IDENTITY POLITICS AND INTELLECTUAL TRAJECTORIES IN BUKHARA, 1917-1924

BY

JESSE MIKHAIL WESSO

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2019

Urbana, Illinois

Advisers:

Professor Mark D. Steinberg
Professor Donna A. Buchanan
ABSTRACT

This analysis of the intellectual trajectories and changing political identities of liberal proponents of reform in Bukhara in the early communist period is concerned primarily with three questions: First, what can a close study of the Bukharan intelligentsia reveal about their intellectual lineage in the context of larger reformist movements in Central Asia and the Muslim world in an age of revolution? Second, following failed efforts at reform and Soviet conquest, how were communism and communists created in Bukhara, and how did Bukharans define their position vis-à-vis Bolshevik ideology? Third, how did Bukharans themselves understand communism and their place in the “modern” world?

In the final analysis, the case of the People’s Soviet Republic of Bukhara (1920-1924) demonstrates that Muslim modernism (Jadidism) and communism became incompatible as ideologies of world-making in Central Asia—that is, at the beginning they were not mutually exclusive ideologies. It was only after the consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia beginning in 1924 that Muslim modernism was understood by Soviet authorities to be explicitly counter-productive and, finally, counter-revolutionary. Moreover, the shifting political identities and varied intellectual trajectories of the Bukharan intelligentsia expressed during the period of the BNSR demonstrate the extent of ideological uncertainty, pluralism, and experimentation present in Bukharan reformist circles.

Keywords: Modernity; reform; revolution; Jadidism; communism; Central Asia
CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.................................................................iv

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.................................................................v

Chapter

INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY..............................1

1. THE SETTING: THE POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE
   BUKHARAN INTELLIGENTSIA..........................................................9

2. THE STRUGGLE: BUKHARAN REFORMISTS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE
   LAST YEARS OF THE EMIRATE..........................................................22

3. THE IDEA: REVOLUTION IN THE MINDS OF THE BUKHARAN
   INTELLIGENTSIA..........................................................................40

4. THE EXPERIMENT: MUSLIM REFORMERS AND YOUNG COMMUNISTS IN
   POWER...............................................................................................55

5. THE CHALLENGE: DIVERGENT MODERNITIES AND DISILLUSIONMENT.....73

CONCLUSION: TOWARD NEW HISTORIES OF CENTRAL ASIA...................87

GLOSSARY............................................................................................96

BIBLIOGRAPHY....................................................................................98
ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sharif Shukurov in Traditional Vestment, ca. 1912</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Bukharan Operation, 29 August - 2 September 1920</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Central Asia, 1920-1924</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Faizulla Khodzhaev in his Office, 1922</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sketch of Abdurrauf Fitrat, ca. 1935</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

BKP     Bukharan Communist Party
BNSR    Bukhan People’s Soviet Republic
d.      delo
f.      fond
KPT     Communist Party of Turkestan
KPUz.   Communist Party of Uzbekistan
l., ll.  list, listy
ob.     obratnoe
op.     opis’
RKP(b)   Russian Communist Party
RGASPI  Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan
TsGARUz Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Uzbekistan
INTRODUCTION

PROBLEMS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

In just over thirty years, between 1905 and 1937, the cultural landscape of Central Asia was changed completely by war, famine, and two major political revolutions, which coincided with the rise and fall of a modernist, nationalist Muslim intelligentsia and the ascension of the Bolsheviks, themselves quintessentially modern. The imposition of communism in Central Asia by the Soviet Union was to have long-lasting and far-reaching consequences for its citizens. The intellectual histories of these two groups, the communists and Jadids, are fatefuly intertwined as ostensibly competing forms of modernity, each with a singular vision of a future for Central Asia. Despite the widespread economic uncertainty and rapidly shifting political climate of this era, the nation of Uzbekistan emerged from the national delimitation of 1924, and it obtained its current recognizable form in 1929 after the creation of Tajikistan from some of its eastern territory. In a sense the existence of Uzbekistan down to the modern day can be seen as a product of both the communist and Muslim intelligentsia; its creation can be attributed directly to the complex, interrelated, and sometimes contradictory trajectories of the Bolshevik and Muslim intelligentsia.

In this study I endeavor to show that, in the final analysis, the case of the People’s Soviet Republic of Bukhara (1920-1924) demonstrates that Muslim modernism (Jadidism) and communism became incompatible as ideologies of world-making in Central Asia—that is, at the beginning they were not mutually exclusive ideologies. It was only after the consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia beginning in 1924 that Muslim modernism was understood by
Soviet authorities to be explicitly counter-productive and, finally, counter-revolutionary. Moreover, the shifting political identities and varied intellectual trajectories of the Bukharan intelligentsia expressed during the period of the BNSR demonstrate the extent of ideological uncertainty, pluralism, and experimentation present in Bukharan reformist circles.

Chapter one of this study is a examination of the setting, that is, the political and intellectual environments in Bukhara prior to 1918, while chapter two concerns the struggles and activities of Bukharan reformists in the last years of the Emirate. Chapter three is an analysis of a revolution in the minds of the Bukharan intelligentsia, and chapter four details the experiment of Muslim reformers and communists in power. Finally, chapter five examines the final challenges and ultimate disillusionment of the Bukharan intelligentsia as the modernities of Jadidism and communism diverged.

**Pre-Archival Narratives**

Before the Cold War the intellectual history of Central Asia was often presented either in Soviet terms, as the triumph of communism in dragging its backward population toward modernity, which included the benevolent creation of the Soviet republics of Central Asia according to national principles,¹ or its inversion, the western model, which tended to exaggerate the political influence of the Soviets, especially in the years before Stalin, and viewed the delimitation as either a new version of “russification” or, more crudely, a repressive measure by the Soviet government, which could control the rebellious Muslims of Central Asia only by dividing their populations into arbitrary and unscientific republics. Nevertheless, the work of

---

some scholars remains useful as an origin point for study, even if the presence of Central Asian voices remains largely absent.\(^2\)

However, starting in the 1950s, especially in America and France, we see sophisticated analyses of the "Russian orient" begin to emerge, led by Alexandre Bennigsen and his Paris cohort.\(^3\) Bennigsen’s work was especially important for its treatment of social and political issues, its analysis of culture, and its implications for international and imperial history. But the most important consequence of Bennigsen’s work was a shift in focus from the center to the periphery. In the words of Brower and Lazzerini, “We like to think of Bennigsen as a pioneer of sorts whose vision for vostokovedenie [oriental studies] in the West included, above all, a fundamental respect for the viewpoint from the borderlands and the development of an ability to interpret it effectively.”\(^4\) We then see a remarkable generation of “Cold War scholars,” which includes Edward A. Allworth, Serge A. Zenkovsky, Michael Rywkin, Alan Fisher, and, later, Daniel Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, who were all directly influenced by Bennigsen’s work and made significant contributions to the history of Russia and Central Asia, although most of the recent scholarship naturally diverges from these older studies.\(^5\) Nevertheless, these


\(^3\) Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, Islam in the Soviet Union, trans. Geoffrey E. Wheeler and Hubert Evans, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967) remains influential and is still widely cited; Edward Said’s postcolonial critique, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1978), remains crucially important for any student of empire and nationalism, as his application of a post-structuralist framework, bolstered by literary theory and emergent trends in Middle Eastern studies, has influenced subsequent generations of scholars of area studies.


\(^5\) See, for example, Edward A. Allworth, The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia (Praeger, 1973); Serge A. Zenkovsky, Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960) is important mainly for capturing the mid-century academic fascination (shared also by the Communist Party) of Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic influence on minorities in the Soviet Union; Michael Rywkin, Moscow’s Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia (Sharpe, 1982); Alan Fisher, The Crimean Tatars (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978).
pre-archival studies remain influential, and are an obvious starting point for any scholar of Russia and Central Asia.

**The Emerging Role of Local Actors**

One of the most noticeable trends in the recent study of Central Asia has been the focus on local actors, especially the Muslim intelligentsia. Adeeb Khalid and others have argued that Central Asia was experiencing its own “cultural revolution” in the years after the Russian revolution, as evidenced by the emergence of a “golden age of modern Uzbek literature,” film, theater, and political participation, which were all important projects of the Muslim intelligentsia. Khalid’s argument is worth citing directly:

> The creation of Uzbekistan was the triumph of a national project of Central Asian Muslim intellectuals who had come to see themselves as Uzbeks. The formation of that republic was . . . the fulfillment in contingent Soviet conditions of a national project that long predated the Russian revolution. The intelligentsia came to have a deep fascination with the idea of revolution as a modality of change, for only revolution could deliver the nation from backwardness.⁶

Thus, Uzbekistan itself was a triumph of the national Muslim elite, even if its existence was predicated on Soviet conditions and revolution as a “modality of change.”

Several western scholars have also disagreed on the degree of contemporary cultural influence and historical significance of the Muslim modernist reformers, the Jadids. Devin DeWeese, in a recent provocative article, argues that “much earlier scholarship on the Jadids has misconstrued key aspects of their ‘program’ and has exaggerated their originality, impact, and importance.” Specifically, DeWeese mentions the existence of a “vastly larger body of Central Asians who were utterly uninterested in, unacquainted with, or opposed to the Jadid program.” In

---

the period after the Bolsheviks’ rise to power, this oppositional group must also include the emergent Young Communists and Russian settlers. DeWeese also goes to great lengths to remind his readers of the fundamentally religious nature of the Jadid ‘program’ of modernity, which he argues is routinely ignored in recent studies. For all the vigor of his argument, however, DeWeese overlooks the very real change in outlook for many Jadids, especially after the 1917 Revolution, which had shifted from “reform to irreligion.” The fact is that Jadids in Central Asia, especially before the rise to power of local communists, were the most important proponents of anti-clericalism and anti-traditionalism in Central Asia, especially with regard to reforming Islamic educational institutions. Mustafa Tuna’s treatment of the “self conscious attempt to debunk ‘Jadidocentric scholarship’” is worth citing at length:

Most conspicuously, some of the most forceful articulations of this incipient anti-Jadidist literature obfuscate—if not disregard—the origins of both the term “Jadidism” and the phenomena it has come to represent . . . While trying to link it to transregional Muslim puritanist movements, moreover, they downplay—if not completely ignore—the Westernist, positivist, and secularist agendas of . . . Jadidism.

