, I could count other holidays. When I was away from the aul for woods and water, I first recited some poems and cried (the first of which is always *Molitvu proliyu ko Gospodu*, which percolates through my soul and always makes me burst into plentiful of tears). Then I recall some national songs, and started humming them.)[78]

As Bol'shoi describes, his slavery always reminds him of the prodigal son from the gospel.[79] In this biblical parable, the prodigal son, the son of a wealthy family, sets off for a distant country, and squanders all his money. When a severe famine comes, he works as a hired laborer to feed pigs, and he "longs to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs are eating". When the son comes back and asks his father to hire him as a laborer, his father is deeply touched by his return. They celebrate it with food and dresses. For the father, the son "was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found".[80] The prodigal son's miserable situation in a foreign land and his longing for home apparently arouse Bol'shoi's empathy. Like the lost son, Bol'shoi is working as a slave and doing drudgery all day. He is suffering from hunger and he is shabbily dressed all the time. He is dead in captivity, but when he returns to Russia, he will be

---

[78] Bol'shoi, No. 14, 302.

[79] *Ibid.*, No. 14, 294. "В сем-то бедственном положении, часто приходила мне на мысль Евангельская притча о скитавшемся по чужим странам блудном сыном, воспоминавшемся благословенное состояние родительского дома!"

[80] Luke 15.

alive again.

Religion is an important element in Flyagin's resistance to "going native" in *The Enchanted Pilgrim*. The Tatar captors try to make Flyagin stay through marriage: they offer to Flyagin four "Natashas" - four Tatar wives - and Flyagin has at least nine children in these ten years. Yet he does not consider the children to be his because "they had no Church sacraments".[81] Nor does Flyagin show any liking of the places he has been to. In his description, the steppe has "not a living thing" but endless boredom and anguish. Living on the steppe, his situation is worse than a bird, because a bird has wings, while he has "neither death, nor life, nor repentance, and if you die, they will put you in the salt like mutton, and you can lie there salted until the end of the world".[82] Orthodoxy is closely related to his understanding of happiness and liberty. For him, to be happy and free is to make confession, to have a Church marriage and to die with a Church funeral, and any thoughts about the "baptized land" make him weep. He describes his secret prayer during the night:

> "You wait for night, quietly crawl outside the camp, so that neither your wives, nor the children, nor any of the infidels can see you, and you begin to pray... and you pray... pray so hard that the snow even melts under your knees, and where your tears fall you see grass the next morning."[83]

This episode highly resembles Bol'shoi's experience, but with an impressive coloring of "grass". Yet the "grass" is an impressive highlight of Flyagin's Christianity. On the

---

[81] Leskov, p. 153.

[82] *Ibid.* , 154.

[83] *Ibid.*, p. 155.

steppe, where he describes as a place that has "no living thing" but endless boredom and anguish, grass appears after his prayer. The grass symbolizes that Flyagin is truly, as what Leskov intends to constructs, "a basic, living form of Christianity".[84]

Moreover, the baptism episode, followed by Flyagin's escape, indicates Flyagin's final rebellion against the captors' culture, and shows how superficial the native religion is. In the tenth year, as Flyagin describes, two Khivans come to the Caspian Sea to convince the nomadic Tatars to fight against the Russians. They threaten the Tatars by setting fire to the steppe, and the Tatars are totally horrified by the sounds and fire made by the Khivans, while later Flyagin discovers it is just the result of fireworks. Obtaining this tool, Flyagin, for the first time since he falls into captivity, is able to be the master of the captors. He threatens all Tatars to "believe in his God", and baptizes them in a river.[85] This episode suggests the contrast between the Russian captive and the Asian captors: while Flyagin sticks to Orthodoxy for ten years, the Tatars are frightened by an alien God and are easily converted.

As Walter Benjamin points out, Leskov saw allies in his fight against Orthodox bureaucracy in many Russian legends.[86] Latz also considers *The Enchanted Pilgrim* as Leskov's criticism of the church at the same time.[87] Many times Flyagin encounters

---

[84] Lantz, p.87.

[85] Leskov, p. 163.

[86] Benjamin, Walter, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov" (Harry Zohn trans.), *Chicago Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter - Spring, 1963), 82.

[87] Lantz, p. 87.

the narrowness and mercilessness of the official church. When he accidentally flogs his Tatar competitor to death, the Russians there come to catch him for trial though the Tatar takes part in the competition voluntarily. They tell him that the infidel Tatars can avoid being punished, but Flyagin "has got to be judged by Christianity", so he has to flee with the Tatars.[88] Thus the official church in fact indirectly leads to Flyagin's ten-year captivity. During the captivity, one day two Russian missionaries come to preach to the Tatars. Flyagin cries to beg them to save him, but the official missionaries show no sympathy to him at all. They refuse to help Flyagin, because their policy is just to convert the Tatars. "You are a Christian, and therefore with you we have nothing to worry about, since even without us the gates of paradise are open to your soul, while these people will be in darkness if we don't join them up, so we must worry about them."[89] In the end the missionaries are killed by the Tatars, while Flyagin manages to baptize the captors. Through this contrast, Leskov ironically expresses his disillusionment with the official church. While the missionaries care only about official policy, it is the *bogatyr*-like hero Flyagin, who endures captivity for ten years, that manages to show the true spirit of Christianity. He is, just as Walter Benjamin characterizes many heroes in Leskov's story, "a righteous man ... a simple, active man who becomes a saint apparently in the most natural way in the world".[90]

---

[88] Leskov, p. 147.

[89] Ibid., 156.

[90] Benjamin, 82.

This chapter focuses on the captives' resistance to the encroachment of the alien captive-taking cultures portrayed in the captivity narratives. The captors' violence and their torturing of the captives are consciously highlighted to follow the conventions of the genre, and to foreground the threat of captive-taking cultures that Russia was facing in the nineteenth century. The captors' benevolence is portrayed as undesirable confinement for the captives, who see the captors' cultures as inherently inhospitable and degrading. Apart from the heroic martyrdom that Dostoevskii portrayed, a close examination of the narratives of the survivors shows that captives intend to demonstrate their sustained and tenacious efforts to preserve his "Russianness". Orthodoxy provides the captives with the main spiritual prop, and Empire serves as the place that the captives are longing for, and where they could return after their captivity. By writing about their endurance and resistance, the narrators depict Russian captive heroes who are able to demarcate themselves from the captive-taking cultures and keep their Russian spirit intact. The demarcation from Central Asian captors and unshakable "Russianness" are the prominent features that Dostoevskii sees in Foma Danilov, Leskov depicts in Flyagin, and the captive-narrators highlight in themselves.

Chapter II

Building a Romantic Fantasy: Femininity and Masculinity in Captivity Narratives

The Caucasus was a site of romantic fantasy in the nineteenth-century Russian imagination. In her analysis of the gendering of the Caucasus, Layton identifies two pictures produced by nineteenth-century Russian romantics: Oriental machismo and a feminized Orient. On the one hand, Oriental machismo, for instance, in Lermontov's *Izmail-Bey*, raises a Russian male's sexual anxiety "about orientals' outmanning him in war and love".[91] On the other hand, the Caucasus is depicted as a feminized land under Russia's masculine imperial domination. With a few exceptions (e.g. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's *Ammalat-Bek*, and Lermontov's *Izmail-Bey*), native males are usually absent in Caucasian tales. Georgian males are portrayed as the "drunkard, the rash fool, the coward, the evil bandit, the incarnation of impotence",[92] while Russian protagonists win Georgian heroines' love in their romantic encounters (Griboedov's *Georgian Night* and Lermontov's *Rendez-vous*). As Layton points out, "depreciating Georgian manhood afforded Russian males a gratifying self-image as members of the vast, empire-building nation which they thought destined to assume 'European'

[91] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, 135.

[92] Ibid., 205-6.

suzerainty over a somnolent little territory in Asia."[93] These two sides, both masculine and feminine, filled nineteenth-century female and male readers' sexual imagination about the Orientalized Caucasus.

This Oriental sexual fantasy about Central Asians also followed the model constructed by Caucasian narratives. Focusing on male captive-protagonists' interaction with female representatives from among the captors, and certain male and female individuals, this chapter will examine how the Oriental masculinity and femininity are portrayed in captivity narratives and how Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*, as the most successful example of a captivity romance, influenced the representations of male and female figures from the Central Asian captors' cultures.

Romance as a *topos* in Captivity Stories

Like torture and resistance, romantic intrigue is a prominent theme in the writing of captivity experiences as well. An early and well-known example is the Smith-Pocahontas story in British and American cultures. This story first appeared in a seventeenth-century memoir, then became an enduring topic in poems, novels, arts and films in the following centuries. The creator of this story, John Smith, was one of the English officers involved in the establishment of the first English settlement in North America, and later a ruler of the Virginia colony. He recorded that in 1607 he was captured by native tribesmen and was taken to Chief Powhatan, the leader of the

[93] Ibid., 203.

Indian tribes in the Tidewater region of Virginia. When Powhatan raised his war club to execute Smith, Powhatan's daughter Pocahontas saved Smith by placing her head upon his own. As Smith wrote in the letter to Queen Anne in 1616: "At the minute of my execution, she hazarded the beating out of her owne braines to save mine; and not onely that, but so prevaild with her father, that I was safely conducted to James towne."[94] Although the credibility of this incident is widely questioned, and Pocahontas in fact married another English settler, John Rolfe, she is remembered for her rescue of John Smith, and later interpretations tend to explain this interaction in a rather romantic way.[95] Based on the year when Smith was captured, Pocahontas was only twelve years old, but she was believed to have fallen in love with him, and their love acted as a intermediary in the reconciliation between the Virginian tribes and the English explorers.[96] The repeated reinterpretations certainly show the significance of this story. Authenticity is not the decisive factor that would define the success of these texts. In fact, in John Smith's narratives highly factual materials are intercut with fictional passages. What matters is that the story is simple, dramatic and historically meaningful enough to be interpreted as a symbol. The story is told by the leader of the

---

[94] Hubbell, Jay B., "The Smith-Pocahontas Story in Literature", *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Jul., 1957), 282.

[95] John Smith did not write about his rescue by Pocahontas at all in his 1608 account *A True Relation of Such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as Happened in Virginia.* It only appeared in 1616 in his letter to Queen Anne and in 1624 in *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles.*

[96] An anonymous writer concluded in the London Magazine in 1755 that "the success of our first settlement in America, was chiefly owing to the love this young girl had conceived for Capt. Smith... Love does all that's great below!" See in Hubbell, 284. Another latest example is the 1995 Disney film *Pocahontas*, in which Pocahontas and Smith are portrayed as princess-like and prince-like characters at the same age and they fall in love with each other.

colonizers who was later recognized as "the founder of Virginia, and the pride of the Southern land!"[97] His rescue by a representative from the tribes implies that help is provided from the indigenous side in the establishment of the first colony in America. By representing her story in a romantic way, the tension between the colonized and the colonizers during the Anglo-Powhatan wars can seemingly be played down, and the gap between the two sides can be easily bridged in a harmonious way.

Written by imperial authors during the rapid expansion of the Empire, captivity and romantic contact in an alien land became a similarly intriguing topic for the nineteenth-century Russian public, especially after the publication of Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*. By grounding the story in the Caucasus, the empire's poetically unexplored periphery where an imperial military march was taking place, Pushkin successfully adapted this theme to the Russian context, and constructed Russia's own "poetics of space" and a captivity romance.

