Applying TBG to Kyrgyzia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, the author correctly predicts that Kyrgyzstan had to be the most reform-oriented Central Asian state in the early 1990s because relative newcomer Askar Akaev perceived that power was shifting away from his central leadership to the country’s regional leadership. In stark contrast, the model indicates that longtime strongman, Uzbek President Islam Karimov, perceived his power base to be strengthening vis-à-vis the regional elites, who readily caved in to the President’s goals at an early date. This has given rise to one of Central Asia’s most repressive regimes (only Turkmenia’s is more pervasive). In the Kazakh Republic, however, both the regional and central elites felt that their power was on the upswing, and the model predicts a slow-growing authoritarian state that is at times repressive and at other times permissive. Ironically, Kyrgyzia, which began with so much promise of democratic reform, has of late grown increasingly authoritarian. After a decade in power, Luong explains, Akaev has become increasingly influential at the expense of the regional elites, and thus no longer deals from a position of weakness.

As would be expected after ten years of preparation, the book has very few editorial faults, but for some reason between pages 70 and 80, there is a flurry of mistakes. In that space, Luong uses “comprised of” in lieu of “composed of,” she misspells “Pishpek” as “Pishnek” in Table 3.2, she transliterates “oblasti” as “oblasty” and defines them as “regions” instead of the more common “provinces,” and Usualiev’s tenure in office differs in Table 3.3 from what she provides in the text on the very next page. Ironically, I did not find any other errors elsewhere.

This book is appropriate not only for political scientists, but also for political geographers, government leaders, intelligence operatives, and anyone interested in Central Asia. Chapter 3 is the best and clearest summary of Central Asian socio-political history that I have yet to come across, and I plan to use it in my university classrooms. In short, kudos to Dr. Luong for her scholarly excellence and her very interesting book.

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Mary Masayo Doi. Gesture, Gender, Nation: Dance and Social Change in Uzbekistan. London and Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002. xiv, 151 pp. $60.00. Distributed by GRG, Westport, CT.

The Soviet Union had one of the world’s largest culture production industries, yet scholars have generally neglected the topic of Soviet culture and the arts, especially in the non-Russian republics. Mary Masayo Doi’s book joins a small but growing list of English-language publications on the performing arts in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia and provides an interesting glimpse into the lives of women dancers in Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, Doi’s arguments are not particularly convincing and the quality of her writing is uneven.

Doi’s argument is this: “dancers, as symbolic ‘girls’ or unmarried females in the Uzbek kinship system, were effective symbolic mediators between extended kin groups and the Uzbek nation-state. National dances and dancing provided an expres-
sive form and a social space for constructing and representing notions of ‘Uzbek’ as a collective identity” (p. 10). Doi’s evidence comes from fieldwork and about twenty interviews of dancers conducted in Tashkent in 1992 and 1994. After an introduction and an initial chapter describing her ethnographic impressions of gender, kinship and nationalism in Uzbekistan, her chapters follow a rough chronology of four generations of dancers (with about two dancers featured per chapter) from the early 1920s through the early 1990s.

The book’s strength is in showing how Uzbek dance as a marginal art form, and women dancers as liminal people, flourished in a space between the indigenous social structure of Central Asia and the Soviet system of culture production. Although women dancers of the first and second generation were marginalized because they defied Uzbek gender roles, over the course of the twentieth century, women dancers became central to the representation of Uzbek culture both at home and abroad. Doi’s study also contributes to other work on the performing arts in Uzbekistan (which are not cited) by illustrating how “the institutionalization of Uzbek dance led to a centralized system of production, the creation of a standardized dance technique, and the construction of regional styles constituting ‘Uzbek’ national dance” (p. 109).

While these points are interesting, they are not particularly well supported, and some of Doi’s other arguments are simplistic or misleading. Doi’s most serious problem is the quality and use of her data. Of the “about twenty life and career histories of dancers” she collected, most interviews were less than an hour long and some took a mere fifteen minutes (p. 12). The life history method is supposed to compensate with depth for what it lacks in breadth and representativeness, but Doi achieves neither depth nor breadth with this small number of short interviews. Additionally, Doi collected “some fifteen life histories of individuals in other professions” (p. 12), but she does not explain her sampling rationale, and it does not appear that she systematically analyzes these data in the book. Doi admits that the limits of her abilities in Uzbek prevented her from making the most of these interviews (p. 96). She also takes an intriguing kinetic approach to ethnography, learning to dance several Uzbek dances from a master teacher, and I would have liked to see her make more use of these unique data in her analysis.

To judge by her descriptions of Soviet policies and her slim references section, Doi is not familiar with much of the current literature on Soviet history, nationality policies, and cultural identity in Central Asia. Perhaps it is in part this lack of familiarity with a variety of perspectives that leads her to caricature Soviet policies as anti-national (e.g. the Soviets used dance as an “instrument of social reform . . . to destroy a people” [p. 126]). This black-and-white view of the Soviet state as villain (and of the Uzbek people as victim) prevents her from bringing out all that is in her own data, where the dancers frequently refer to the Soviet state’s role in creating and supporting Uzbek national dance.

The book’s other problems include poor organization, sloppy editing, factual errors, and disconnections between the theoretical framework and the data. In various places she brings up promising concepts such as “colonialism,” “modernization,” “commoditization,” and “the dialectics between structure and agency,” but disappoints when she fails to use or even explain these ideas in her analysis. Throughout