As Tuna confirms, there has been a tendency in the historiography (as well as within their contemporary society) to conflate Jadidism with pan-Islamism and other Islamic reformist movements. Any examination of writings by the Central Asian Jadids will reveal their secularist platform and the vitriol with which they attacked the conservative Muslims in the press.

While only a few prominent Jadids became communist party members in the years after the revolution, their cultural efforts continued, however minimized by Soviet censorship and,

---


8 One prominent example would be the life and works of the major Jadid Abdurrauf Fitrat. Khalid documents in great detail his “path from reform to irreligion” in *Making Uzbekistan*, 221, 240-253.

9 Mustafa Tuna, “‘Pillars of the Nation’: The Making of a Russian Muslim Intelligentsia and the Origins of Jadidism,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2017), 260.
later, exile, imprisonment, and execution. Despite persecution, many reformers never gave up on the idea of the “nation,” and their imaginations were interrupted only by the violent reality and uncertainty of the age. In this, and in many other ways, the Jadids ironically had much in common with the Bolsheviks, who officially labeled them nationalists and counter-revolutionaries. The reality is that many Jadids welcomed and were encouraged by the revolution. In addition to their advocacy for secular education, the Jadids worked to disarm the conservative Muslims of Central Asia, opening the way for later Soviet anti-religious campaigns. The Jadids also advocated for the unveiling of women and sweeping orthological and lexical reforms of the Uzbek language. They should therefore be understood primarily as modernist reformers and agitators.

**Imperial and (Post-)Colonial Models**

Several recent and influential studies of Russia’s role in Central Asia have documented the “colonial” flavor of Soviet policy and practice, emphasizing the economic importance of the region *vis-à-vis* the Soviet state, especially for cotton production and other raw materials, and the disempowerment of local, non-Communist, elites, the Jadids and other pre-revolutionary elements. By 1924, after Moscow’s dissolution of the short-lived Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic (BNSR), the Jadids never again held positions of political power. For its part, the Soviet Union worked to promote young Uzbek communists to local positions, but important positions in the party cells were usually held by ethnic Russians. In Khalid’s view, this period marked a “turning point in the political history of Central Asia,” after which there remained little doubt about who held power in Central Asia: “With Bukhara under control, the Bolsheviks felt much more in control of the situation. Matters of state-building could take center stage. For the
Central Asian intelligentsia, too, 1923 was a decisive point... From now on, national projects were to work within Soviet parameters and be defined by them.”

Northrop, in his analysis of the political and economic manifestations of Bolshevism in Central Asia, argues that the Soviet Union was in many ways a continuation of the Tsarist empire: “The USSR, like its Tsarist predecessor, was a colonial empire... [It] may not have been a classic overseas empire like that of the British or Dutch, [but] the USSR did have a somewhat comparable political, economic, and military structure; a parallel cultural agenda; and similarly liminal colonial elites.” I would argue that the liminality of local elites is a crucial aspect of understanding power relations in Central Asia at the time. We see this very clearly in the shifting roles of power in Uzbekistan during this period, from the Jadids to the Young Communists in the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (KPUz). By the time of the “Stalinist Revolution,” it became clear that Central Asia was firmly in control of the Soviet state. Though the Great Purges of 1936-1938 marked the final, physical defeat of the Jadids (any many more), the reality is that they had been marginalized for at least a decade or more.

Not all scholars have agreed with an “imperial” characterization of the Soviet Union in Central Asia, however. Khalid, for example, directly challenges Northrop’s claim: “The Soviet Union’s cultural agenda... had more in common with those of the mobilizational states of the interwar era, while its attempts to engineer society—land reform, organization of marginal groups in society, reshaping the body social—have no parallels in the colonial empires of the era.” While Khalid makes a compelling exceptionalist argument, he appears to downplay the

10 Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 155.
economic exploitation of the region, which many local intellectuals considered a crucial
component of “red colonialism.” Complicating matters, Khalid appears to make a point similar
to Northrop’s later in his book: “Collectivization and the expansion of cotton tied Central Asia,
and Uzbekistan in particular, to the Soviet economy; the closing of the borders cut Central Asia
off from the rest of the world, while the silencing of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia
transformed the parameters of public discourse.”13 Thus, these two scholars’ disagreement over
the imperial characterization of the Soviet Union is evidence that the definitions of theoretical
models such as empire are continually being refined by current scholars.

***

The story of the Jadids is one of rapid motion, near-euphoria, and final tragedy. Given an
opportunity to explore substantive cultural reforms in the final years of the weakened autocracy,
they were ultimately forced to confront an even more radical exponent of modernity, the
Bolshevik. The Jadid vision of modernity, as a normative ideal associated with secularism and
the post-industrial life, was informed directly by intellectual currents in the waning Ottoman
Empire and among Volga Tatars in Russia. Their chief concern was fighting the endemic
“backwardness” of Central Asia, especially its educational institutions. For the Jadids and many
of the Muslim reformers, the idea of the “nation” was the necessary outcome of their attempts at
modernization. However this “nationalism” (though later vindicated in the creation of the Soviet
republics in Central Asia) would in later years prove fatal to many of the Muslim intelligentsia in
Uzbekistan.

13 For a sophisticated analysis of the political economy in Turkestan after the revolution, see Marco Buttino,
59-74; Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 10.
CHAPTER 1
THE SETTING: THE POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE BUKHARAN INTELLIGENTSIA

In 1917 Bukhara was among the most intellectually diverse, if not open, cities in Central Asia. Members of the liberal intelligentsia, the main subjects of this study, were shaping their intellectual trajectories in response to revolutionary local and international events, including the 1905 Revolution, the Turkish War of Independence, and the two Russian revolutions of 1917. We now recognize these as events of great historic import, but for Bukharan reformists they were happening in real time. And, especially at the beginning, the winners were never guaranteed. Below we will encounter Bukharan intellectuals, such as Fitrat or Khodzhaev, who started their political careers as social activists and writers in the Jadid tradition and later, radicalized to an extent by the Russian revolution, became Young Bukharans or members of the Bukharan Communist Party (BKP).

Many among the intelligentsia were working through the varied and sometimes contradictory ideologies of pan Turkism, nationalism, Jadidism, or socialism, trying their best to assess the worthiness of each for constructing a new world within a modernist framework. Bukhara itself became a unique arena for ideological experimentation, owing to a diverse mix of intellectual traditions, both from within the local Muslim elite, best exemplified by the ulama [scholars of Islam]14, and from international influences, most notably the ideas of Muslim modernists in Tatarstan and the Ottoman Empire. Throughout it all, in an era of rapidly shifting

14 The reader will note the glossary at the end of this document.
political (and even national) identities and intellectual sparring, where it indeed was never certain which line of thought would prevail, the Bukharan intelligentsia developed their ultimate ideal: the modern nation in Central Asia. This is their story, and a story of their ideas.

**Traditional Muslim Elites**

In 1917 Bukhara was still seen, by many conservative and progressive contemporaries alike, as a bastion of Islamic tradition, one which needed either to be supported in its resistance to modern, western, or Russian ideas or remade according to them. The political realities were more complex. The Emirate of Bukhara, as the last bulwark of quasi-independent Muslim rule in Central Asia, was, depending on who was asked, either a continuing reminder of Persian cultural and literary achievement, of the past greatness of the Turkic world-conquerors and the ancient majesty and prosperity of the Silk Road, or a locus of backwardness and anti-modernism, a symbol of that state which has fallen out of time. The state was caught between perceived geopolitical ambitions of foreign empires (Russia and Britain); at the same time it was intimately tied to the Russian economic base and dependent on its military acquiescence. In the post-revolutionary environment of cultural agitation and social discord, these political relationships became even more strained. Put another way, the emir was forced to play a complicated political game with the sovereignty of Bukhara and the spiritual primacy of Islam in Central Asia at stake.

The emergent progressive and modernist Bukharan intelligentsia, directly inspired by intellectual trends in *fin de siècle* Russia and the Ottoman Empire, sought both to acknowledge the discord in their society, promulgated by decades and possibly centuries of backwardness, and

---

15 Bukhara had been a protectorate of the Russian Empire since 1868, following the Russian conquest of Central Asia and the establishment of the *krai* of Turkestan.
to reclaim their culture and history from those who, according to them, perpetuated it: chief among them were the *ulama* and the emir himself. Said Mir Mohammed Alim Khan (1880-1944), the last Emir of the Manghit Dynasty and the last descendent of Genghis Khan to rule over what was a portion of his empire, was, in the minds of reformists, both the embodiment of Bukhara’s traditional Muslim elite and a scion of backwardness, whose rule was characterized, especially in its last years, by arbitrariness, political expediency, and sustained repressive measures against its own citizens.\(^\text{16}\)

For reformists, the policies of political expediency and appeasement to colonial powers were evidence of the moral degradation and arbitrariness of the emir and his advisors. In the words of preeminent Bukharan reformist Faizulla Khodzhaev (1896-1938), who would later become the de facto head of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic as Chair of the Central Revolutionary Committee (revkom): “There was no legislative body, except for the will of the emir, no laws, except the religious law of the Shariat, no guarantees of personal and property inviolability for the population of Bukhara.”\(^\text{17}\) Thus, for members of the Bukharan intelligentsia such as Khodzhaev, the old regime in Bukhara, exemplified by the emir, was to be opposed primarily because it could not guarantee the physical and material livelihood of its subjects.

**The Question of Modernity**

In 1917 the traditional Muslim elites of Bukhara, of which the most significant and formidable were the emir himself and the Islamic scholars of the *ulama*, were still empowered, but this was changing. Within the Russian imperial sphere, the 1905 Revolution had proved to be

---

\(^{16}\) This characterization is drawn from many of the writings of the Bukharan reformists, including Faizulla Khodzhaev, Abdurrauf Fitrat, Sadriddin Aini, Mustafa Chokaev, and Sharif Shukurov, which will be examined in further detail below.

\(^{17}\) Faizulla Khodzhaev, “O mlado-bukhartsakh,” *Istorik Marksist* 1 (1926), 123. All translations from Russian and Uzbek are my own unless cited from a secondary source.
a formative event, a brief experiment in western-style “liberalism” and a relaxation of censorship which led to an easier transmission of ideas originating from both international and local minorities. Concurrently, the recent global advancements in science and industry, in addition to local achievements, such as the completion of the Tashkent Railway, signalled the beginning of a new and rapidly accumulating ensemble of “modern” norms.