The plot of *Kavkazskii plennik*, a Circassian falling in love with a Russian captive, feeding him and helping him to escape, is certainly not original. It draws significantly on the Indian romance in Chateaubriand's *Atala*, and the Turkish romance in Byron's *The Corsair*, though with a different ending - instead of two characters falling in love with each other, as Chateaubriand's Chactas and Atala and Byron's Conrad and Gulnare, Pushkin's captive rejects the Circassian girl's love and she drowns herself after the captive leaves. This romantic intrigue in *Kavkazskii plennik* is widely

[97] Hubbell, 290.

discussed. Bruce Grant argues that Pushkin has created a Promethean "good prisoner" in this poem. The Russian captive is like Prometheus who becomes a "noble victim" of his generosity, and his good virtue earns him the admiration of the Circassian girl.[98] However, I would argue that the concept of "a good prisoner" is ill suited at least to *Kavkazskii plennik.* Layton has pointed out that contemporary criticism was clearly fond of the mountain maid's generosity, and criticized the Russian captive's heartlessness. M. P. Pogodin called the Russian captive's callosity "inexcusable in every respect", and P. A. Viazemsky even called the captive "a son of a bitch" in a letter to Pushkin.[99] Yet Pushkin defended his protagonist by clarifying that the captive did not really love the Circassian girl and had wisely avoided risking his life to save her. As Pushkin explained in a letter to V. P. Gorchakov in 1822 in response to his criticism of the captive's hardheartedness, what he intended to depict in *Kavkazskii plennik* was not a typical "hero of the romantic poems", but rather a Russian hero with "typical traits of the youth in the nineteenth century":

> Your comments [on *Kavkazkii plennik*] are, my dear, very fair and too lenient - why the captive did not drown himself together with the Circassian girl? He acted very reasonably, but reason is not needed for a poetic hero. The captive's character is unfortunate, which shows that I am not fit for [creation of] heroes of romantic poems. I wanted to depict in him the indifference to life and its pleasures, this premature aged soul, which became typical traits of the youth in the nineteenth century.[100]

---

[98] Grant, Bruce, "The Good Russian Prisoner: Naturalizing Violence in the Caucasus Mountains", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), 41, 43.

[99] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, 99.

[100] Pushkin to V. P. Gorchakov, October-November, 1822: "Замечания твои, моя радость, очень справедливы и слишком снисходительны — зачем не утопился мой Пленник вслед за Черкешенкой? как человек — он поступил очень благоразумно, но в герое поэмы не благоразумия требуется. — Характер Пленника неудачен; доказывает это, что я не гожусь в герои романтического стихотворения. Я в нем хотел изобразить это равнодушие к жизни и к ее наслаждениям, эту преждевременную старость души, которые

Thus Pushkin challenges the usual model of captivity romance, in which two sides fall in love with each other. In this sense the captive is far from being a "good prisoner". On the contrary, as Stephanie Sandler notes, the Circassian girl "absorbs the Russian man's deadness".[101] The Circassian girl pardons the Russian's indifference and sacrifices herself for his "typical Russian traits". The Russian captive, as well as the poet himself, gains a new life in this newly shaped poetic space.

The relationship between the captive and the Circassian girl is asexual. Said has noted that some nineteenth-century European travelers, such as Flaubert, always associate the Orient with "the escapism of sexual fantasy".[102] The Orient was portrayed as a place with a promise of unbounded sexuality, energy and desire in contrast with the restrained European societies. Yet in *Kavkazskii plennik*, the Circassian heroine is portrayed in a different way. As Katya Hokanson points out, the image of the girl is constructed in a Greek mold, in which females are not portrayed with the exotic sexuality of "Oriental women", but with "pure, austere, 'classical' characteristics".[103] Besides that, Pushkin's Circassian heroine is extremely devoted in

---

сделались отличительными чертами молодежи 19-го века. Конечно, поэму приличнее было бы назвать «Черкешенкой» — я об этом не подумал. Черкесы, их обычаи и нравы занимают большую и лучшую часть моей повести; но все это ни с чем не связано и есть истинный *hors d'œuvre*. Вообще я своей поэмой очень недоволен и почитаю ее гораздо ниже «Руслана» — хоть стихи в ней зрелее. Прощай, моя радость." Pushkin, A.S., *Sobraniye sochinenii v 10 tomakh*, Vol. 9 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1962), 55.

[101] Sandler, Stephanie, *Distant Pleasures: Alexander Pushkin and the Writing of Exile* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 149.

[102] Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979), 190.

[103] Hokanson,*Writing at Russia's Borders*, 64.

love. She would rather die than marry a man she does not love. In contrast to the "European woman" from the captive's society, who "falls in love anew" when "love passes away, boredom begins",[104] the Circassian girl loves only once in her life. Instead of a "sexual fantasy", Pushkin constructed the Caucasus as a place of "romantic fantasy", and devoted female lovers.

Kavkazskii plennik proved to be a subtle and successful manipulation of the captivity theme in the fervor of a rapidly expanding empire. The captivity narrative, romantic love and the admiration of the "noble savage" are perfectly incorporated into Russia's conquest of the Caucasus by Pushkin. The nameless and innocent Russian captive's interaction with the Circassian girl becomes a Russian version of the Smith-Pocahontas story, which romanticizes and softens the imperial project by creating a poetic and romantic variation of the encounter.

Central Asian Captivity Romances After *Kavkazkii plennik*

Kavkazskii plennik enormously influenced writing of the empire's contact with an alien culture. Nineteenth-century writers also tried to incorporate the model of romantic encounter in their writings about Central Asian captivities. Echoes of Pushkin's poem can be found in these stories. A comparison of captivity stories written after the publication of *Kavkazskii plennik* might shed light on different positions of the Caucasus and Central Asia in the imagination of nineteenth-century

[104] Hokanson's translation of *Kavkazkii plennik* in *Writing at Russia's Borders,* 243.

Russian writers and narrators.

Petr Kudriashev's short story *Kirgizskii plennik* certainly follows the model of captivity romance constructed by Pushkin consciously. This fiction, subtitled "a real story of the Orenburg Line" ("быль Оренбургской линии"), is claimed to be based on a real incident Kudriashev heard from an elder that took place soon after the establishment of the Orenburg Line in the 1730s. The text starts from Kudriashev's sentimental longing of his birthplace Verkhneuralsk, where his protagonist Fedor lives. Built near the Ural (Yaiq) river by senator Ivan Kirilov in the Orenburg expedition in 1734, Verkhneuralsk was one of the fortresses of the Orenburg fortification line. Kudriashev expresses his admiration of Verkhneuralsk as a charming fortress city in "Asiatic Russia" and his sentiment at leaving the city:

> Немногие крепости, немногие города могут похвалиться таким прекрасным местоположением, какое играет Верхнеуральск, стоящий на левом, крутом берегу быстрого Урала ... Словом, быстрый взор на каждом шагу встречает предметы самые прелестные, самые восхитительные, самые романические! Благословляю, благословляю тебя, незабвенный Верхнеуральск! Ты занимаешь незавидное место на карте Азиатской России; но самое первое – в моей памяти, в моем сердце! ... Расставшись с тобою, незабвенный Верхнеуральск, я расстался с игривою радостью, расстался с легкокрылым счастьем! Все, что было для меня мило, что было для меня драгоценно – осталось в тебе, незабвенный Верхнеуральск!...
>
> (Few fortresses and few cities can boast of such a perfect location like Verkhneuralsk, which stands on the steep bank left to the torrential Ural... In a word, [in Verkhneuralsk] a quick glance at every step meets the most charming, delightful and romantic objects! Bless, bless you, the unforgettable Verhneuralsk! You occupy an unnoticed place on the map of Asiatic Russia; but firstly - you are in my mind, in my heart! ... After parting with you, unforgettable Verhneuralsk, I parted from playful joy, parted from light-winged happiness! All that was nice and precious for me was left in you, unforgettable Verhneuralsk!...)[105]

[105] Kudriashev, Petr, "Kirgizskii plennik (byl' Orenburgskoi linii)", *Otechestvennye zapiski*, Vol. 28, No. 79 (Oct., 1826), 273-290.

Following Pushkin's model, Kudriashev extols the empire's might and immensity before turning to the story, though in a slightly different way. While Pushkin expresses longing for the Caucasus, where the captivity takes place, Kudriashev sets the spot in a Russian city, from where the Russian captive is captured and to which he returns. The reason behind this geographical difference might be the empire's lack of actual control of the steppe regions. While Russian military forces had already deeply penetrated into the Caucasus in the 1820s, the Kazakh steppe remained largely unexplored. In order to celebrate the unfolding of the empire to the south, Kudriashev picks the spot where the imperial sublime can actually be sensed - the establishment of the Orenburg fortification line. This alteration manages to ground the story in Russia's presence in Central Asia in the 1820s, and some writers after that also used the subtitle "a real story of the Orenburg Line" in their writing of Central Asian captivity.[106] The Orenburg line became a vital starting point for stories written about Central Asia.

In this narrative, the romantic intrigue does not celebrate a military conquest that had not yet taken place, but it still softens Russia's encounter with the steppe tribesmen. Kudriashev follows the successful model Pushkin has created in writing captivity stories, and at the same time attempts to bridge the Kazakhs and Russians by adding the union of Fedor and Bayana and the baptism of Bayana in the end. Bayana, like the Circassian maid, saves Fedor from hunger by feeding him with *kumys* and

[106] For instance Murav'ev's *Kirgizskii plennik* and N. Sherbakov's novella *Piat' let v plenu u tashkenttsev: Rasskaz sibirskogo kazaka* (Saint-Petersburg, 1873).

meat. She promises to set Fedor free and escapes with him to Verkhneuralsk, where she is baptized as Olga, the name of the saint and first ruler of Rus' to convert to Christianity. Fedor is not a hard-hearted Russian captive; he falls in love with Bayana and keeps his word to take her with him when he escapes. Without this union, the story would be like Efremov's narrative, in which captives and captors remain on two sides of Russia's map. Bayana's baptism shows the perspective that incorporating the Kazakh tribesmen into the Russian empire is possible, and "Asiatic Russia", Verkhneuralsk and the Orenburg line, would be the starting point of this happy union.

In the *lubok* fiction *Nevol'nichestvo u aziatov* (1895), Lunin adapts the convention of Oriental captivity romance to popular literature to attract readership. He constructs a tragic captivity romance that takes place in Khiva. The protagonist, Vikula Il'ich Morozov, is a Russian sailor on the Caspian. He is captured by "half-savage Asiatic nations" and taken to "the other side of the Caspian sea, where Russians have barely been to", then sold to Khiva and works as a slave laborer. His owner, Murza, at first treats the slave laborers like animals, but Vikula gradually wins his trust. After Vikula learns that in Khiva slaves can redeem themselves after seven years of labor, he starts working very hard "with the consoling thought that the time will come when I see my homeland and hug my family".[107] His knowledge of farming impresses Murza, and Murza appoints Vikula as the leader of slaves. At this point Murza's daughter Fat'ma appears. This girl with "unusual beauty" starts to pay attention to Vikula, and shows

[107] Lunin, 31.

up wherever Vikula is. She asks him to teach her Russian, and many times she expresses her love to him. Yet Vikula worries that this romance will lead to Fat'ma's death, because free love is not permitted in Khivan society. He decides to escape from Fat'ma's love and starts working in another village, but only hears about her suicide after one year.