A group of Muslim modernists and reformists, the Jadids, became active during this time, heavily influenced by other Muslim modernists in Russia and the Ottoman Empire and, to a lesser extent, by international intellectual trends such as pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism. Many of these reformists came from merchant families and were educated either in the traditional Islamic school, the madrasa, abroad, or both. These reformists were chiefly concerned with searching for an answer to the question of modernity. What does this mean? According to Mark D. Steinberg, modernity can be only partially defined “by the processes and values of rationalistic and scientific modernization: by the modernizing project of administrative and aesthetic ordering of society and nature, by the driving will to modify and control the physical environment and social and economic relationships with applied science and technology.”

The other aspect of modernity, what I call its radical ambiguity, may be understood as an interactive rebirth by way of acceleration toward the unknown. For the Bukharan reformists, then, the question was how to best orient themselves for a successful “reconstruction” of life on these

---

18 The degree to which socialism and the revolutionary strategies of the Bolsheviks influenced the Muslim modernists will be discussed in Chapter 3.

“new lines,” which were drawn up by new advancements in science and political theory, and made imminently possible by the revolutionary climate in which they found themselves.\textsuperscript{20}

In this undertaking of radical rebirth on new lines, the reformists looked first to Islam itself, to the spiritual and worldly laws of the Ḩadīth and sharī'ah.\textsuperscript{21} Influenced by radical Muslim thinkers in Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the Bukharan reformists discovered a contradiction between Islam as it was taught in the madrasa and “true Islam,” which they sought to recover. This recovery was deemed possible only by way of education, and its biggest obstacle was the endemic backwardness of Central Asian society, which, in the minds of the Bukharan liberals, was especially apparent when contrasted to the achievements of Europe. The reformists hoped that new methods of education would be the foundation for a reformed society, one which would be shaped by modern contours but remain legitimate to the Central Asian cultural heritage. With the goal of creating a modern Muslim nation in Central Asia, reformists formulated strategies for reform (and, later, revolution) by looking to the western liberalism of Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and Russia for an ideological basis. Their final aspiration, similar to the Bolsheviks, became nothing short of the radical transformation of the world around them (mir-tvorchestvo) and a reexamination of the cultural and national identities that world created. This process of ideological formulation was necessarily experimental, both exemplified and made possible by shifting political allegiances among a diverse cast of public intellectuals in an unstable region.


\textsuperscript{21} In Central Asia, historically, Sunni Islam and the Hanafi fiqh predominated.
Calls for Reform

By characterizing the Emirate of Bukhara as "backward," the progressive Muslim intelligentsia helped to define what was "traditional." In doing so, they supplied an ideological alternative to Muslim monarchy, one which sought to improve society primarily by sponsoring reform efforts. These reformists, also known as Jadids, proponents of the "New Method" school of Islamic education, were, especially before the February Revolution, not yet revolutionaries, but were primarily reformists who sought modest reforms. The term Jadidism has a complicated historiography and much analytical baggage. For this reason, and because the term was never used by the Jadids themselves, I prefer to use the terms "modernists," "progressivists," or "reformists," while acknowledging the nuance and difference that these terms engender. The fact remains, however, that the Jadids were, at different times and to varying degrees, Muslim, modernist, progressive, and reformist. The distinction between reformist and revolutionary thought (and strategy) became less clear over time, especially after the February and October Revolutions, but the Muslim reformists in Bukhara were, as evidenced by their early activities, primarily concerned with raising the level of education, especially that of foreign languages like Russian.

Sadriddin Aini (1878-1954), prominent Bukharan reformist and among the most important literary figures of Tajikistan, was one of the reformists in Bukhara who focused many of his "progressive" efforts on education. In his memoirs, written in 1940 under the auspices of

---

the Soviet censors, Aini comments on the modesty of the Bukharan reformers' political and reformist goals (at least in the early years):

The progressive movement of which I am speaking could not, by any means, be called revolutionary. It demanded only a few reforms—the reform of the schools and madrasahs, the reform of a number of old-established rules and regulations, and . . . they required only the cessation of license on the part of the Emir's officials and a certain modification of the system of taxation. . . . Naturally I joined this progressive movement.23

The progressive movement of which Aini spoke was primarily concerned with raising cultural awareness by means of education of Muslim citizens. Backwardness (otstalost'), the bane of Muslim reformists in Central Asia, and indeed of the Bolsheviks in Russia, could only be cured by sustained effort in introducing modern education to the population. Many of the Bukharan reformists, including Aini's bitter rivals Abdurrauf Fitrat and Faizulla Khodzhaev, had studied abroad in Moscow, Europe, and Istanbul.24 There they were able to interface with the works of other Muslim modernists, chief among them the Crimean Tatar Ismail Gasprinskii.

Jadidism as a Muslim Modernity

Ismail Gasprinskii (Gaspirali, 1851-1914), who published in Russia and Turkey and whose writings were known in Central Asia, was the most important early proponent of Jadidism as a school of thought. Gasprinskii and subsequent Muslim reformists sought to combat the endemic backwardness of Muslim societies across the world by replacing the traditional Muslim education in the madrasa with that of the New Method, which emphasized a phonetic approach to learning the alphabet, as opposed to syllabic, and the importance of secular subjects, including arithmetic, science, and history.

---

23 Sadriddin Aini, Pages from My Own Story: Memoirs (Moscow: 1958), 73.
24 Fitrat studied in Istanbul from 1909-1913.
Many of these reformists came from wealthy merchant families, and several of them, most notably Abdurrauf Fitrat (1886-1938), had long careers as writers before the revolution. The early Bukharan Jadids, of which Fitrat was the most exemplary (later he would prove to be among the most mutable), worked to imagine a religion capable of supporting modernization efforts in Central Asia. But what did this mean? “Enlightened Muslims,” according to Gasprinskii, would be “somewhat more knowledgeable and educated when compared to the dark masses . . . informed about the conditions of the times, familiar with the practical sciences pertaining to life, and versed in Russian and other languages.”\(^{25}\) But what of Islam itself? According to Khalid, “Jadidism had begun as a project of redefining ‘Islam’ through appeal to Islamic sources of authority and from a discursive position located inside the Islamic tradition.”\(^{26}\) Fitrat identified the practices of shrine worship, extravagant feasting, and underage marriage as specifically anti-Islamic, but, for other Jadids, such as Munnavar Kori Abdurashidkhon ugli (1878-1931), the primary source of “moral decay” in the present was lack of knowledge.\(^{27}\) His essay, “Isloh ne demakdadur [What is Reform?],” published in 1906, remains one of the clearest articulations of Jadidism and the New Method:

All our acts and actions, our ways, our words, our maktabs [elementary schools] and madrasas and methods of teaching, and our morals are in decay. . . . If we continue in this way for another five or ten years, we are in danger of being dispersed and effaced under the oppression of developed nations. . . . O coreligionists, o compatriots! Let’s be just and compare our situation to that of other, advanced nations; . . . let’s secure the future of our coming generations and save them from becoming slaves and servants of others. The Europeans, taking advantage of our negligence and ignorance, took our government from our hands, and are gradually taking over our crafts and trades. If we do not quickly make

\(^{25}\) İsmâ’îl Gasprinskîy [Gasprinskii], “Ziyâli MUSTÜLMANLARA (Bir Hitâb) Slovo k inteligentnym musul’manam,” Tercüman/Pervodchik (25 March 1893), quoted in Tuna, “Pillars of the Nation’: The Making of a Russian Muslim Intelligentsia and the Origins of Jadidism,” Kritika: Explorations in Russian & Eurasian History 18, no. 2 (Spring 2017), 266.

\(^{26}\) Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 220.

\(^{27}\) Fitrat Bukhārāyī (hereafter cited as Fitrat), Raḥbar-i-nijāt (Bukhara, 1916).
an effort to reform our affairs in order to safeguard ourselves, our nation, and our children, our future will be extremely difficult.
Reform begins with a rapid start in cultivating sciences conforming to our times. Becoming acquainted with the sciences of the time depends upon the reform of our schools and our methods of teaching.  

For Munnavar Kori, then, reform was necessary to catch up with the West, whose imperialist tendencies remained a constant threat to the material livelihood of Central Asians. Similarly, Fitrat considered reform among the Muslims of Central Asia necessary to reclaim what had been lost over several centuries of decline. His advice, to “[s]trive until you too have that which made the Christians victorious over you,” is an accurate summation of early Jadid philosophy vis-à-vis the West. Thus, for the Jadids the moralities of Islam were secondary to its status as an indispensable locus of culture, solidarity, and collective history.

Fitrat, Munnavar Kori, and other Bukharans saw Europe as a model for economic and scientific advancement, and in Turkey and Tatarstan they found the modernism of the Jadids capable of supporting their secular aims while remaining legitimate within the Islamic tradition. The Emirate of Bukhara, despite its status as a Russian protectorate, remained, along with Khiva, the only reminders of pre-Russian, Muslim sovereignty in Central Asia, and thus, Bukhara was uniquely situated: reformists hoped Alim Khan, who was seen as moderate upon his ascension to the throne in 1911 (he had also studied in Russia as a teenager), would be receptive to calls for reform, especially if that reform was presented as concordant with Islamic canonical law.


29 Fitrat, Munâẓara-yi mudarris-i bukhârâ-yi bâ yak nafar-i Farangi dar Hindustân dar bâra-yi makâtib-i jadida (Istanbul, 1911), 31, quoted in Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 41.
This was not to be the case, as the emir tightened controls over the population amid famine, unrest and whispers of revolution from the west; but many of the Bukharan *intelligentsia* still saw the emir paternalistically, as a “kind father of the Bukharans,” or “the king who protects his people.”30 The emir, as a Muslim sovereign, was best situated to defend Bukharans from their oppressors, before, in the words of Fitrat, “imams are replaced by priests . . . [the] call to prayer by a bell, . . . [and the] mosque by a church.” Writing in 1911, Fitrat urged Alim Khan to “[g]ive some thought to what the solution might be for us miserable ones. Who is our deliverer? Who will grasp our hand and pull us from this maelstrom? . . . Is today not our best opportunity, since we have, in your august personage, a kind father, a wise ruler, and an intelligent king?”31 This “opportunity” proved to be squandered in the minds of reformists, and Fitrat himself would, just six years later in 1917, refer to Alim Khan as a “monument of oppression.”32 His opinion was shared among many of the Bukharan reformists, and, by the time of their expulsion from Bukhara in 1918, under orders from the emir, the Bukharan reformists were forced to look elsewhere for a leadership capable of implementing reform.