The image of Fat'ma resembles Pushkin's Circassian heroine - she is virginal, innocent, and most importantly, devoted in love. The main barrier of this romance is the tyrannical Oriental family. As Lunin constructs the fiction, a Khivan girl, "who has had even a little desire of loving other people before getting married", will be severely punished. The most lenient punishment is lifelong imprisonment, while the severest is taking her away to steppe with her eyes covered, then letting her be tortured by hunger and thirst until she dies.[108] Yet Fat'ma is portrayed as a figure who puts love above everything. She does not fear punishment and death - "If people prevent us from loving each other, then we do it in Heaven!"[109]- and her love is constant - "There is not a flash of love for women of my tribe. We can love only once in our life."[110] She would rather be killed by Vikula than live without him. Vikula feels that "Passion, and only the ardent passion of Oriental women, can instill in her such disdain of

[108] Ibid.. 45.

[109] "Если нам помешают люди любить друг друга, то мы это сделаем на небесах!", ibid., 53.

[110] "Для женщины моего племени вспышек не существует. Мы умеем любить только один раз в жизни своей.", ibid., 54.

self-preservation and even disdain of her own life."[111] After Vikula escapes, she fulfills her words by stabbing herself in the heart with a dagger. Her acts and words are totally dominated by an "Oriental" passion of love.

On the other hand, Vikula, like Pushkin's captive, is restrained by a "European" reason. While Fat'ma puts love above life, Vikula acts in the opposite way. He feels love towards Fat'ma as well but he understands that this union is not allowable, thus he escapes from Murza's family with the intention of saving Fat'ma's life. Yet Vikula's intention only becomes a test of Fat'ma's Oriental passion and directly leads to her death. At the same time, not only Fat'ma suffers, but also a male figure, Murza, is hurt by Vikula's departure. He "waited for two days", hoping that Vikula would return, and "beat himself, cried and did not eat anything".[112] In this encounter, Lunin constructs Russian manhood outmaneuvering the Orient in knowledge and love. Vikula, an ordinary Russian sailor, becomes the actual master of this Oriental family during his captivity. He governs and controls his master's domestic activities, and attracts the "princess" of the captors' family. In this tragic romance, Fat'ma proves her "ardent passion" of Oriental femininity, while Vikula shows his "European" superiority in knowledge and reason. This family turns out to be a victim of the encounter between Russian and Oriental civilizations.

---

[111] "Одна страсть и только пылкая страсть восточной женщины, может вдохнуть в нее такое презрение к чувству самохранения и даже к самой жизни!", ibid., 53.

[112] "Мурза два дня ожидал, что ты возвратишься к нему. После этого он стал сокрушаться, бил себя, кричал, не принимай никакой пищи.", ibid., 78.

A Romance behind the scenes

Compared with fictional captivity romances, romantic intrigue in non-fictional captivity narratives is relatively blurred. As Starr points out, one difference between non-fictional and fictional captivity narratives lies precisely in amatory intrigue: fictional captivity stories put an emphasis on romance. By writing about the erotic episodes, fiction writers tend to "overshadow the actual business of escape", which is the essential basis for selecting and organizing material in non-fictional narratives.[113] This point might be reflected in Efremov's romance behind the scenes in *Stranstvovanie.*

All the editions of Efremov's *Stranstvovanie* were composed before *Kavkazskii plennik* was written.[114] As previously mentioned, the *Stranstvovanie* only gives a concise record of his interaction with the natives when he was captured and served in the Bukharan army. There are two figures of whom he provides relatively detailed description. The first is the Bukharan atalyk Daniyal-*biy*, who tries to convert Efremov to Islam by torture, makes him swear allegiance to Bukhara, and promotes him to the leadership of the Bukharan army. The second figure is one of the *atalyk*'s Persian bondmaids (ключница), who will be examined in this section. This nameless character remains in the three editions of *Stranstvovanie*, and her ambiguous affair

[113] Starr, G. A., "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Nov., 1965), 49-50.

[114] The manuscript version was first published in the 1890s, but written in the late 1700s.

with Efremov plays a vital role in his escape from captivity.

As Efremov records in all the editions, during his captivity a Persian bondmaid fell in love with him and asked him to marry her. Efremov refused, but he promised that when he escaped he would take her with him. After two years, Efremov fought bravely in a battle with Turkmen Yomut tribe of Khiva. Daniyal-*biy* was very pleased with Efremov's service. He awarded Efremov land and money, and planned to dispatch him to Khiva. Having won Daniyal-*biy*'s trust, Efremov forged a dispatch letter in the name of *atalyk*, stating that he had been given a mission to go to Kokand. The Persian bondmaid helped Efremov by stealing the *atalyk*'s seal when he was sleeping, which provided Efremov with a valid travel document for escape. Efremov then escaped with two other Russian captives to Kokand, from where he went to India.[115]

The final fate of the bondmaid is ambiguous. In the original manuscript, Efremov only states that he escaped with two Russians without mentioning the bondmaid. While in the edition published in 1786, Efremov says he took her with him when he escaped. But Efremov was certainly not satisfied with this edition, as he claimed that it was published "without the author's consent", and this episode was probably invented by the editor.[116] In the 1794 edition revised by himself, and the 1811 edition, Efremov explained "I had to leave the bondmaid behind, because if I took her with me, I could not save either myself, nor her. The *atalyk* would notice her absence immediately and

---

[115] Efremov, "Stranstvovanie" in *Puteshestviia po vostoku v epokhu Ekateriny II,* 149-151, 186-187.

[116] Efremov, "Stranstvovanie", 187, comment 5.

search for her everywhere".[117] Thus based on the narrative, it is highly likely that Efremov had broken his promise and deceived the bondmaid. She became a minor tool in Efremov's escape from Bukhara, and played no significant role in his life as a captive.

As has been mentioned above, Efremov had given little attention to describing his interaction with the captors. Nor did he make any effort to elaborate this potentially romantic intrigue. The further interaction between Efremov and the Persian bondmaid is almost absent in his story, and there is no description of Efremov's psychological responses to her love. He was more interested in writing about his participation in the Bukharan army's military expedition. After Efremov swore allegiance to the *atalyk* and the Persian bondmaid fell in love with him, there is a two-year gap in his memoir, then the narrative suddenly turns to the battle with the Turkmen tribe and the subsequent escape. This intentional gap will not tell the readers what happens exactly between Efremov and the bondmaid, but it reveals how Efremov wants to tell his version of the story as a Russian captive in Central Asia. What mattered to his writing is just the moment when he escaped from Bukhara and headed to Kokand.

Efremov could have followed the editor's invention, but he did not. There are two possible reasons why Efremov refused to develop this interaction even in his imagination. The first is that the Persian bondmaid was not the type of romantic

[117] "а ключницу принужден был оставить, ибо, взяв оную с собой, никак бы не мог спасти ни себя, ни ее, аталык хватился бы ее тотчас и послал бы искать повсюду" ibid., 187.

subject that Efremov needed for the writing of his captivity. Unlike Pocahontas, this nameless bondmaid was neither a princess-like figure nor a representative of the captors. While Pocahontas was already a personage in seventeenth-century English society, the Persian bondmaid was obscure. By writing his experience down, Efremov intended to create a legend about himself, as a man who had spent nine years in foreign lands and now was eager to serve the empire through his unrivaled knowledge of the Asian states, hence the romance with a captive like himself would not be useful in this legend. The second reason is that Efremov still stuck to exactly what happened. He organized and selected his materials based on his "actual business of escape", and he did not want his readers to be distracted from his own adventure. Regardless of being dishonest with the bondmaid, Efremov chose to portray her as a sacrifice for his own success. In both the torture scene and this obscure romantic encounter, Efremov has shown more "reason" than "passion" in the process of self-fashioning. What he sought for in his Oriental captivity was not romance, but rather knowledge. Thus this romance remains behind the scenes in Efremov's narratives.

A present male hero

In captivity narratives, the central male hero tends to be the captive himself, thus little space is left for highlighting male individuals from the captive-taking cultures. Native males are generally pictured as a group, with the exception of a few figures who play a part in protagonists' captivity sequences of capture, enslavement and escape,

such as Daniyal-*biy* in Efremov's narrative, and Murza in Lunin's story. The captors are more frequently portrayed as an integrated group that is dominant in violence, yet impotent in love and civilization. For instance, Bol'shoi records his vulnerability in front of his Kazakh captors' humiliation and threats; at the same time, he laughs at their "folly" of fighting among themselves for plunders and their ignorance in medicine. In *The Enchanted Pilgrim*, Flyagin's Tatar captors are able to take part in the flogging competition voluntarily, conduct a violent "operation", and seemingly enjoy Oriental polygamy, but their paganism and inhospitable land fail to secure Flyagin even after a ten-year captivity. In *Kavkazskii plennik*, Pushkin also presents the Circassian mountaineer-warriors as an undifferentiated group that captures and confines a Russian individual. As Hokanson points out, Pushkin's sketch of Circassian people and culture appeared to be the biggest success of this poem, as this part was reprinted separately at least six times during his lifetime.[118] Pushkin also wrote in his letter to Gorchakov in 1822 that "the Circassians, their customs and manners, are the best part of my story".[119] Yet, although "all the attention of the European/ Was attracted by this marvelous people",[120] for the Circassian heroine the future is still to be sold "to a hateful man/ Into a strange aul for a price of gold".[121] It is only the Russian captive who has won the Circassian maiden's heart.

---

[118] Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Borders*, 61.

[119] Pushkin, 55.

[120] Hokanson's translation of *Kavkazskii plennik* in *Writing at Russia's Borders*,236.

[121] Ibid., 241.

In order to follow Pushkin's success in portraying the captors' culture, Nikolai Murav'ev attempted to construct Kirgiz "noble savages" in his poem *Kirgizskii plennik*. As has been mentioned above, Murav'ev borrowed the content of Kudriashev's namesake story. In the story, instead of romanticizing the natives, Kudriashev put more effort into incorporating his ethnographic knowledge of the Kazakhs into this captivity narrative, therefore the Kazakhs in Kudriashev's fiction are described as completely alien barbarians whom the captive, Fedor, does not show any appreciation for. In Murav'ev's poem though, certain lines apparently echo Pushkin's depiction of Circassian manners and culture. This is the major difference between Kudriashev's story and Murav'ev's poem apart from their genres. Overall Murav'ev pictures Kazakh tribesmen as free and violent neighbors of the empire that threatens the peace of the borderland: "They are sons of the disastrous border, /They are mighty, with spry spirit,/ Disdaining death and failure,/ They boldly speed along for plunder ... / They destroyed the precious peace/ Of their neighbor's borderland..."[122] To echo Pushkin's "Circassian song", Murav'ev also creates a "Kirgiz song", in which the Kazakhs call themselves "the neighbor of horror" and "the demon of nature": "We, the bold people, live in mountains,/ We are descendants of happy freedom;/ In bright daytime we are the neighbor of horror,/ At night - the demon of nature!"[123] Compared with *Kavkazskii plennik*, little admiration is shown towards the Kazakh tribesmen. They are portrayed

[122] "Сыны губительного края,/ Могучи, с бодрою душой,/ И смерть и гибель презирая,/ Отважно мчатся на разбой .../ Они соседственного края/ Священный рушили покой...", Murav'ev, Nikolai Nazar'evich, *Kirgizkii plennik* (Moscow: Tip. Avgusta Semenova, 1828), 12-13.

[123] "Живем, отважные, в горах,/ Питомцы щастливой свободы;/ Мы ясным днем соседям страх,/ А ночью - демон природы!", ibid., 16.

as overwhelmingly dreadful and threatening Oriental males.

Yet among the narratives, there is one extremely bright male individual from the captors' side that the narrator has spent much effort to picture - a "Kirgiz" (Kazakh) in Kokandi service called Dashchan - in the zoologist Severtsov's *Mesiats plena u kokantsev.* As Severtsov records, Dashchan is the leader of the group of Kokandi raiders ("атаман шайки") that captured him. Severtsov's first impression of Dashchan was quite favorable - Dashchan spoke "pure Russian with a soft and ingratiating tone",[124] and he treated this Russian captive very well: he brought Severtsov food and *airan*, and at night, when Dashchan noticed that Severtsov was resting his head on his elbow, he shared his pillow with Severtsov.[125] The further description of Dashan is worth examining not merely because it is almost the only well-portrayed native male individual from all the narratives. Following Pushkin's depiction of the Circassians, Severtsov's Dashchan challenges some stereotypes of the Kirgiz people that were produced before, and provides one impressive image of a Central Asian version of Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's Ammalat-Bek and Tolstoy's Hadji Murat.

Severtsov uses an English phrase to express his appreciation of Dashchan's appearance and manner: "a gentleman robber".[126] As he describes, Dashchan looked

---

[124] "он рекомендовался чистым русским языком, мягким и вкрадчивым тоном", Severtsov, Nikolai, Mesiats plena u kokantsev (Saint-Petersburg, 1860), 29.

[125] Ibid., 30.

[126] Ibid., 31.

different from most Kokandi Kirgiz. While most Kirgiz people were “stumpy, with high cheekbones, flat noses and wide faces” and look like “sluggish bumpkins dressing in robes”, Dashchan’s face was “European”, “more soft and pleasant”.[127] “No cunning and greediness is shown on this face, but only carefree daring, the desire to live and making fun, sensitivity, and even some happy and unfeigned kindness.”[128] Severtsov was invited to ride next to Dashchan when they were heading to the Kokandi tribe, thus he was able to fully observe Dashchan’s riding moves and manners. Dashchan is pictured as a “handsome horseman” (“красивый наездник”) in a way that echoes Pushkin’s portrayal of the swift Circassian mountaineers. Dashchan’s beloved horse, a brisk *karabair*, easily went for two days without forage, and Dashchan also kept his joy and vitality along the way. After two days of riding, his “neat silk belt and brown robe made from fine broadcloth were not greasy, but only a bit dusty ...; it was clean even inside his shirt!!”[129] Severtsov, in contrast, was exhausted and grimy. Having seen Dashchan’s manner, Severtsov’s understanding of the Kirgiz people was totally changed, as he writes: “How could a Kirgiz have such neatness?!”[130]

Severtsov was impressed not only by Dashchan’s appearance, but also by his way

[127] “Наружность его была, однако, не такая как у большинства киргизов, коренастых, скуластых, плосконосых и широколицых, которые хоть в самом деле ловки и проворны, а смотрят увальнями, неповоротливыми, в халатах...”, ibid., 31.

[128] “Только не одна хитрость и жадность выражались на этом лице, как у его брата; тут виднелась и беззаботная удаль, и желание пожить и потешиться, и чувственность, и даже какое-то веселое, непритворное добродушие.”, ibid., 31.

[129] “Подтянутый шелковым поясом, коричневый из тонкого сукна халат не был засален, а только в пыли, хотя и поношенный; даже видневшаяся из под него рубашка почти чистая!!”, ibid.,44.

[130] “И откуда взялась такая опрятность у киргиза?!”, ibid., 44.

of living. As "a gentleman robber", Dashchan had started raiding and robbery from early youth, but Severtsov explains that steppe raiding is not the threatening and dangerous business that people usually imagined it to be. It is rather a way of living, a kind of art and enjoyment for the natives, and it has certain rules that need to be followed. For instance, it was not allowed to raid tribesmen's guests or friends.[131] Before Russian military forces started to gain control in this region, *baranta*, the native word for raiding, was a usual custom of Kirgiz people. As Virginia Martin analyzes, etymologically the Kazakh word *barimta* (*baranta*) means "that which due to me".[132] It was not a crime, nor *grabezh* or *nabeg*, the Russian words that were used to refer to *baranta*; rather, it was "a legitimate judicial custom embedded in the Kazakh culture understanding of wrongdoing, honor and revenge" and a sanctioned custom that created *batyrs*, a Kazakh term for "hero" or "valiant warrior".[133] Raiders who were courageous, tactful and composed were admired and honored, and Dashchan happened to be a virtuoso of *baranta*. He was well familiar with the steppe and the nomads, and he dared to go raiding even by himself. At the same time, Dashchan did not rob out of greed - he generously shared his plunder with other tribesmen. As Severtsov records, having taken the Kokandi fortress of Ak-Mechet', the Russians tried many times to capture Dashchan, but all returned without success.[134] There were

---

131 Ibid., 32-33.

132 Martin, Virginia, "Nomadic Custom, Imperial Crime" in Brower, Daniel R. and Lazzarini, Edward, *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 251, 264.

133 Ibid., 250.

134 "После взятия Ак-Мечети, не раз ходили ловить его наши отряды, и возвращались ни с чем.", p. 35.

rumors that Dashchan was killed, but he scotched the rumors by launching and taking part in new raiding activities. For his prowess and generosity Dashchan was considered by his tribesmen to be a *batyr*. In this aspect, the image of Dashchan is a development of the representation of Kazakhs in Murav'ev's poem: "They are mighty, with spry spirit,/ Disdaining death and failure,/ They boldly speed along for plunder". This image of valiant raiders and slave captors can be seen as one of the usual pictures of the Kazakhs in Russian imagination in the nineteenth century. Yet when most imperial Russians always tended to show a lack of understanding in *baranta*, Severtsov, as a captive, gained an extraordinary insight about this Kazakh custom during his captivity.[135]

Moreover, what might connect Ammalat-Bek and Hadji Murat with Severtsov's Dashchan is his further discussion of the tension between steppe raiding activities and Russia's growing presence in Central Asia, and this is brought about by Russia's direct confrontation with Central Asian tribesmen in the 1850s. As Severtsov observes, raiding was a usual way of living for steppe tribesmen. Yet when Russia started to pursue not just nominal, but actual control of the steppe region, raiding activities were criminalized. "Raiders became rebels",[136] and what the tribesmen thought of as

[135] As Virginia Martin points out, evidence demonstrates a lack of understanding on the part of Russian observers of barimta as nomadic custom. "The 1822 Regulations [*Ustav o Sibirskikh Kirgizakh*, Regulations on the Siberian Kirgiz] defined it as *grabezh*; Levshin used it to mean 'the holding of criminals or their relatives' and 'the stealing of cattle'. An article in *Sibirskaia gazeta* in 1886 used the term *barimta* to describe repeated incidents of horse theft by Kazakhs. The steppe governor-general [Maksim Antonovich Taube], in his 1898 annual report, discussed *barimta* as 'cattle' theft." See Martin, 258.

[136] "Барантач становился мятежником", Severtsov, 33.

prowess, the Russians considered a crime, thus these "last *batyr*-riders, who are practicing their daring within the steppe which are now possessed by Russians, gradually lost the land beneath their feet for their heroic feats".[137] Severtsov expresses sympathy towards Dashchan, a representative of the "last *batyr*-riders" on the steppe. As he sees it, Dashchan was a real heroic figure, but he was born in the wrong age, in which he would only be considered as a "rebel" and a "criminal". "Is it his fault that he was born too late, that the clash with superior, yet alien Russian norm brought him to penal servitude?"[138] Dashchan's clash with the empire in Central Asia recalls the fate of Ammalat-Bek and Hadji Murat in the Caucasus. The empire's expansion was already irresistible; a native individual could only be a subject or a victim of this process.

What is also striking in Severtsov's narrative is that he not only portrays his masculine captor, but also presents Dashchan's "Oriental" wife, which provides a vivid native couple that rarely appears in written narratives. As he describes, Dashchan's wife was as good-looking as Dashchan: her skin was white, her cheek was rosy, and her face also had a "European" features. She did not cover her hair, which was "black, thick, silky and carefully brushed", and she was able to ride a horse like a man. Severstov calls her a "decent coquette" (кокетка порядочная), as he recalls that she

---

[137] "последние батыри-наездники, упражнявшие свою удаль внутри русских владений в степи, более и более теряли, так сказать, землю под ногами для своих подвигов.", ibid., 34.

[138] "... его ли вина, что поздно родился, что столкновение с высшей, но чуждой, русской формой народной жизни довело его до осуждения на каторг?", ibid., 37.

told him, with a playful smile, that "it is joyful to be with them; they have many women here, especially in Turkestan, and women here are fine".[139] This coquettish Oriental beauty and the "gentleman robber" make a rare Oriental couple that fills the gap of sexual imagination of the Central Asian Orient. As a captive-observer, Severtsov encounters not only the masculinity of the Orient, but also its femininity, even though the latter side seems more promising in the historical context: when Dashchan's presence was shaken by the empire's expansion, his wife's words seem to have opened a romantic and sexual fantasy that could be cultivated and developed.

This chapter focuses on the representation of femininity and masculinity in captivity narratives about Central Asia. The images of Russian male captives and Central Asian females are overall persistent. Russian captives are usually capable of outmaneuvering their Central Asian captors in love and civilization. In their captivity stories, they show their Russian manhood through their superior knowledge and their success with Central Asian women. Central Asian females, following Pushkin's Caucasian romance, are depicted as devoted lovers with ardent Oriental passion. They are portrayed as both fruit and victim of the clashes between Russian and Oriental civilizations. On the other hand, the representation of Central Asian masculinity was apparently enriched along with the empire's actual expansion into the steppe. In the 1820s, the captors were described as alien and threatening neighbors who were

[139] "у них весело, женщин много, особенно в Туркестане, что женщины хороши (джаксы)", p. 49.

dominant in violence, yet impotent in love and civilization. In the middle of the century admiration and sympathy towards a Central Asian male hero appeared in Severtsov's narrative.

Chapter III

Captive's gaze: Russian Captives' Superior Knowledge in Land and Medicine

Captivity narratives were being written and read as a unique type of travelogue and ethnographic record.[140] For captive-narrators of factual narratives, captivity experiences provided unparalleled opportunities to engage with captive-taking cultures, with Severtsov's discussion about Kazakh *baranta* as the best example. Fictional captivity stories also serve as a ground for writers to incorporate their travel experiences and ethnographic knowledge: Pushkin's 121-line depiction of Circassian mountaineers in *Kavkazskii plennik* was reprinted several times as a travel account, and the ethnographer Kudriashev also gives details of Kazakh medicine and rituals in his *Kirgizskii plennik.* Based on narrators' actual encounters with captors, the observations recorded in captivity narratives are believed to be authentic first-hand accounts of an alien land and its peoples.