**Jadidism in Practice: The New Method in Bukhara**

In addition to appeals to the emir and the *ulama* for reform from above, the Bukharan reformists began organizing their own agitational, grassroots efforts. New Method schools, imported from Tatarstan, had been appearing in Russia and Russian Turkestan since the revolution in 1905, but Alim Khan and the *ulama*, down to their last years, were more openly hostile to educational reform. According to Adeeb Khalid, “The new-method school acquired such a central position in Jadid reform across the Russian empire [Tatarstan and Turkestan]

---

30 Ibid., 41.
31 Ibid., 41.
because political realities allowed it.” The political realities of Bukhara, where Muslim citizens had a Muslim ruler to whom they might bring their concerns, as previously mentioned, made it much more difficult for reformists to operate. As such, Bukhara “came to be the center of anti-Jadid sentiment all over Central Asia, as the conflict between reformers and their conservative opponents defined the politics of Muslim society for years to come.”

New Method schools in Bukhara faced considerable financial opposition from the emir and the ulama. Aini, writing about his first visit to a New Method school in Bukhara, notes its sorry state, owing to lack of funding and state support, and indeed to the presence of foreign instructors: “Some of the Bokhara people, dissatisfied with the old school . . . send their children to the new-method school opened by the Tartars. I visited the school. Bokhara children who did not even know the Uzbek language were compelled to take their lessons in the Tartar language. I was very sorry for them.” Aini and his early supporters, among whom the most significant was Abdulkadyr Mukhieddinov (Mirzo Abduqodir Muhiddinov, Mirza abd al-Qadir Mukhiddinov, 1892-1934), another crucial figure involved in the formulation of a “Tajik” identity (to be explored further below), then proceeded to open their own school in Bukhara, although this led to a direct confrontation with the conservative elite. Aini recalls:

During the examinations, which we decided to hold in public in order to set an example to others, the higher priesthood made a number of provocative attacks on our [New Method] school. A decision was taken to the effect that such a school would make apostates of the children. With the aid of the Emir the higher clergy succeeded in closing the school.

33 Khalid, The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform, 162; Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 64.
34 Aini, Memoirs, 74.
35 Ibid., 75.
Unfortunately, for Aini, Mukhetdinov, and many other reformists in Bukhara during this time, ideological censuring was often accompanied by subsequent imprisonment or acts of violence in the name of the emir:

Not content with this [closing of the school] the mullahs and the Emir’s men tried to assassinate Mirza Abdulwahid [Mukhetdinov], turning the ignorant mob on him and he was forced to go into hiding in Karshi for some time. . . . I also remained in hiding for some time but in the end I got tired of that sort of life and went straight to the alim of Bokhara, my teacher and one of those responsible for the closing of the school.36

Aini, having taken his petition directly to a member of the traditional ulama, who was his teacher, demonstrates that reformists in Bukhara before the revolution made its way to Central Asia still worked within the societal boundaries of traditional Muslim rule. Aini, who, like many early Bukharan reformists, also had solid credentials as ulama, approached his former teacher as an equal, and he was also prepared to defend the New Method as not inconsistent with the Shariat:

I entered into a discussion with him about the school, proved to him that the school did not contradict the laws of the Shariah and, moreover, taught the children to read and write much more quickly than other schools as the examinations had shown in practice. The alim, feeling himself defeated in the discussion, chose another way. “What does it matter to you whether somebody’s children are illiterate! You’re literate yourself and have learned the sciences, you can become a qazi or a rais! And if you value your life give up that business of yours!” . . . [But we] did not give up our aims.

***

In the Soviet period the Bukharan reformists would be increasingly unable to distance themselves from their pre-revolutionary careers and activities, often with tragic results. As such, it remains crucial to understand their political and intellectual background. In Marxist terms the liberal intelligentsia of Bukhara were unequivocally of the same class background as the ulama.

36 Ibid., 75.
Some, such as Sharif Shukurov (Sharifjon Makhdum, 1867-1932), were even nobles. A majority of Jadids and later reformists, including many of the later Young Bukharans, received a traditional Islamic education in the *madrasa*, and the Bukharan intelligentsia were by and large from successful and wealthy merchant families. The Bukharan liberals, however, spurred by the 1905 Revolution and the early calls to reform of the Jadids, began to imagine themselves as fundamentally separate from the “backward” and increasingly “immoral” caste of Bukharan Islamic nobility. In imagining an ideology capable of providing a logical basis for reform in Bukhara (based on the Turkish and European models), the reformists defined a “liberal” alternative to the “conservative” elite. This alternative would be a *modern* alternative, fit for the reclamation and the reconstruction of society and culture in Central Asia. But for many of the intelligentsia—and historians—it was difficult to pinpoint what was “modern,” and, in any case, how did being “modern” make society better? The Bukharans decided, like the Jadids, that education would be the primary method of societal innervation. But the Bukharans were forced to reconsider their tactics in the face of opposition or resistance from the state. These were problems the Jadids were considering in 1905, and the Bukharan intelligentsia would continue to explore them in following years, following the intellectual path of reform in the diverse (and possibly antithetical) guiding lights of Islam, Jadidism, communism, nationalism—or something perhaps more unique to Central Asians themselves.
CHAPTER 2
THE STRUGGLE: BUKHARAN REFORMISTS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST YEARS OF THE EMIRATE

In the last years of the Emirate, Bukharan reformists, who were never part of a homogenous group, were nevertheless divided less by ideology than by methods and personal relations. These personal differences became more pronounced by the tumultuous years of 1918-1920—years of secrecy, near-victory, unrest, and persecution. Aini described living in Bukhara in 1918 as a “state of torpor.”37 Although many of the liberal intelligentsia had not yet given up on the possibility of reform from Alim Khan, Aini and Mustafa Chokaev (Cho’qoy, Shokay, 1890-1941), the foremost proponent of Turkestan independence and the most prolific of the Uzbek émigré activists, remained skeptical. According to Chokaev, Alim Khan “could not even as much as show his face in the capital of his Emirate, the city of Bukhara, which he visited only once in his life, and then only under the strong guard of the Russian General Dilienthal, in 1910, when he was still the heir to the throne.”38 In this environment of “torpor,” amid whispers of revolution from the West, the Bukharan reformists began their first major campaign for reform.

The two most important groups of reformists were led by Aini and Khodzhaev, bitter rivals whose ideological similarities became vastly overshadowed by mutual enmity and distrust. Khodzhaev and his associates began to call themselves Young Bukharans (as reformists they were more politically active than their contemporaries), while Aini’s group, consisting mostly of

37 Ibid., 73.
38 Chokaev, “Turkestan and the Soviet Regime,” 413.
older Jadids and educators, were more moderate, operating mostly in secret out of Aini’s house and publishing new-method tracts. Khodzhaev’s political acumen and knowledge of Russian helped facilitate contact with potential Russian supporters, and his group was able to significantly influence representatives of the Provisional Government, and later in 1918, the Bolsheviks. Their agitation culminated in two pivotal events in Bukhara in 1918: the declaration of a reformist manifesto and an invasion of Bukhara itself. By the end of the year, political realities in Bukhara had both revealed the fractious nature of the Bukharan intelligentsia and their decided incompatibility with the status quo.

Secret Societies and Personal Rivalries

By 1918, in response to increased scrutiny from the emir, some among the Bukharan intelligentsia of merchants, educators, and reformists began to form secret agitational societies, often funded in secret by older liberals, most notably Shukurov.\(^39\) The more radical of the Bukharan reformists, the Young Bukharans and the fringe elements of the nascent Bukharan Communist Party (BKP), conducted or sanctioned robbery and assassination.\(^40\) Some of the secret societies held to the possibility of creating an oppositional movement in Bukhara, but most of these groups varied in their goals, and were generally more distinguishable by who they excluded. Sadriddin Aini, in his memoirs, recounts the foundation of his own secret society of educators and reformists. Interestingly, the account reveals very little about the foundational purpose of Aini’s group (“We formed a secret society for the reform of the school and

\(^{39}\) According to Allworth, Shukurov “never took direct part in the Jadid movement, yet the Jadids always benefited from his moral and material support and assistance. Sadr al-Din-i Ayni [Sadriddin Aini] testifies that he was among one of those liberals who financially contributed to the activities of the association of Tarbiyat-i aifal by paying a certain monthly fee in secret.” Edward A. Allworth, ed., The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual: The Diary of Muhammad Sharif-i Sadr-i Ziya (Brill, 2004), 5.

\(^{40}\) See Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 124, 140.
madrasah.”)—however it does provide a perspective on the intellectual environment in Bukhara at the time.

We were very strict with regard to whom we accepted into the society. It could not have been properly called a political society and it was by no means revolutionary, but the government of the Emir with its medieval laws and the Russian tsar’s officials who used medieval methods in Bokhara regarded even work in the field of science and education as revolutionary so that members of such a society as ours were ‘state criminals’ in their eyes.\(^4\)

Aside from the brief description of the purpose of his own society, Aini’s retrospective account is mainly remarkable because it makes explicit the issue of personal rivalries among the Bukharan intelligentsia and because his hedging (“It could not have been properly called a political society”) is a reflection of the charges that would be laid against the Bukharan reformists in the decade to follow.

In writing his memoirs over a decade after the events in question, Aini’s account must be considered a reflection of the later priorities of an intellectual looking to resituate his past more comfortably within conditions under the Soviets. Aini continues, betraying a personal feud with another well-known Jadid: “If a waverer or an agent provocateur had chanced to get in, the society would have been speedily crushed. For this reason even a man like Fitrat who was widely known at the time was not permitted to enter our society. . . . We even took extensive precautions to keep the existence of the society hidden from such people.”\(^4\) Aini even describes his fellow reformists, the Young Bukharans, as an unruly mob of secret supporters of the emir: “The only thing they did do with their endless talk about reforms was to collect a mob of people around

\(^4\) Aini, *Memoirs*, 75-76.

\(^4\) Ibid., 76-77. Interestingly, the note attached to Fitrat’s name in this collection reads: “*Abdurrauf Fitrat*—one of the leaders of Jadidism, a bourgeois reformist movement which ideologically had much in common with the secret society founded by Aini; he later turned into a political double-dealer and bitter enemy of Soviet power.”
them and call that mob a ‘secret society.’ The chief participants were people close to the Emir’s government, often obvious agents of the Emir, the scions of court nobles.” In this hardly disguised denunciation of Khodzhaev, the de facto leader of the Young Bukharans and a friend of Fitrat’s, Aini demonstrates the serious degree to which, as political lines were being drawn in Bukhara, in an age of political upheaval and shifting ideologies, these personal relationships and disagreements became enlarged in their importance; personal rivalries quickly became political—later they would become significant for the creation of stable political and national identities.

Jadidism in Politics: The Young Bukharans

The Young Bukharans were a semi-secret group of Muslim reformists and political activists, distinguished from other groups of Central Asian Jadids mainly by their political activism (and aspirations), methods and self-disassociation. The Young Bukharans, like many Jadids, were directly influenced by international modernist activity, especially the nationalist publications and activities of the Young Turks and Tatar intellectuals such as Gasprinskii. Many of their group had received an education abroad, in Moscow or Istanbul, and several of them had a command of Russian. Their period of greatest political and agitational activity, 1909-1918, was characterized by measured resistance to the status quo, a campaign for land, tax and educational reforms, and the creation of a representative government with a constitution. While their political aims at this time were more modest compared to their ideological counterparts in the

41 Ibid., 91.
42 Khodzhaev would repeatedly attempt to distance himself and the Young Bukharans (later, the Bukharan Communist Party) from the Jadids, especially after charges of pan-nationalism were leveled against members of the older intelligentsia under communism. See Khodzhaev, "K istorii revoliutsii v Bukhare i natsional’nogo razmezhevania Srednej Azii," in Izbrannye trudy, Volume 1 (Tashkent: 1970), 179.
West, including the Young Turks and Russian revolutionaries (as we will see below, the Young Bukharans were still willing to work with Alim Khan on matters of reform even after their expulsion from Bukhara), the Young Bukharans, after the February Revolution in Russia and a period of famine, massive unrest and increased repression in Bukhara, became increasingly radicalized.

According to Khodzhaev, the most prominent Young Bukharan, the primary goal for reformists in the last years of the Emirate was combating the arbitrariness of Alim Khan’s rule: “The Bukharan revolution was not created by any kind of adventure or lust for power, as our opponents think. No, it was caused by the desire to put an end to the arbitrariness [proizvol] of Emir Said Mir Alim, who oppressed the Bukharan people especially bitterly in recent years.”46 Khodzhaev directly equates the proizvol of Alim Khan with the necessity of reform in Bukhara, however, the reality was that Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans worked closely with the emir’s representatives and the Russian Resident to draft a reformist manifesto as late as 1918.

Khodzhaev, writing in 1921 as the de facto leader of the newly founded Bukharan Republic—brought about after the Bukharan Revolution and the city’s surrender to the Red Army in 1920—no doubt wanted to distance himself from the former regime, to emphasize the “oppressive” nature of the emir. In 1918 however, when Khodzhaev and his associates were still operating in Bukhara, there were hardly any explicit condemnations of Alim Khan among the writings of the Young Bukharans. This fact appears to lend support to a contemporary critique of Khodzhaev, namely, that he and his group were primarily political opportunists, not opposed to

---

the emir in principle, but willing to work with anyone who would support the reforms they found necessary for the creation of a modern Muslim state in Bukhara.

In the words of Aini, who would become a formidable political opponent of Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans after the emir’s ouster, the Young Bukharans “had no support amongst the people [in 1918]. They had not formerly carried on any sort of propaganda for reforms amongst the townspeople or the villagers nor were they able to begin it after February [the February Revolution in Russia]. They did not even have a programme.”\textsuperscript{47} While some of the charges Aini laid against his personal and political rival Khodzhaev appear to have some merit—Khalid and other scholars have argued that the influence of the Young Bukharans on the events of the Bukharan Revolution were minimalized after their exile from 1918-1920\textsuperscript{48}—the Young Bukharans were still formidable in 1918. While it remains true that many of the reformists had little popular support in Bukhara, Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans deserve the most credit among the Bukharan intelligentsia for initiating contact with the Russian Provisional Government, which led to a surprising series of apparent concessions by Alim Khan in the reformist Manifesto of 1918.

\textbf{International Support and the Reformist Manifesto}

The collapse of the tsarist state provided an opportunity for the Bukharian intelligentsia, many of whom had been operating in secret or semi-secret societies such as Aini’s and Khodzhaev’s, to voice their opinions more openly. Regardless of whether or not they supported the revolution, Bukharan reformists, especially the Young Bukharans and Khodzhaev, became emboldened by the prospect of support from the revolutionary state in Russia. This was not

\textsuperscript{47} Aini, \textit{Memoirs}, 91.
\textsuperscript{48} See Khalid, \textit{Making Uzbekistan}, 124.
necessarily because the reformists saw in the Russian revolutionaries the potential for a partnership based on shared ideology. Rather, the decision, at least for Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans, seemed to be political. Khodzhaev and his associates understood the importance of Russian support, and quickly worked to establish relations with the provisional government in Petrograd, sending the following telegram in 1918:

Great Russia, through its devoted sons, has irretrievably overthrown the old despotic regime, and founded in its place a free, democratic government. We humbly ask that the new Russian government in the near future instruct our government to change the manner of its governance to the bases of freedom and equality, so that we may [also] take pride in the fact that we are under the protection of Great Free Russia.

Khodzhaev, a keen politician, was already aware of the importance of presenting his efforts in the best possible light to those whose assistance he sought. He asks for, “freedom” and “equality,” concepts which remain necessarily vague, yet capture, he hoped, the essence of commonality between the Young Bukharans and the provisional government. Khodzhaev’s gambit worked, and by March the Russian Resident Aleksandr Miller (1868-1940) had drafted a political manifesto, which was duly approved by Emir Alim Khan and Petrograd. If it were unclear to contemporaries why Alim Khan and his ministers would have supported such a concession, Shukurov argues that the emir and the ulama “having learned of the events [the February Revolution], willingly or not accepted the revolution and bound themselves to establish Liberty [hurriyyat], escaping, due to this, from the claws of the revolutionaries.”

---

49 As Khalid rightly notes, “Bukharan Jadids knew full well that their main support lay outside of Bukhara.” The Young Bukharans also appealed to international Muslim organizations and the Shuroi Islomiya in Samarkand, a coalition of Jadids and social democrats, whose prominent members included, among others, Munnavar Kori and Makhmudkhodzha Behbud (1875-1919). See Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 62.


51 Sharif Jan Makhdum Sadr Ziya’ (hereafter cited as Shukurov), The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 315-316.
was wary of increasing Bolshevik influence in the region, and, at least at first, preferred the lesser evil of reform to the possibility of revolution.

Figure 1 – Sharif Shukurov in traditional vestment, ca. 1912. The Arabic inscription, translated by Allworth, reads, “This is the image of the matchless Shelter of the Shariat, with the [standing] of sādr, the judge, Mirza Muhammad-Sharif-i Sadr [Sharif Shukurov].” From Allworth, ed., The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 120.

This manifesto was to be read by the prominent Bukharan reformist Sharif Shukurov, who in April 1917 had been appointed qāzi kālan [chief judge] in Bukhara. His account of the public declaration hints at a tense atmosphere: “[O]n Friday at ten o’clock, at the Royal Ark at the Raḥīm-khān presence-chamber there assembled the entire nobility, and ‘ulmā, and amirs, and the Consulate officials and some progressivists.” His account continues:

At the above-mentioned hour, the Amīr and Vizier appeared at this assembly and put a copy of a “manifesto” [manifīs], namely a public declaration, into the hands of the author.
I stood up and read [it] aloud, conveying it to the hearing of those present, both those nearby and distant, both Turks and Tajiks. As soon as I finished reading the Declaration, the Amir, never uttering a word, immediately returned to his dwelling chambers through the same door he had come in.52

Shukurov’s appointment was part of a mollifying effort by Alim Khan, in the weeks leading up to the decree, to replace several of the older ulama with those who would be more receptive to reform. Bukharan reformists, Shukurov included, were hopeful that Alim Khan’s implicit, if muted, support of the reform effort in Bukhara would lead to further concessions. The decree itself, which was read publicly on 7 April, promised “state supervision of functionaries, the suppression of unjust taxes, and the establishment of a state exchequer and a budget,” in addition to funding for a printing press. More importantly for the reformists, the manifesto conveyed Alim Khan’s intention to “[take] all measures to disseminate education and the sciences . . . in strict accordance with the shariat.”53 This was considered a major victory for some Bukharan reformists, who seemed finally, with the support of Petrograd, able to introduce reform from within the boundaries of their own government, and in accordance with Islamic law.

**Popular Demonstrations and Civil Unrest**

Unfortunately for reformists, any celebration would be cut short, as a rally organized by the Young Bukharans the very next day met a counter-demonstration of ulama and townsfolk in the streets of Bukhara. The Young Bukharans were rallying in support of the reform effort, and members of the ulama, with the support of many Bukharan townspeople, were protesting the

---

reforms. The demonstrations quickly turned violent, and dozens of reformists were arrested, including Aini, who was placed in a palace dungeon and given seventy-five lashes.\textsuperscript{54} Alim Khan, not wishing to antagonize the \textit{ulama} and conservatives further, quickly disavowed the Manifesto and dismissed liberal functionaries in his government. The sources reveal a nightmarish scenario for the Bukharan reformists, where the breakdown of law and order quickly led to physical assaults and the seizure of property of the liberal intelligentsia, even those, such as Aini, who were not in support of the Manifesto.

This period of violence marks the beginning of the dangers associated with “Jadidism,” as it now became an accusation (due to be repeated on innumerable occasions by the Soviets and Bukharan Communists). Shukurov, in his diary, recalls one episode where a mob broke into the vizier’s office and began breaking windows: “[We] came out wishing to stop this crowd of ruffians, but however much we persuaded them speaking and shouting, there was no success, nothing [of our words] reached anybody’s ear. With this tumult they burst into the Vizier’s Residence and . . . broke the panes of the windows. . . . [T]hey called [us] kafirs [infidels] and apostates, and cursed [us], and named us \textit{Jadids}.”\textsuperscript{55} Alim Khan relied on this episode to distance the Emirate from Russia, and his government was quick to paint the reformists as Bolshevik sympathizers.