The main focus of this chapter is the accounts about Central Asian land, nature

[140] Alexander Morrison has kindly shared his unpublished article, which includes a valuable record about one contemporary reading of Severtsov's captivity narrative as a travelogue. It is a record from the diary of F. S. Dobrovol'skii, a member of the garrison at Fort Vernoe, who in June 1864 wrote that as it was 42 degrees outside "I am occupying myself reading the book by N. Ia. (sic) Severtsev *Mesiats plena u kokantsev*, in reading which it is possible to acquaint oneself a little with the *Kokandtsy*, their way of life, fortresses, troops, commanders, and with the town of Turkestan in all its filthiness, as an example of all Central Asian fortresses, and to know that the editor was a zoologist, as even though he was slightly wounded in hand to hand combat, he does not cease to pay attention to the plants and birds he sees by the road." from *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv* (RGVIA), f.66 'Dobrovol'skii F. S.' op. 1, g. 84, "Chernoviki i otryvki dnevnika F. Dobrovol'skogo vo vremia ego voennoi sluzhby v Turkestane", l.1ob.

and cultures that the nineteenth-century Russian captives chose to record in their narratives. With land and medicine as two specific examples, this chapter aims to reveal that the captives' gaze is inherently unequal - during the captivity, the captive-narrators were confined and restrained; nevertheless, under the disguise of passive suffering, the imperial captives were actually the ones who were ultimately free to judge and construct their captors' society. For captives who were not ethnographers or scientists before, such as Efremov, captivity provided unique possibilities for observation that can compete with the studies of their scholarly contemporaries. For the doctor Bol'shoi and the naturalist Severtsov, captivity was both an adventure and a space to demonstrate their superior European knowledge. By retelling their captivity stories, narrators attempted to show that their experiences as captives were also useful and valuable. They managed to turn trauma into personal, even national triumph. They were both victims and vanguards of Russia's colonialism of Central Asia.

Land of Promise, or Land of Emptiness

In her study on the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century European travel writing, Mary Pratt points out that the development of European natural science had a significant impact on travelers' view of Latin America and Africa. Science led to exploitation, and exploitation generated the desire for colonization. The Linnaean classification system invented in 1735 developed European naturalists' endeavor to

systematize the world's flora and fauna and to map the exploitable resources, markets, and the lands to colonize under the guise of passive and objective classification.[141] Alexander von Humboldt's exploration in South America reinvented Spanish America as a land with potential for European economic expansion, and a creole society as in need of improvement.[142] The development of natural science led to European economic and political expansion into the "contact zone", the social spaces "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination".[143] According to Pratt, nineteenth-century European travel writings, no matter scientific or sentimental, have an "anti-conquest" character. European bourgeois travel writers tended to secure their innocence and emphasize the social and economic reciprocity of colonization. They attempted to legitimize colonization, and created "a sense of curiosity, excitement, adventure, and even moral fervor" about European expansionism.[144]

The situation of imperial Russia's explorations in Central Asia was different in some respects. While Africa and South America had already been subjected to Spanish colonization for more than three hundred years by the nineteenth century, Central Asia were fully conquered by the Russian Empire only in the second half of the century.

---

[141] Pratt, Mary Louise , *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (NY: Routledge, 2008, second edition of 1992), 15, 30.

[142] Ibid., 107-169.

[143] Ibid., 7.

[144] Ibid., 3.

Thus early Russian missions to Central Asia focused more on the establishment of diplomatic relations with Central Asian rulers, and the natural obstacles in their journeys to reach these cultures.[145] Nevertheless, the development of natural science was still an influential factor in Russia's exploration in Central Asia, especially after the establishment of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1725 and the publication of the first official atlas of the Russian Empire, *Atlas rossiiskoi*, in 1745.[146] The need to define the empire's boundary and the interest in exploring the empire's potential colony yielded numerous missions and geographical expeditions to Central Asia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Imperial travelers attempted to search both for justification for and benefits of Russia's expansion into Central Asia. For instance, in his mission to Khiva in 1793, major E. I. Blankennagel recorded his encounters with Russian captives in Khiva and a legend that he heard from a Russian slave that Khiva abounded with gold and silver.[147] As a supporter of Russian expansionism, Blankennagel called Khiva a "New Peru", and proposed to conquer Khiva to free Russian slaves and explore its economic promise.[148] Humboldt was also invited by Nicholas I to explore the nature of "Asiatic Russia". He made the trip in the summer of 1829, when he traveled along the frontiers of Chinese Dzungaria, the fortification line

---

145 See, for instance, Sela, Ron, "Prescribing the Boundaries of Knowledge: Seventeenth-Century Russian Diplomatic Missions to Central Asia" in Green, Nile (ed.), *Writing Travel in Central Asian History* (Indiana University Press, 2013), 69-88.

146 *Atlas rossiiskoi, sostoiashchei iz deviatnadtsati spetsial'nykh kart predstavliaiushchikh vserossiiskuiu imperiiu s pogranichnymi zemliami, sochinonnoy po pravilam geograficheskim i noveishim observatsiiam, s prilozhennoiu pritom general'noiu kartoiu velikiia seia Imperii* (Saint-Petersburg: Press of Academy of Sciences, 1745).

147 Blankennagel', E. I., *Zamechaniia maiora Blankennagelia, vposledstviie poezdki ego iz Orenburga v Khivu v 1793-94 godakh* (Saint-Petersburg, 1858), 15.

148 Ibid., 16, 21.

of the Kirghiz steppe and the shores of the Caspian Sea, and discovered numerous natural resources such as the gold, diamonds, and platinum of the Urals and gold on the Kirgiz steppe.[149]

In their description about lands, captive-narrators also attempted to contribute to the construction of Central Asia as a site of economic promise. The most apparent example is Efremov's record about two mines, a gold mine and silver mine, in Khiva in his 1811 edition of *Stranstvovanie*. A comparison of the 1784 manuscript and 1811 edition of *Stranstvovanie* shows that this episode was consciously added by Efremov or by Petr Kondyrev, the editor of 1811 edition and a lecturer in history and geography at Kazan University. As in Efremov's manuscript, he mentioned that gold and silver from India, Persia and China were traded by merchants (mainly Tatars) in Bukharan markets.[150] In his subsequent travels in India, he described Bengal as the place where a large amount of gold, silver, diamonds, pearls and silk could be found. Eighteenth-century Bengal in Efremov's accounts is a real rich and exotic land. He described people there riding elephants with boxes and cushions made with gold, silver and silk. The rich Bengali men wore "gold necklaces, earrings and rings" and women with "gold earrings, nose rings and finger rings".[151] While in the 1811 edition,

---

[149] A. von Humboldt. *Central-Asien. Historischer Bericht uber Herm A. v. Humboldt's Reise nach Siberien*. 1844; MacGillivray, William, *The Travels and Researches of Alexander von Humboldt: Being a Condensed Narrative of his Journeys in the Equinoctial Regions of America, and in Asiatic Russia; Together with Analyses of his More Important Investigations* (Cambridge University Press, 2009; first published in Edinburgh,1832), 408, 412-413.

[150] Efremov, "Stranstvovanie", 1794, 158.

[151] Ibid.,168.

keeping the exotic picture of India, Efremov and Kondyrev deliberately added the description about the potential mines in Central Asia. They stressed that there was no mine in Bukhara, but a Russian there told Efremov that a Russian slave in Khiva had once found "two mountains with gold and silver".[152] According to the narrative, this Russian slave was a member of Alexander Bekovich-Cherkassky's fatal expedition to Khiva in 1716. After its defeat by the Khivans and Bekovich's death, soldiers and experts of this expedition were enslaved and forced to serve the Khivan Khan. One of the Russian slaves found these two mines and reported to the Khan that with them the Khan can "build all houses in Khiva with pure silver and cover all of them with pure gold."[153] Intending to hide this information to avoid military invasion, the Khivan Khan executed this Russian slave, and ordered him not to exploit these two mines.

This legend about the hidden treasures in Khiva was so widespread in the Russian imagination in the eighteenth and nineteenth century that almost all Russian travelers to Khiva mentioned it in their travel writings. Besides the above-mentioned account by Blankennagel, in which he recorded that he heard about the same legend from a Russian slave named Maksim during his three-month stay in Khiva in 1793, it can also be found in the accounts about Florio Beneveni's diplomatic mission to Bukhara and Khiva in 1724-1725, Dmitrii Gladyshev and Ivan Muravin's expedition to Khiva in 1740-1741, the merchant Danil Rukavkin's travel to Khiva in 1753 and

[152] Efremov, "Stranstvovanie", 1811, 208.

[153] "Если достать оный, то можно из чистого серебра выстроить в Хиве все покои, а золотом покрыть их.", Efremov, 1811, 208.

Nikolai Murav'ev-Karskii's diplomatic mission to Khiva in 1819.[154] Based on the common ground in these narratives, some general observations about this legend can be made. The first is that this rumor was closely related to Bekovich-Cherkassky's debacle in Khiva in 1716. According to Edward Allworth, the gold delusion was one of the significant factors that prompted Peter I to dispatch Bekovich-Cherkassky and launch this sizable campaign against Khiva. The Khivan envoy in Saint-Petersburg at that time, Ashur-*biy*, groundlessly confirmed the existence of gold dust in the Amu-Darya and disastrously developed an idea among Peter I and his statesmen that "copious gold dust awaited in an easily invaded Khiva populated with submissive Khivans", which led to Bekovich's expedition and its failure.[155] This defeat, however, did not dispel the gold delusion; on the contrary, subsequent Russian travelers further elaborated it. The widespread version of the rumor – that a Russian war-captive from Bekovich's mission had discovered mines/mountains of gold near Khiva, but the Khan had hidden the information to avoid a Russian invasion – implied that Russian war-captives were masters whose expertise would allow them to thoroughly exploit and develop the Khivan land, while the Khivan Khan was a ruler who was worrying about the "White Tsar's revenge".[156] The second point is that this legend seemed to be

---

[154] Popov, A, N, *Snosheniia Rossii s Khivoi i Bukharoi pri Petre Velikom*, vol.4 (1853), pp. 237-318; *Poiezdka iz orska v Khivu i obratno, sovershennaia v 1740-1741 godakh Gladyshevym i Muravinym*, commented by , Ia. V. Khanykov (Saint-Petersburg, 1851), p. 38; Rukavkin, D., *Opisanie puti ot Orenburga k Khive i Bukharam* (Moscow, 1776), pp. 203-216; Mura'ev, N. N., *Puteshestviie v turkmeniiu i khivu v 1819 i 1820 godakh, gvardeiiskogo general'nogo shtaba kapitana Nikolaya Murav'eva, poslannogo v sii strany dlia peregovorov*. Vol. 2 (Moscow, 1822), 20.

[155] Allworth, Edward A., *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 90-95.

[156] "... мщения Белого Царя", Mura'ev, N. N., *Puteshestviie,* 20.

widely accepted only among Russians. Most travelers merely tried to verify the rumor through Russian captives, who repeatedly retailed the belief which was deeply embedded in their imagination. Nikolai Murav'ev-Karskii attempted to seek proof for this rumor among Khivans, but he recorded that he did not get much information from natives due to their "ignorance" ("невежество").[157] Overall, based on these travel accounts, the fervor for exploring Khiva's hidden gold and conquering the land still existed, even intensified, after Bekovich's disastrous campaign. Together with the appeal to free Russian war-captives from Khiva, the gold delusion was both a justification for and benefit of Russia's expansion into Central Asia. The picture was not quite reciprocal; it was rather a part of the general expansionist rhetoric within the Russian Empire.