What went wrong for the reformists? Firstly, not all of the Bukharan intelligentsia approved of the Young Bukharans’ appeal to the emir, and certainly many of the population of Bukhara were divided over the contents of the Manifesto.\textsuperscript{56} According to Shukurov, many

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} See Aini, \textit{Memoirs}, and Khalid, \textit{Making Uzbekistan}, 64.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Shukurov, \textit{The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual}, 326.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Aini’s reminiscence of the declaration is especially bitter: “On the day the decree was made public . . . the Jadidist leaders started organizing street meetings at which they commented on the decree, pouring out their gratitude to the Emir for every word.” Aini, \textit{Memoirs}, 99.
\end{itemize}
ordinary Bukharans did not know what to think of the declaration, as “Everyone understood [the Manifesto] in his own fashion, everybody interpreted [it] in his own style.”57 Aini, in the days before the declaration, wrote of travelling “around the villages . . . to see how things stood.” He was surprised by the peasants’ opposition to the reforms:

I went to Vabkent, some 15-16 miles from Bokhara, and visited many villages in that vicinity and had heart-to-heart talks with many peasants. But they did not seem to be the same peasants that in 1916 had agreed with my every word and supported me with examples from their own lives when I spoke about the tyranny of the Emir. They might have been changed for others. I was faced with the peasant fanatics for whom the supporters of the reforms were infidels and all the Emir’s actions were in accordance with the Shariah, the laws of Islam.

Aini continues, placing the blame for the reactionary sentiments among the peasants upon the ulama: “It turned out that immediately the first word about the February Revolution had arrived the Emir’s government, through the mullahs, had begun working up the peasants against any sort of reforms and against the reformists.”58 As Shoshanna Keller, discerning the latent anti-Russian sentiment in the demonstrations, argues, “ordinary Bukharans who had turned out to support the reactionaries probably had little idea of the real issues involved. In the general collapse of authority many rural peasants had come to Bukhara looking for excitement and activity. This loose, volatile mass had little ideology but was unambiguous in its resentment of the Russians and anything associated with them.”59

For the Young Bukharans and many Bukharan reformists, this failure and subsequent violence, accompanied by a total reversal in policy by Alim Khan, was a sign that modest

---

57 Shukurov, The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 325.
58 Aini, Memoirs, 93-94.
59 Shoshana Keller, To Moscow, not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941, (Praeger, 2001), 34.
reform, peacefully enacted, was becoming a dim dream. The reforms promised in the decree were themselves never enacted, and the emir became a symbol of all that was wrong with Bukharan society. Shukurov, then still in the employ of the emir, wrote that “It became manifest and proved, apparent and clear that the Amīr was not a protagonist of Liberty, the Vizier not the supporter of the progressivists, and the officials of the [Russian] Consulate obeyed the winning adversary.”

The minor Bukharan reformist Abdulla Badriy echoed this sentiment in 1919: “All his [Alim Khan’s] thoughts are of living in luxury, and it is none of his business even if the poor and the peasants like us die of starvation. ‘His highness’ is a man concerned only with eating the best pulov, wearing robes of the best brocade, drinking good wines, and having a good time with young and good looking boys and girls.” This was no longer mere proizvol, or arbitrariness. Alim Khan was now portrayed by reformists as profoundly immoral.

What changed? After it became apparent that Alim Khan would not enact the reforms he and his ministers promised, the Bukharan intelligentsia painted him as a traitor to his own homeland, an agent for the Russians or a puppet for the conservative interests of the ulama. The emir, no longer just careless and arbitrary, was immoral and tyrannical. Alim Khan, for his part, also branded the reformists as traitors for working with the Russians. Both sides, then, thought that the other were traitors to their homeland. More than anything else, however, this episode was

---

60 The failure of peaceful reform efforts in Bukhara in 1918 echoed of the 1905 Revolution in Russia. Like the Bolsheviks in 1905, the Bukharans became increasingly radicalized by the episode.

61 Shukurov, *The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual*, 329. Shukurov’s diary entry follows with expletive-laden denunciation of specific members of the ulama, who, he argued, instigated the riots.

evidence of deep fissures in Bukharan society, and all sides felt that stronger steps toward the
reconstitution of order were necessary.

Persecution, Exile and Kolesov’s Invasion

The chaos of the demonstrations signalled the end of the reformist alliance with the
Provisional Government and the beginning of a period of intense reaction and state violence by
Alim Khan and his deputies, who began indiscriminately arresting Bukharan intellectuals,
reformists and educators—many were executed. For proponents of reform, this period of
near-success and ultimate failure became a catalyst for radicalization. Among those who fled
Bukhara, or were exiled, several ended up in places such as Tashkent, Samarkand, or the
mountainous region of Eastern Bukhara (what would become Tajikistan). These places, with
the exception of Eastern Bukhara, which would later become a site of extreme unrest as the
center of the Basmachi insurgency, were under the protection of Russia and were becoming more
noticeably affected by revolutionary fervor from the west.

For some liberals who managed to stay in Bukhara and survived, the emir was no longer
seen as a legitimate ruler at all, much less one capable of enacting reform (Others, including
Fitrat and Khodzhaev, were still willing to include the emir in their program of reform, partly to
avoid further antagonizing conservatives. This will be discussed in further detail below.) The
same Shukurov, who managed to hold his post as qazi kalan for a few months, was by admission

---

63 Prominent Bukharan reformists such as Khodzhaev, Fitrat and Mukhethdinov, among others, were exiled from Bukhara. With regard to the privileged positions many of the Bukharan intelligentsia left behind, Fedtke remarks that “Muhuddinov as well as Khajaev had to leave considerable riches behind, which the Emir confiscated. From that time on their political ambition to bring about changes in Bukhara was modified by a highly personal concern: Due to the political situation the only chance they saw to get back to Bukhara and regain their property was via the toppling the Emir’s regime.” Fedtke, “How Bukharans Turned into Uzbeks and Tajiks: Soviet Nationalities Policy in the Light of a Personal Rivalry,” in Patterns of Transformation in and around Uzbekistan, eds. Paolo Sartori and Tommaso Trevisani (Diabasis, 2007), 26.
forced to participate in state violence, which had begun to spill over into other cities in response
to mounting unrest: “In the wilayat [province] of Qarshi [Karshi], within a day, four hundred
fifty men and women, infidels and Muslims were publically put to death on the square of the
Qurghan Gates, and the author, under duress, was there above them, overseeing the course and
circumstances of the executions,” which were carried out in the prisons at night, “[by] fives and
tens.”64 Despite having played a role in overseeing the state violence, Shukurov’s position was
not safe. He was soon arrested himself, “with a great tumult and a thousand fussings and
exaggerations.”65 For Shukurov, an older, moderate Jadid with impeccable credentials as ulama,
the emir had become “careless,” in his persecution of the Bukharan intelligentsia: “He did not
hear wholesome advice, did not see further than what was beneath his feet, did not think about
the results of his doings, did nothing to stop shedding innocent blood. The evil of these
blameworthy deeds and his misdoing [injure] himself . . . and the people of his country.”66 The
question for reformists became, then, how to reclaim their homeland?

The Young Bukharans, many of whom had fled to Russian Turkestan, began to develop a
possible solution in concert with the Bolsheviks of Tashkent. A new program of action, compiled
by Fitrat, appeared in the autumn of 1917. Its main points included:

1. The land-water question . . . It is necessary to save the peasants from the evil of
   usury [zlo rostovshchhestva] . . . A government formed as a result of irrigation
   should distribute the landless population.
2. Waqf lands . . . Schools, religious and secular, and mosques should be renovated
   with the profit from waqf lands. Libraries, orphanages, hospitals for the poor and
canteens should be built again.

---

64 Shukurov, The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 341.
65 Ibid., 343. Shukurov’s account of his time in prison is chilling: “In this baleful abyss and terrifying arrest,
where all doors of the room, except the entrance, had been spiked from outside and nonetheless, every door being
controlled by a few guards, hour after hour the fear of execution, minute after minute the horror of murder remained
[relentlessly] real and evident.” Ibid., 343-344.
66 Ibid., 351.
3. Military affairs . . . All residents of Bukhara who have reached the age of 22 should be called upon for military service. . . . Sick and crippled people should be exempted. The term of military service is set to 2 years. . . . The soldiers should be literate.
4. Financial business . . . taxes coming from cultivated land should go to the established Ministry of Finance . . . The palace treasurer should be accountable to the minister.
5. Internal affairs . . . The top officials in the [provinces] will be appointed by the Minister of the Interior, while the lowest, by popular appointment. . . . The Minister and the rulers should not interfere in court cases.
6. Judicial institutions . . . The Ministry of Justice and the highest judicial authority, the Istinaf, must be established. . . . Persons dissatisfied with the decisions of the judicial bodies file an appeal in Istinaf.
7. The protection of the state . . . The police must keep peace and order in the city.
9. Foreign affairs . . . Confer with the Russian and other governments to appoint the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This minister should also be the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.
10. Enlightenment . . . In addition to state and waqf schools, schools can be opened by anyone.
11. A Council of Ministers . . . The Chairman of the Council is appointed with the approval of the Emir.
12. Communal Council . . . For monitoring orders and the maintenance of streets, roads, setting prices, monitoring markets and so on, a Communal Council shall be established, consisting of representatives chosen from the people. 