Efremov and Kondyrev apparently attempted to evoke the popular imagination and a sense of proprietorship of the hidden treasure in Khiva, thus the episode about mountains of gold and silver in Khiva was deliberately added in the section about Khivan land in the 1811 edition. It was certainly not Efremov's personal experience, but rather a reflection of a widespread myth; it was consciously incorporated into Efremov's narrative to make his experience more rich and colorful. It shows that writing a captivity narrative is not simply retelling a captivity experience; narrators also need to respond to the imagery that was raised by contemporary travelogues, and to satisfy their readers' curiosity.

---

[157] Ibid., 20.

On the other hand, in their response to other travelogues, narrators also attempted to challenge the popular imagination by writing down their actual experiences. Severtsov's account about his one-month captivity among Kokandi Kirgiz is one example of this. Severtsov was commissioned by the Imperial Academy of Sciences to join a two-year scientific mission in the Lower Syr-Darya to conduct geographical and zoological surveys of the steppe. Before telling about his trip, Severtsov records how an officer who just returned from Central Asia "enthusiastically" described the rich fauna and flora in the Lower Syr-Darya. In the officer's description, the Syr-Darya is "powerful, full-flowing and torrential"; its surface is like a mirror, "reflecting the cloudless, dark blue and still glowing sky and the dazzling of the South." The river is surrounded by "strong and fresh vegetation" of "vast reeds, willows with flexible withies, poplars with dark green leaves, oleasters with small silvery foliage" and saxauls "in fanciful shape"; these plants build up a "graceful grid on the transparent blue of the sky". Various and abundant animals can also be seen on the steppe. Pheasants appear "at every step"; iridescent Persian bee-eaters are shining under the sun in the "warm and refreshing air"; fish hawks are hovering above Syr-Darya, and tigers, boars, deer and wild goats are hiding in the thickets... Spring on the steppe is like an "Italian spring". The Russian officer's picture of the the Lower Syr-Darya is totally touristic. This kind of enjoyment and excitement about the nature in Central Asia became possible in the late 1850s when the Kazakh steppe was brought into Russia's control. It indeed heightened the zoologist Severtsov's expectations of this expedition. But when Severstov arrived in this region,

he was deeply disappointed by his actual experience. He felt himself "being deceived" by the officer. He arrived in a "stormy and freezing winter" between 1857 and 1858, and when spring came, it was totally not an "Italian spring". Coldness and snow lasted until April, and vegetation was "deathly pale". The land was "unattractive" with "friable, racked and dry sand", dust "floated in the air" covering all greenery and flowers, and even the blue sky was dirtied by sand and dust. When Severtsov went hunting, wild animals just hid themselves immediately. The fauna and flora was rather "poor" and "monotonous", for which Severtsov described as "zoological poverty" in the Syr-Darya region. Severtsov's actual experience was neither enjoyable nor exciting; it was rather accompanied by coldn, dust and feelings of sickness.

These two sides, both richness and emptiness of the Central Asian land, served as reminders of possible rewards and disappointment in Russia's colonization of Central Asia. Efremov's account about the treasures in Khiva is an appeal for expansion when the actual conquest did not yet begin, while Severtsov's personal experience is written after Russia's conquest of the Kazakh steppe and during the military clashes with Kokandi tribesmen. They both show their attempts to characterize Central Asian land and nature based on their superior European knowledge. As captives, they depict themselves as vanguards of Russia's exploration and exploitation of Central Asia.

Constructed Backwardness in Central Asian Ethonomedicine

Medicine played a significant role in Russia's encounter with Central Asian cultures. For instance, in 1793 major Blankennagel' went to Khiva as an eye doctor to treat a Khivan *inaq* Fazil'-*biy*'s eyes. Although Blankennagel' could not cure Fazil'-*biy*' who was already completely blind, he managed to treat three hundred native patients.[158] Nineteenth-century Russian captivity narratives also provide intriguing sources on Central Asian medical practices. Captives, as observers, record how their captors cure them of their injuries from violent capture and local diseases they have observed. Besides that, Russian captives mentioned their experiences of being considered by captors as doctors and healers, no matter whether they had medical knowledge or not. An examination of these accounts will not only show the tension between Russian and Central Asian medical practices, but also provides a way to see how Central Asian natives situated Russian medicine in their culture.

Captives record local diseases they have observed and suffered from. Efremov's narrative provides an early account of *rishta* (ришта), a disease caused by a water-borne parasite that was widespread in Bukhara. Due to its infectiousness, *rishta* was considered as threatening as malaria during Russia's colonization and early Soviet times. The Bukhara branch of Moscow's Tropical Institute, founded in 1924, set the eradication of *rishta*, along with malaria, as one of its primary tasks.[159] Efremov

---

[158] "Putevye zametki maiora Blankennagelia o Khive v 1793-1794 gg.", *Vestnik russkogo gegraficheskogo obshchestva*, No. 5, 1858: 90, 7.

[159] In the 1920s in Bukhara about 20% people were infected with *rishta*. To avoid infection, Leonid Isaev, the head of the Bukharan Tropical Institute, ordered to drain Bukhara's local ponds or *hauz* and forbade Muslims from washing their faces before prayers. For more information about the measures taken by Soviet authorities to fight against *rishta*, see Cavanaugh, Cassandra Marie, "Backwardness and Biology: Medicine and Power in Russian and Soviet Central Asia, 1868--1934" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2001), p. 229-233.

recorded the symptom, local treatment and the eighteenth-century Bukharans' view of *rishta* that he witnessed during his three-year service in Bukhara. According to Efremov, the poor sanitation in Bukhara mainly resulted from a lack of clean water. There were only four public bathhouses in the city, and people merely washed themselves with water, without soap.[160] The closest source of water was a canal that lay one-day ride from Bukhara, thus Bukharans saved water in ponds for daily supply. These ponds, usually turbid, were not only used as drinking water for people and cattle, but were also used for farming and all kinds of washing. Drinking unclean water easily led to *rishta.* People who were infected with *rishta* suffered from burning pain, and had to wait until the parasites come out from their bodies. The native way of treating *rishta* was to pull it out when it appeared under the skin and wrap the wound with vegetable oil and cotton cloth.[161] *Rishta* was so widespread in Bukhara that within three years there were altogether sixty-seven parasites being pulled out from Efremov's body. As he recalls, during summer almost all Bukharans were walking with sticks as the burning pain from *rishta* made it impossible to walk freely. Locals considered it to be a good luck when they were infected with *rishta* in summer, as *rishta* came out of the skin faster in warm climate. While in autumn, many people had to lie on bed as *rishta* stayed in their body longer when the weather was cold.[162]

---

[160] Efremov, "Stranstvovanie", 1784, 152.

[161] This local treatment was criticized by Leonid Isaev in 1920s as he argued that it cannot prevent *rishta* from its origin.

[162] Efremov, "Stranstvovanie", 1784, 159; Efremov, "Stranstvovanie", 1811, 213.

These accounts about uncleanness and widespread disease are recorded by Efremov as signs of the backwardness of Central Asian culture.

As a Russian doctor captured by Kazakh tribesmen, Bol'shoi paid special attention to recording Kazakh medicine in his *Zapiski*. With mockery he described the tension between him and the tribesmen in their different perception of medicine. As Paula Michaels summarizes, before Russian colonization, Kazakh ethnomedicine drew on a diverse heritage. It was an integration of "both pre-Islamic shamanist traditions and Islamic practices" - "Shamans and mullahs served as medical practitioners, fighting to expel the evil spirits Kazakhs believed to be at the root of disease".[163] Besides shamans and mullahs, who conducted rituals to treat diseases, another group of healers were folk doctors, who usually applied "plant and animal products available in the surrounding steppe, making use of herbs, fermented mare's mild (*kumys*), and other naturopathic remedies ranging from tuberculosis to syphilis".[164] These medical practices were seen by nineteenth-century Russian doctors, ethnographers and missionaries as backward and ignorant. Russian travelers tended to present a picture of Kazakh steppe as "a cesspool of dirt and disease, where natives wallow in their own filth and live life almost indistinguishable from their animals".[165] The ignorance of Kazakhs and poor hygiene were portrayed by Russian travelers to highlight the

---

[163] Michaels, Paula A., *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin's Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003), 24.

[164] Ibid., 30.

[165] Ibid., 36-7.

significance of Russian "civilizing mission". Bol'shoi's narrative is a typical example of this viewpoint. The traditional practices of Kazakh ethnomedicine were seen by Bol'shoi as absurd and ignorant.

In Kazakh tradition, illness deals more with psychological activities; it connects more to status of spirit, and native healers' diagnosis and the method of treatment are based on this belief. Shamans, mullahs and folk doctors were supposed to know in advance what the disease was, conduct ritual to drive away evil spirit, and ask the gods and spirits for prosperity and health.[166] When Bol'shoi encountered Kazakh ethnomedicine, he felt it completely in contrast to European medicine, which is based on theory, knowledge and empirical practices. As Bol'shoi records, Kazakh tribesmen had a peculiar understanding about the doctor's role. They believed that a doctor is able not only to make a diagnosis, but also tell fortunes. When Bol'shoi told them that he could not make diagnosis based merely on pulse, the Kazakhs complained: "What sort of doctor are you?"[167] Not only were doctors were supposed to possess this mystical power in the conception of the Kazakhs, Russians were also unusual in the tribesmen's imagination: they believed that "every Russian is able to produce supernatural acts such as predicting frost, making weather warmer, raising horrible storms, making rainfall, bringing or driving away thunder cloud, etc."[168] Further

---

[166] Ibid., 27.

[167] Bol'shoi, *Syn otechestva*, 1822, No. 14, 297.

[168] "Всякий Русский в состоянии произвесть самые сверхъестественные человеку деяния, как то наприм. учинить безвременно повсеместную стужу, теплым день сделать, возбудить страшную бурю, пролить дождь, навести и отвести громовую тучу и проч." Bol'shoi, No. 14, p. 297. A reference can be made to John Castle's account, in which he writes about his trip to Abulkhair Khan in 1734 and that Kazakhs considered Castle's

evidence of the tribesmens' medical absurdity is portrayed in their way of viewing and applying medicament. The drugs that Kazakhs widely used include *sabur* (dried aloe juice), *gvozdika* (cloves), *bad'ian* (anise), *ptyt'* (mercury), *kinovar'* (cinnabar), *sulema* (corrosive sublimate), *sinii kamen'* (blue stone), *kvastsy* (alum), *sera* (brimstone) and *sarsaparel'* (smilax).[169] These substances can hardly be considered as drugs in Bol'shoi's consideration. Bol'shoi records a case when he asked a tribesman for some medicines for treatment, but the next day the man came back with pieces of wax, a cork and half of a coffee bean that Kazakhs obtained from raiding a Russian caravan, asking whether these were drugs or not. For these "drugs" this Kazakh had paid a sheep.[170] Besides this, as Bol'shoi observes, most of the time tribesmen just carried these "medicines" with them as "talisman" in the hope of warding off disease. The drugs that they got by plundering Bol'shoi's mission were similarly wasted by tribesmen as they distributed these drugs as amulets.[171] These superstitious ideas and practices from Kazakh tradition were being referred to by Bol'shoi as ignorance of tribesmen's medical knowledge.

"European objects", such as wigs and watches, as something "magical". See in Castle, John: "Journal von der AO 1736 aus Orenburg zu dem Abul Geier Chan der Kirgis-Kaysak Tartarischen Horda" in *Materialen zu der Russischen Geschichte* (Riga, 1784) trans. Sarah Tolley & ed. Beatrice Teissier as *Into the Kazakh Steppe: John Castle's Mission to Khan Abu'lkhayir* (1736) (Oxford: Signal Books, 2014), pp.9-10.

[169] "Лекарства, которые мне случалось видеть в самом малом количестве у Киргизцев, суть: сабур (азбай), листьеничная губка или белый труп, гвоздика (каламперь), бадьян (бадьян), ртуть (сынап), киноварь (сыр сынап), сулема (ак сыпап), синий камень (кок тас), квасцы (ачитас), сера (кукурт), сарсапарель (тамор дары) и пр. " Ibid., 298-9.

[170] Ibid., 296.

[171] Ibid., 299. Paula Michaels explains the use of amulets in Kazakh ethomedicine:"Men and women alike adorned themselves and their homes with amulets meant to defend against the evil eye and keep dangerous spirits at bay. Shamans and mullahs both prepared and sold amulets to protect their wearers from illness. Shamans made them from sacred or endowed with special strength to resist or cure disease ... Mullahs typically prepared amulets that consisted of a small vessel containing a tiny scroll with a Quranic verse or prayer.", Michaels, p. 31.

Bol'shoi's mission to the steppe was initially to assist his compatriots in their travel; while being captured, he was forced to treat his captors and to confront the "Otherness" of Kazakh culture, thus his record mainly focuses on the conflict, tension and alien side of the captors' culture. On the other hand, for some other captives, such as Mikhailov, Kazakh tribesmens' superficial understanding of medical knowledge was something that they could take advantage of. Mikhailov's captivity contains an intriguing episode about his experience of working as a healer for a Kazakh boy. After he escaped from his Kalmyk captors, he was captured by Kazakh tribesmen, among whom he always suffered from hunger. When his Kazakh owner's grandson had asthma, Mikhailov, a former Russian Cossack, was asked to heal this boy together with a Kalmyk sorceress (most likely a Shaman). The Kazakhs believed that since Mikhailov "hast lived among the Russians and Kalmucs and they have skillful physicians", he "must know a remedy for the disease".[172] Thus Mikhailov pretended to be a physician for a while, during which he enjoyed special authority and freedom. Though not possessing any medical practices before, he suggested a treatment that the boy should not drink milk, but only mutton-broth. This advice not only miraculously helped the boy to recover, but also procured Mikhailov a good meal (mutton-broth) that he had not had for a long time. But after several days the boy was fed with milk again, and he soon died. In this episode, the appearance of the Kalmyk sorceress is quite curious. She, as a figure that the Kazakh tribesmen widely worshiped, was not capable of

[172] *Adventures of Michailow, a Russian captive, among the Kalmucs, Kirghiz, and Kiwenses. Written by Himself* (London: Sir Richard Phillips & Co., 1822), 18.

making diagnosis and giving any useful advice. When she was asked for how long the boy could survive, she said more than a month, while Mikhailov said one day, after which the boy soon died. Yet Kazakh tribesmen still treated Mikhailov merely as a slave and obeyed the sorceress, and her subsequent suggestion to sell Mikhailov due to the "misfortune" he had brought was the main factor that caused the sale of Mikhailov to Khiva.[173] Though Mikhailov did not utter it explicitly, the appearance of the Kalmyk sorceress in his narrative certainly implies the irrational and superstitious belief of the tribesmen. This eighteenth-century captivity experience can find its echo in Leskov's *The Enchanted Pilgrim*, in which Flyagin, as a Russian horse connoisseur, is taken captive by the Tatars near the Caspian and forced to treat their livestock and Tatar women. Flyagin does practice medicine during his ten-year captivity; he recalls: "What's so clever about it? When somebody was ill, I gave them aloe or galingale root, and it would go away, and they had a lot of aloe - in Saratov one of the Tatars found a whole sack of it and brought it back, but before me they didn't know what it was meant for. "[174] These two episodes show that the identity of backwardness was easily constructed in the sphere of medicine. Any Russian could be a master, at least in medicine, of the captive-taking cultures. Not only because the natives already acknowledged the fact that Russians are superior in this field, but also the natives were easily manipulated due to their ignorance, superstition and superficiality.[175]

---

[173] Ibid., 21.

[174] Leskov, 148.

[175] Further study on the constructed backwardness of Central Asian medicine during late imperial Russia in

At the same time, not all travelers and captives saw Kazakh medicine as backward. Some noticed that many native treatments proved to be very practical and useful. For instance, in the section about medical arts of the Kazakhs, Aleksei Levshin notes that "Kirgiz medicines are not all about empty and superstitious rituals of these sham healers; they indeed know many effective medicines".[176] Then Levshin points out some effective herbs and Kazakh naturopathic remedies that are extremely effective for symptoms, such as heart ache, muscle pain and tumours. As Levshin notices, these treatments are not based on any theory, but on practices that were passed from generation to generation and the "natural instinct of human being to save his life".[177] An effective way of healing a wound can also be found both in Kudriashev's short story *Kirgizskii plennik* and Severtsov's narrative. Kudriashev's writing of captivity stories is a way to popularize his ethnographic knowledge. In this story, after the Cossack Fedor is taken back to the Kazakh *aul*, the tribesmen apply their cure in order to make Fedor recover from the serious injury he gets from the battle so that he can start working as a slave. The treatment - covering the wound with a fresh and warm sheepskin - proves to be very simple but effective. "The method of treatment was the easiest: everyday Fedor was covered by a hot sheepskin, which was just taken from a sheep. This simple treatment was very helpful for our sergeant. He, after five weeks, completely

---

Cavanaugh, "Backwardness and Biology", "Chapter 1: Making them more accustomed to us, 1868-1917", 18-94.

[176] "Впрочем, пустые и суеверные обряды сих мнимых лекарей не составляют всего врачебного искусства киргизов: они действительно знают многие полезные лекарства." Levshin, Aleksei, *Opisanie kirgiz-kazach'ikh ili kirgiz-kaisatskikh ord i stepei*, vol. 3, *Ethnograficheskiia izvestiia* (Saint-Petersburg, 1832), p. 142.

[177] Ibid., 144.

recovered."[178] Severtsov's account confirms the authenticity of this Kazakh treatment. He records that the Kokandi Kirgizs treated him with "raw and fresh mutton" to heal the wounds he got during the capture. During daytime they covered Severtsov's wound with raw meat for absorbing ichor, and at night they applied powers made from herbs and tortoise eggs. This "pure Kokandi treatment" proved to be very effective.[179] Yet in these writings about Central Asian medicine, the inequality in knowledge is quite evident. As representatives from European civilization, Russians and Russian captives felt themselves to be the ones who are qualified for defining the effectiveness or ignorance of Central Asian cultures.

As Mary Pratt argues, imperial expansion generated "contact zones", where "disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination".[180] Russian captivity narratives exactly present a form of such "contact zone", where Oriental captors confine imperial captives, while captives define and judge captors. As this chapter shows, by constructing backwardness and ignorance of captive-taking cultures, captive-narrators manage to show their sense of superiority despite their abjective positions. They demonstrate their capabilities of knowing and mastering their captors'

[178] "Способ лечения был самый простой, именно: Федора каждодневно обкладывали горячею овчиною, за минуту перед тем с барана снятою. Это простое лечение было очень полезно для нашего вахмистра; он, по прошествии пяти недель, совершенно вылечился." Kudriashev, 280.

[179] Severtsov, 68.

[180] Pratt, 7.

cultures. Thus writing captivities is not merely the retelling of captivity experiences; it also shapes ideas, creates discourse, and constructs captives' and captors' identities, usually in a highly asymmetrical way.

Conclusion

Reading captivity narratives is an exploration of the diversities and complexities in the clashes of different cultures. It is a recollection of the vulnerabilities and uncertainties of early travels, and it is also a reminder of the miscommunication and misunderstanding that could possibly happen when different cultures meet. These humble captives experienced and retold part of History.

This thesis has shown that writing about captivity experiences involved the conscious construction of certain narratives and personas, both in fictional and factual accounts. There are certain themes that constantly appear in different narratives. Captors' unsuccessful attempts to tame captives, including force and benevolence, are accentuated to highlight Russian captives' willpower, their ability of dealing with different adversities, and their unchanging belonging to their ultimate home – Russia. Romantic encounters and unattractive male captors are depicted in order to soften the tension between captors and captives and to imply Russian males' outmaneuvering of Central Asian females in love. Captivity is also a platform for captives to demonstrate their superior knowledge over Oriental civilizations. Russian captives show their possible capabilities of mastering Central Asian lands and civilizing Central Asian peoples, which implies the possibility for expansion and colonization. The writing of captivity experiences has certain paradigm to follow; yet it also changed and evolved over time according to the shift of power between the captors' and captives' societies.

Specifically in Russia's relations with Central Asian societies, the rapid expansion into Central Asia witnesses Russian captives' growing awareness of their captors as Russia's own subjects. Captors are transformed from alien and threatening neighbors into peoples to be embraced and pitied. This shows that the Orient in imperial Russia's imagination was certainly not static; it changed over time along with Russia's increasing contact with and control of the Orient. This point challenges Said's model of Orientalism, namely, the "male perception of the Orient", in which power relations between the Orient and the Occident were always static.[181] At the same time, the examination of these narratives shows that nineteenth-century Russians, even those who had been in captivity, tended to confidently feel themselves to be representatives of European powers in relation to Central Asian cultures. Little awareness of Russia's bicontinental geography, intimacy with Asian cultures, or Russia's hybridity or "Asian" identity is traced in these writings.[182] In writing captivity experiences and portraying Central Asian captors' cultures, nineteenth-century Russian Orientalism coincides with European Orientalism. Captivity, as an alienated form of the imperial expansion, was a prominent theme in describing Russia's frontier experiences and expressing Russian identity.

The Caucasian corpus produced during the nineteenth century is an important precursor for Russians' writing about Central Asia. Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*

---

[181] Said, 208.

[182] For instance, David Shimmelpennnck van der Oye argues that Russian Orientalism does not fit in the Saidian model of European Orientalism because Russia, being closer to the East than other Western countries, has more interaction with East, and Russian Orientologists respected the region they studied. See: Shimmelpennnck van der Oye, 238.

generated its epigone literature in the writings about Central Asian captivities, and its enduring influence can still be traced toward the end of the century. Yet the place for the Caucasus and Central Asia was significantly different in Russian Romanticism. When the Caucasus was already a place for military service, exile and travel in the 1820s to 1840s, Central Asia remained a vast unexplored land, thus it had less space for romantic imagination. When Central Asia was fully conquered by Russian in the 1880s, the "Golden Age" of Russian literature has already past; it was a period for different kinds of encounters and writings, touristic travels, geographical expeditions, etc. This is another topic to be explored.

There is certainly more research to be done in the writings about captivities and bondages within the Russian Empire and in Eurasian region. For instance, tracing narratives about Russian captivities in Central Asia, the Caucasus and Crimea in a larger time span will provide a more comprehensive view of the contact between steppe cultures and Russia (or Muscovy). Apart from the captive-narrators who managed to return to Russia, there were more captives who were not able to escape or redeem themselves and became part of their captors' societies. Their lives and fate are another story to be told. Besides that, the reversed roles of nomadic captors and Russian captives in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, non-Russian captives in Eurasia and the perception of captives and slaves by Central Asian cultures are also topics to be explored.