F. I. Kolesov, the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars (sovarkom) in Tashkent, having recently organized the conquest of Kokand, had by this time become impatient with the Emirate. With Lenin’s tentative approval, an ultimatum was issued on 17 March by a revolutionary committee of Bolsheviks and Young Bukharans, who were operating in exile from Tashkent. The set of demands were as follows:

---

68 The subject of the Kokand Autonomy, while slightly outside the scope of this project, remains an important event in Central Asian history. In 1917 Fitrat celebrated the foundation of an "autonomous" Muslim government in Kokand: "Autonomous Turkestan! . . . I do not believe there’s a greater, more sacred, more beloved word among the true sons of the mighty Temur, the indigenous Turks of Turkestan! If there is a force that can warm the blood of the Turks . . . and heighten their faith, then it’s only this word: Autonomous Turkestan." Fitrat, "Muxtoriyat," Hurriyat (5 December 1917), quoted in Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 75. For a detailed presentation of this topic, see Agzamkhodzhaev, Istoria Turkestanskoi avtonomii i Turkestan v nachale XX veka, 80-112.
Bukhara should have the constitutional form of government, and a national assembly should be formed, with authority over the appointments and dismissals of all qazis and functionaries other than the emir, and over the treasury and the armed forces. Until the assembly convenes, such authority should be exercised by the Young Bukharans. The emir will be retained as a constitutional monarch, answerable to the national assembly.69

Even at the final hour, then, the Young Bukharans were still willing to accept Alim Khan as a constitutional monarch. The emir ignored the ultimatum, however, and disaster ensued, culminating in the poorly planned and unsuccessful invasion of Bukhara by Kolesov.70

According to Shukurov, Kolesov’s invasion served only to make matters worse for those still in Bukhara: “This event caused the [splash of] boldness of and executions by the Amir, Vizier and those heroes who [only] at home are lions. In Bukhara, everyone who was known as an adherent [of Kolesov and progressivists] or who was claimed as such from enmity, immediately had been seized and put to death.”71 Kolesov for his part blamed the Bukharan masses for the failed coup, surprised as he was by the fact that the beliefs of the Young Bukharans were not shared by the majority of society.72 Khodzhaev offered a different assessment: “Kolesov failed to fulfill the agreement, and did not deliver the promised weapons to the Young Bukhara organization on time.” Moreover, “the Young Bukharans had insufficient funds to support an independent, internal armed uprising. As a consequence . . . the armed uprising did not begin from within, but from without, not as a popular uprising in Bukhara, but as an attack on Bukhara by small, mixed groups of Russian and Bukharan Red Guards.”73

---

70 Shukurov’s account of this episode, in contrast to his language concerning Alim Khan, is typically reserved: “Kolesov, a Russian Bolshevik, who in those days dominated and ruled in the [Turkestan] provinces of Russia, invaded Bukhara in alliance with progressivists. First, he demanded that Liberty be established. After the Amir’s refusal, Kolesov declared war, but suffered defeat.” Shukurov, The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 341.
71 Ibid., 341. Emphasis mine.
73 Khodzhaev, “K istorii revoliutsii v Bukhare.”
reformists, broken with the emir’s government and seemingly abandoned to their fates by the adventurous Kolesov and the Bolsheviks, were thus forced to make a choice: give up their reformist aims or find another way to fight for them. They would soon get another opportunity.

***

After the chaos surrounding the ill-fated manifesto and the quick defeat of Kolesov’s army in 1918, Alim Khan focused his efforts on eliminating the Young Bukharans and other reformists, who by now had become rebels and revolutionaries. Many of the liberal intelligentsia in Bukhara who survived the first wave of arrests after the declaration of the manifesto were, following Kolesov’s adventure, jailed, expelled from the city, or worse.\(^{74}\) The response of the Young Bukharans and other reformists, which will be covered in greater detail below, was to continue seeking outside help—however, it remains important to note that, during the last two years of Alim Khan’s rule in Bukhara, the reformists had been effectively silenced. According to Khalid, “The Young Bukharans received some support for organizing a resistance movement in Bukhara itself, although their success was limited. Their impact on Bukhara between 1918 and 1920 was minimal.”\(^{75}\) The Young Bukharans, however, many of whom had fled to either Tashkent or Samarkand, had not abandoned their reformist aims. When the opportunity to return to Bukhara arose in 1920, after the committed invasion of Bukhara by the well equipped and well trained Red Army, reformists saw it as the revolutionary fulfilment of reformist efforts stretching back nearly a decade.

\(^{74}\) Khalid notes that Alim Khan used the Kolesov episode to tarnish the reputation of the Young Bukharans, “[allowing] the emir to direct the wrath of his subjects onto the reformers, whom he tarred as being traitors and apostates and no different from the Bolsheviks.” Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 120.

This “Reformist” period, where Bukharans came close to realizing initial steps toward reform but were ultimately unsuccessful, remains critical for understanding the political motivations and tendencies of the Bukharan intelligentsia. The delicate political environment in Bukhara facilitated the creation of secret and semi-secret intellectual societies, which often held the dual function of social clubs that helped to cement personal rivalries. Despite their personal and ideological differences, Bukharan reformists in this period displayed a remarkable degree of political adaptability, working as they did with power groups as disparate as the emir, the Provisional Government, and the ascendent Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, the catastrophic failures of the manifesto and Kolesov’s invasion, and the subsequent initiation of a campaign of state violence by the emir, had the effect of radicalizing the Bukharan intelligentsia, many of whom, having lost all hope in Alim Khan and the ulama, ceased being reformists and became revolutionaries, influenced as they were by the spread of revolutionary ideology from Russia and the growing number of more radical proponents of modernity in Central Asia: the Bolsheviks.
CHAPTER 3

THE IDEA: REVOLUTION IN THE MINDS OF THE BUKHARAN INTELLIGENTSIA

The immense aspirations of the Bolsheviks to rebuild Russian society had a profound impact on the intellectual environment in Central Asia. The failure of reform efforts in Bukhara, in addition to increased contact with Bolsheviks, who by 1920 were exerting stronger control over all of Central Asia, facilitated a radicalization of the intelligentsia, who were, after the Russian example, considering revolution as an idea, as a potentially viable instrument of change. What emerged was a conception of revolution that was intimately connected to the past. The task of the Bukharan intelligentsia was, by reimagining and reclaiming their past, to create a new, modern nation of Central Asians, one that would be able to defend itself from outside interference.

The failure of the stipulated reforms of the manifesto altered the debate among reformist circles regarding the proper path toward the recreation of society. Was it to be through reform or revolution? This begs the question, relevant to contemporaries as well as historians: what difference is there between reform and revolution? The Jadids thought of reform as a redressement, or the recovery and improvement upon an already established system, that of Islamic law. Bukharan reformists largely adhered to this vision until it became clear that reform would not be possible under the rule of Alim Khan. The Young Bukharans and the earliest members of the freshly minted Bukharan Communist Party began to imagine what a revolution in Central Asia would look like. There was, however, no clear conclusion to this issue brought forward by the Bukharan reformists. Ultimately, the debate among reformists regarding reform
and revolution was cut short by the invasion of the Red Army in 1920. In Central Asia the
primacy of revolution as a bringer of change was confirmed by way of superior military power,
and the Bukharan reformists were forced to accept the consequences of this confirmation.

**Bolsheviks and the Idea of Revolution**

Bukharan reformists hoped the Russian Revolution would be a catalyst for real change in
Central Asia and would lead to a deliverance from the “backwardness” that had been so
characteristic of the “Russian” era, that is, since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century.
The Russian people, having slipped from the yoke of Tsarist autocracy under the leadership of
the Bolsheviks, seemed poised to enter the “modern” world, a world imagined to be created by
the destruction of traditional power structures, religion and nobility. In this sense Bukharan
reformists found much in common with the revolutionary ideology of the Bolsheviks—they also
hoped the revolution would signal the end of colonial exploitation of the region from Russia and
other western powers. By 1918 however, much of the enthusiasm for the Russian revolution in
Central Asia was stymied by civil unrest, bloodshed, and civil war.76

Concerning the idea of revolution itself, many reformists later welcomed the revolution
as a necessary precondition of fundamental change in society. Several, however, especially
before the Bolsheviks established firm control over the region in 1920, were cautious of the
Bolsheviks and negative in their assessment of the revolution. Fitrat, for example, wrote in 1917
that “Russia has seen disaster upon disaster since the transformation [the February Revolution] . .
. And now a new calamity has raised its head, that of the Bolsheviks!”77 Fitrat would have been
made to regret those words as he later attempted to situate himself in the Bukharan Communist

---

Party, joining by 1921. Fitrat would eventually serve as Minister for Foreign Affairs (mid-1921—February 1923), Minister for Education (February—June 1923), and Chair of the National Economic Council in 1922. His initial condemnation of the revolution and the Bolsheviks may be explained by the fact that Fitrat (and most of the Bukharan liberals) had no previous conception of “class struggle” in Central Asia—the Central Asian Jadids, as previously mentioned, almost exclusively came from wealthy and influential families. Another explanation, however, may be found in the words of Shukurov, who wrote, in an unpublished manuscript, most likely from 1917, “From the beginning to end, I was a supporter of peace... I followed the path of truth and did not join any sides.”

Some Bukharan reformists, including Fitrat and Shukurov, were troubled by the perceived fanaticism and violence of the revolution; more common than outright condemnation, however, was the view expressed by Aini, who in his memoirs wrote: “February came and with it the Russian Revolution, but the population of Bokhara was in complete ignorance of the latest events. If anybody learned about these things he dared discuss them only in whispers.” Aini, while admitting ignorance on behalf of the Bukharans, nevertheless lamented that “It was a pity that not one of us had any political training and that we were in complete ignorance of the existence of a working-class movement in Russia.” Thus, according to Aini, most Bukharans did not know what to think of the revolution, and, more importantly, thought it prudent not to consider such things. In the final analysis, however, Aini himself wishes he had a revolutionary “guide” during those years: “At that time I had no conception of the political significance of the working-class movement in Russia. I had had no political-revolutionary training, I knew of no

---

78 Shukurov, The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 11.
revolutionary organization and there was no revolutionary to teach and guide me. Not knowing what to do I was confused and perplexed.”79 For many reformists, especially those such as Aini and Mukhetdinov, who were later marginalized by the Bolshevik leadership, this sense of confusion, of not knowing the “right path,” would remain for years to come.

The “Nation”

The intellectual currents of Central Asia had been indisputably altered by a half decade or more of Russian rule. The question was, which was the path forward, now that it seemed Central Asians finally had their chance? The earliest Muslim modernists in Central Asia had effectively imported their version of modernism from Turkish and Tatar thinkers. These Jadids sought cultural advancement through a reimagining of Islam, in accordance with the secular laws of the modern world. In many cases, as we will see, the goal of the intelligentsia was the creation of a “nation” [millat] of Central Asians. This “nationalism” was later to prove fatal for many of the Central Asian intelligentsia, and it becomes important to define the nationalism of the Central Asian thinkers. What was the nation to be? Was it, as their political enemies would claim, a manifestation of the sinister ideologies of pan-Islam or pan-Turkism, theoretical unions, political or cultural, of Muslims or the Turkic people?