Moreover, the myths and tales about imperial Russian captives are not extinct;

they persist in clashes between powers in modern societies. In 1996, a nineteen-year-old Russian soldier, Evgenii Rodionov, was reported to be taken prisoner by Chechens during the First Chechen War. According to widespread tales, he was tortured by the Chechens who wanted to convert him into Islam, but he refused to remove his cross on his neck; he was later murdered after one hundred days of imprisonment and torture. When this news came to Russia, he was adored as a saint and martyr, and in 2003 icons of Rodionov appeared. In numerous icons this young Russian solider wears his camouflage, with an Orthodox cross around his neck and a halo behind his head.[183] Although the details of these tales are largely based on Rodionov's mother's questionable testimony, the extensive veneration and meetings in honor of Rodionov were real. To a great extent, the figure of Evgenii Rodionov is like a reappearance of Dostoevskii's portrayal of Foma Danilov from Russia's conquest of the Kokand Khanate. It pictures the threat of modern Russia's adversary and draws a clear dichotomy between Christian and Islam. It is a completely new story; it is also an old story.

[183] There are many reports about Evgenii Rodionov. See, for instance: "Yevgeniy Rodionov. Skvoz' uzhasy chechenskogo plena", accessed April 17, 2016, http://www.pravda.ru/society/fashion/couture/07-01-2003/34229-rodionov-0/; "Kurilovo Journal; From Village Boy to Soldier, Martyr and, Many Say, Saint" *New York Times*, November 21, 2003, accessed April 17, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/21/world/kurilovo-journal-from-village-boy-to-soldier-martyr-and-many-say-saint.html.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Adventures of Michailow, a Russian captive, among the Kalmucs, Kirghiz, and Kiwenses. Written by Himself (London: Sir Richard Phillips & Co., 1822)

Blankennagel', E. I., *Zamechaniia maiora Blankennagelia, vposledstviie poezdki ego iz Orenburga v Khivu v 1793-94 godakh* (Saint-Petersburg, 1858)

Bol'shoi, Savva, "Zapiski Savvy Bol'shogo o prikliucheniiakh ego v plenu u kirgiz-kaisakov v 1803 g. i 1804 g.", *Syn otechestva*, 1822, No. 11, 168-176; No. 12, 214-220; No. 14, 289-303; No. 15, 24-34; No. 35, 49-68.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor, *A Writer's Diary, Volume 2: 1877-1881* (Translated by Kenneth Lantz) (Illinos: Northwestern University Press, 1997)

Erofeeva I. V.(ed.), *Istoriia kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov.* Vol. 5: *Pervye istoriko-etnograficheskie opisaniia kazakhskikh zemel'. Pervaia polovina XIX veka.* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2007)

Erofeeva I. V.(ed.), *Istoriia kazakhstana v russkikh istochnikakh XVI-XX vekov.* Vol. 6: *Putevye dnevniki i sluzhebnye zapiski po iuzhnym kazakhskim stepiam. XVIII-XIX veka* (Almaty: Daik-Press, 2007)

Efremov, Filipp, "Rossiiskogo unter-ofitsera geviatletnee stranstvovanie i prikliucheniia v Bukharii, Khive, Persii i indii i vozvrashchenie v Rossiiu, napisannoe im samim v sanktpeterburge v 1784 g.", *Russkaia starina*, 1893, №.7, 125-149.

Efremov, Fillip, "Stranstvovanie Filippa Efremova v Kirgizskoi stepi, Bukharii, Khive, Persii, Tibete i Indii i vozvreshenie ego ottuda cherez angliiu v rossiiu" in *Puteshestviia po vostoku v epokhu Ekateriny II* (Moscow: Vostochnaia Literatura, 1995)

Kudriashev, Petr, "Kirgizskii plennik (byl' Orenburgskoi linii)", *Otechestvennye zapiski*, Vol. 28, No. 79 (Oct., 1826), pp. 273-290.

Leskov, *The Enchanted Wanderer and other stories* (London: Vintage Books, 2014)

Leskov, Nikolai, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol.5 (with the introduction by Lev Anninsky) (Moscow:EKRAN, 1993)

Levshin, Aleksei, *Opisanie kirgiz-kazach'ikh ili kirgiz-kaisatskikh ord i stepei*, vol. 3, *Ethnograficheskiia izvestiia* (Saint-Petersburg, 1832)

Lunin, V. A. *Nevol'nichestvo u aziatov: rasskaz starogo moriaka* (Moscow, 1895, 1898, 1908, 1911, 1913, 1914)

Murav'ev, Nikolai Nikolaevich, *Puteshestvie v Turkmeniiu i Hivu v 1819 i 1820 godakh gvardeiskogo general'nogo shtaba kapitana Nikolaja Murav'eva, poslannogo v sii strany dlia peregovorov* (Moscow: Avgusta Semena, 1822)

Murav'ev, Nikolai Nazar'evich, *Kirgizkii plennik* (Moscow: Tip. Avgusta Semenova, 1828)

Pushkin, A.S., *Sobraniye sochinenii v 10 tomakh* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoye izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1962).

Severtsov, Nikolai, *Mesiats plena u kokantsev* (Saint-Petersburg, 1860)

Tatarinov, A. A., *Semimesiachnyi plen v Bukharii* (Moscow and Saint-Petersburg: Pressing house of M. O. Vol'fa, 1867)

Secondary Literature

Allworth, Edward (ed.), *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance*, *A Historical Overview* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994)

Allworth, Edward A., *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present: A Cultural History* (Hoover Institution Press, 1990)

Andreeva, Elena, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007)

Austin, Paul, *The Exotic Prisoner in Russian Romanticism* (NY: Peter Lang, 1997)

Benjamin, Walter, "The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov" (Harry Zohn trans.), *Chicago Review*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter - Spring, 1963), 80-101.

Brooks, Jeffery, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)

Brower, Daniel R. and Lazzarini, Edward, *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997)

Campbell, Mary Beth, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988)

Cavanaugh, Cassandra Marie, “Backwardness and Biology: Medicine and Power in Russian and Soviet Central Asia, 1868--1934” (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2001)

Colley, Linda, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600- 1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002)

Dickinson, Sara, “Russia’s First ‘Orient’: Characterising the Crimea in 1787”, *Kritika* 3, 1 (2002)

Dickinson, Sara, *Breaking Ground: Travel and National Culture in Russia from Peter I to the Era of Pushkin* (Studies in Slavic Literature and Poetics 45) (Studies in Slavic Literature & Poetics) (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006)

Etkind, Alexander, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011)

Fisher, Alan, “Muscovy and the Black Sea Slave Trade”, *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 6:4 (1972), 575-594.

Frank, Joseph, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)

Grant, Bruce, “The Good Russian Prisoner: Naturalizing Violence in the Caucasus Mountains”, *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Feb., 2005), 39-67.

Grant, Bruce, *The Captive and the Gift: Cultural Histories of Sovereignty in Russia and the Caucasus* (NY: Cornell University Press, 2009)

Green Nile (ed.), *Writing Travel in Central Asian History* (Indiana University Press, 2013)

Hopkins B. D., "Race, Sex and Slavery: 'Forced Labour' in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the Early 19th Century", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Jul., 2008), 629-671.

Hokanson, Katya, “Literary Imperialism, Narodnost’, and Pushkin’s Invention of the Caucasus,” *The Russian Review*, vol. 53, July 1994: 336-352.

Hokanson, Katya, *Writing at Russia's Borders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008)

Hopkirk, Peter, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (NY: Kodansha International, 1992)

Hubbell, Jay B., “The Smith-Pocahontas Story in Literature”, *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 65, No. 3 (Jul., 1957), 275-300.

Khodarkovsky, Mikhail, *Russia’s steppe frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Indiana University Press, 2004)

Khodarkovsky, Michael, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads*, 1600-1771 (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2006)

Lantz, K. A., *Nikolay Leskov* (Boston:Twayne Publishers, 1979)

Layton, Susan, *Russian literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Layton, Susan, "Russian Military Tourism: The Crisis of the Crimean War Period", in *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist Under Capitalism and Socialism*, edited by Anne E. Gorsuch, Diane Koenker(NY, Cornell University Press, 2006), 43-63.

Layton, Susan, "The Divisive Modern Russian Tourist Abroad: Representations of Self and Other in the Early Reform Era", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4 (Winter, 2009), 848-871.

Maggs, Barbara, “Imprisoned! Two Russian Narratives of Travel and Captivity in Asia in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: Filipp Efremov in Central Asia and Vasilii Golovnin in Japan”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*,Vol. 52, No. 3/4 (September-December 2010), 331-349.

Mamedov, Mikail, “ ‘Going Native’ in the Caucasus: Problems of Russian Identity, 1801-64", *Russian Review*, Vol. 67, No. 2 (Apr., 2008), 275-295.

Michaels, Paula A., *Curative Powers: Medicine and Empire in Stalin’s Central Asia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003).

Morrison, Alexander, “ ‘Applied Orientalism’ in British India and Tsarist Turkestan", *Comparative studies in society and history,* 51.03 (2009), 619-647.

Morrison, Alexander, “Introduction: Killing the Cotton Canard and getting rid of the Great Game: rewriting the Russian conquest of Central Asia, 1814–1895”, *Central Asian Survey*, 33:2, 131-142.

Morrison, Alexander, “‘Nechto eroticheskoe’, ‘courir après l'ombre’? – logistical imperatives and the fall of Tashkent, 1859–1865”, *Central Asian Survey*, 33:2, pp. 153-169.

Morrison, Alexander, “Twin Imperial Disasters. The invasions of Khiva and Afghanistan in the Russian and British official mind, 1839–1842”, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 48 (1) (January 2014), 253 – 300.

Nayar, Pramod K., *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

Pearce, Roy Harvey, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative", *American Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Mar., 1947), 1-20.

Pratt, Mary Louise , *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (NY: Routledge,2008, second edition of 1992)

Ram, Harsha, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006)

Roboli, T., “*Literatura ‘puteshestvii*,’ ” in B. Eikhenbaum and Iu. Tynianov, eds., *Russkaia proza* (St. Petersburg: Petropolis, 2007; reprint of 1926 ed.), pp. 104-127.

Snader, Joe, *Caught between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington:University Press of Kentucky, 2007).

Starr, G. A. , "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Nov., 1965), 35-52.

Sahni, Kalpana, *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia* (Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1997)

Said, Edward W., *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979)

Schonle, Andreas, *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey: 1790-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2000)

Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2010)

Strong, Pauline Turner, *Captive Selves, Captivating Others: The Politics and Poetics of Colonial American Captivity Narratives* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999)

Stanziani, Alessandro, *Bondage: Labor and Rights in Eurasia from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries* (Berghahn Books, 2014)

Sunderland, Willard, *Taming the wild field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004)

Thorstensson, Victoria, “The Inkwell of The Russian Messenger: Editorial Politics and the Serialization of Dostoevsky's Demons and Leskov's At Daggers Drawn”, *The Russian Review* Vol.75 No.1 (2016), 26-50.

Wachtel, Andrew, “Voyages of Escape, Voyages of Discovery: The Transformation of the Travelogue”, *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*. ed. B. Gasparov, R. Hughes, I. Paperno. *California Slavic Studies*, vol. 15. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992),128-149.

Wehrle, Albert J., "Paradigmatic Aspects of Leskov's 'The Enchanted Pilgrim'", *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Winter, 1976), pp. 371-378.