Shukurov, reflecting on his reluctance to serve Alim Khan as qazi kalan in 1917, wrote that he performed this duty because he was “disgusted with the evil of the old style of governance, which harmed sons of my country, with the hope to reform my country and religion and with a proper respect to serve the Sharia and the nation, I proceeded to the executing of this outstanding task.”80 Shukurov admitted to being disgusted with the old ways in Bukhara,

79 Aini, Memoirs, 89, 77, 94.
perpetuated by the emir and the *ulama*, but he was compelled by loyalty to Islam and the nation. These were serious concerns of the Bukharan intelligentsia. But what was the “nation,” and to what degree was it defined by Islam? In the discourse of the early Jadids, the nation was the abstract cultural and, to varying degrees, political community or ecumene of Turkic peoples, stretching from Istanbul to Kazan and Central Asia. For the early Jadids, Islamic law and the nation were intimately connected. For the reformists of Central Asia, who had borrowed their idea of the nation from the Jadids of Turkey and Russia, Islam was a marker of heritage, especially in the absence of ethnic delimitations. For Bukharan reformists the nation was both something that had always existed and something that was to be reconstructed. Central Asian liberals were looking back to a time when Central Asia was a center of intellectual and political power. The Bukharan reformists were fixed both on the achievements of the past and the possibility for building a better future. The *millat* was to be resuscitated and inoculated with twentieth-century rationality.

The necessity of reconstructing a Turkic nation, however, was not necessarily a manifestation of the theoretical ideologies of pan-Islamism or pan-Turkism. The Bukharans did not seriously consider the possibility of a political union of Turkic peoples outside of Central Asia. The *millat* and *watan* [homeland] were inseparable and synonymous. This does not mean, however, that Central Asian reformists were not accused of pan-ideological conspiracies. In fact, the accusation is repeated on innumerable occasions in later Soviet records, but, importantly for the Bukharan liberals, the accusation would also be repeated by fellow Central Asians. For example, Akmal’ Ikramov (1898-1938), one of the most important early Central Asian communists, wrote in 1926 that “The Uzbek intelligentsia avoid the word ‘Uzbek,’ instead using
the term ‘Muslim,’ as it, as before, follows the notorious ideologies of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism.”  

Aini, a Jadid himself, wrote in his memoirs that “After the February Revolution the reformist movement was headed by such Jadidists as Fitrat and Usman Khoja [Khodzhaev] who had been educated in Turkey and conducted Panturkic propaganda.”  

Aini here is beginning to draw a distinction between the peoples and perceived nations of Central Asia, and his brand of nationalism would prove fundamental for the adjacent reconstruction of the Persian-heritage nation of Tajikistan.

Reform or Revolution?

For Bukharan reformists the distinction between reform and revolution was becoming less pronounced, especially after the failure of the Manifesto. We remember Aini remarking that his secret society of educators had not been “revolutionary,” advocating, as it did, for modest reforms. Later in his memoirs, however, Aini reflected on the popular sentiment in Bukhara and its surrounding areas, finding much to his disappointment that the peasants had come to support the emir in his retreat from reform: “The rich peasants, the arbab and aqsuqal, the village elders, who realized full well the losses they would suffer from any change in the regime, aroused the ignorant masses against the reforms and supported the tyranny of the Emir.”  

The language employed by Aini in this account suggests that he now considered the pursuit of reform to be revolutionary, that is, working toward a “change in the regime,” which had become tyrannical. Reformists became radicalized, both by the successes of the Russian Revolution and out of necessity, as the possibility of reform, sponsored by the intelligentsia and implemented by the

---

82 Aini, Memoirs, 90.
83 Ibid., 93-94.
emir’s government, became impossible. Alim Khan was no longer the “kind father of the Bukharans, the king who protects his people,” but a tyrant who needed replaced.

In fact, reform and revolution had always been closely related concepts for the Jadids and later Bukharan reformists. “Revolution,” before the events of 1917 at least, was less a term for political upheaval and the establishment of a new regime and more a description of the idea of constructing a new, better future. Importantly, this future was intimately connected to Central Asia’s past. Bukharan reformists, in considering backwardness (in education, and therefore morality) the primary reason for the perceived cultural and intellectual stagnancy of Central Asia, were nonetheless looking both forward and backward. The goal of Bukharan reformism was a return to the cultural and political prominence Central Asia had enjoyed in the previous centuries; however it was to be reinforced, and made viable, by rationality, the tool of modern thought. If revolution is envisioned as evolving in the path of a circle, then Bukharan reformists were waiting for the wheel to revolve completely, to return to a society that was both great and also theirs. Importantly, this revolution was supposed to occur in the minds of Central Asians—conceived as new ways of thinking—and not necessarily to be reflected in a new form of government. In a word, revolution was always the goal, and reform was the path. The question remained, what would the Bukharan reformists do upon finding this path intraversable?

**Young Communists and the BKP**

Bukharan reformists and Russian revolutionaries were similarly radicalized by the failure of reform efforts. Just as the failure after the 1905 Revolution to institutionalize liberal reform radicalized the liberal Russian intelligentsia, Bukharans were driven toward more “radical” ideologies, including socialism, by the failure of the Manifesto and the subsequent persecution of
reformists. It must also be noted that minor Bolsheviks had been at least nominally operating in Bukhara as early as 1918, with the founding of the Bukharan Communist Party (Russian: *Bukharskai a kommunisticheskai a partii a*, BKP) by fringe members of Young Bukharans, Tashkent Young Communists and Tatar Jadids (including A. Iakobov, M. Kulmukhamedov and Kh. M. Mirmukhsinov). Before 1920, however, the BKP had relatively little influence in Bukhara itself. According to Khalid, the earliest members of the BKP were “Turkestanis and Tatars with only tenuous connections to Bukhara.”\(^{84}\) Fedtke, similarly concludes that the “connection of these Communists [the BKP] to the Jadids or Young Bukharans is not entirely clear.”\(^{85}\) According to Chokaev, the BKP was funded and organized by Moscow Bolsheviks themselves: “[s]eeing that a means of directly influencing the Turkestanians would be highly advantageous to them, the Moscow Bolsheviks began to organize a Communist Party among the Mussulmans.”\(^{86}\) While it is true that Lenin, Stalin and the Party encouraged the mobilization of Central Asian workers—Lenin himself wrote of the necessity “to make every effort to establish friendly relations with the people of Turkestan, to prove to them by deeds and example the sincerity of our wishes, to eradicate all traces of Great Russian and worldwide imperialism”—the Bolsheviks simply did not have a strong enough presence in Central Asia, especially in Bukhara before 1920, to implement a creation of a revolutionary party at the grassroots level.\(^{87}\) What is clear from the sources, however, is Moscow’s purported support of the revolutionary cause in Central Asia: “Only the Russian Socialist Revolution, which is the spearhead in the struggle against world imperialism, can free Bukhara from slavery . . . . Due to this fact the Young

\(^{84}\) Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 117.


Bukharan Party seeks... the aid of Socialist Russia and will, on its behalf, help the Russian workers and peasant government in its struggle against world imperialism.”

Despite the lack of strong Bolshevik support in agitational efforts before 1920, the Bukharan reformists nonetheless looked to Moscow both for ideological guidance and leverage against the emir, as has been documented above. Unfortunately for Bukharan reformists, and despite some ideological common ground, their early relationship with the Bolsheviks was fraught—and it would be only marginally improved over time. Valerian Kuibyshev, who had visited Bukhara in late 1919, remarked that the Young Bukharans “use our protection to act in a puerile, hooligan fashion to no end and exacerbate our relations with Bukhara.” By “Bukhara,” Kuibyshev was referring to the emir’s government. He continued, “The activities of the Young Bukharans should either be harmonized with our policies, or we should proclaim urbi et orbi our negative attitude toward their actions, which often have a purely predatory character.”

Kuibyshev’s speech is remarkable for its tacit support of the emir’s regime, or at least the status quo, yet, only one year before, the Bolsheviks themselves, with support from the Young Bukharans, had moved against Bukhara in a disastrous and aborted attempt at the emir’s deposition. For the Young Bukharans, as would become especially apparent in later years, it remained unclear what “harmonization” with Soviet policy meant.

**Collapse of the Emirate**

By mid-1920 the Soviet general Mikhail Frunze (1885-1925), who was born in Bishkek and educated in Almaty, decided to implement a military solution to the “problem” of the Emirate, as it was increasingly becoming amid the turmoil of the post-manifesto political climate.

---

88 V. V. Kuibyshev to Turkommisiiia, 30 November 1919, RGASPI, f. 122, op. 1, d. 45, ll. 1-10b, quoted in Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 124-125.
in Bukhara. Frunze had some support from the Young Bukharans, who in exile had worked with the Musburo and Tashkent communists to instigate final measures against Alim Khan. According to Chokaev, the Bukharan reformists were driven to seek help from the Bolsheviks mainly as a last resort:

The indescribable cruelties in regard to the most peaceful upholders of the introduction of new, more humane principles of government, the floggings and executions resorted to by the Bukharan potentate did their work. The Young Bukharans, who had aspired to the modest `constitution by Shariat,’ could not further restrain themselves, and decided to negotiate with the Bolsheviks.89

Chokaev here repeats the reformists’ original desire for “modest” reform, along the lines of Islamic law, but now implies that the window of opportunity had become closed. The fact that assistance from the Bolsheviks was for Chokaev something which had needed “restraint” betrays the caution that some of the Bukharan intelligentsia expressed when dealing with the Bolsheviks. Chokaev continues, expressing concern for the replacement of the emir’s government with foreign rule: “[T]he brutality of the Soviet power in Turkestan dictated to the Bukharans and the Khivans the necessity of refraining from any step which might have led to an exchange of the rule of Said-Asfendiar and of Said-Mir-Alim [Alim Khan] for that of the Russian Soviets.”90

Nevertheless, ordinary Bukharans had little say in the matter, as Frunze, having freshly conquered Khiva, decided, by way of military might (and despite objections from some Party members in Moscow), to bring Central Asia firmly under Soviet control.

Chokaev argues that the sovietization of Bukhara proceeded consequently, “[w]ith the closest co-operation between the Young Bukharans and the Soviet troops.”91 The reality is that the Young Bukharans had little to do with the success of the conquest of Bukhara in August

90 Ibid., 413.
91 Ibid., 413-414.
1920, and the remnants of the liberal intelligentsia of the city were overwhelmed by the severity of the violence. Many Bukharans were understandably surprised and confused, especially because relations between the Emirate and Russia had improved significantly by the end of 1919. In his diary Shukurov recounts the first days of the invasion. His account is worth citing at length for its insights into the Bukharan response to the Red Army:

On the Feast of Qurban, in the year 1338 [1920], suddenly many soldiers of the Bolshevik Soviet State of Russia, the leader of which was named Lenin, attacked the [railway] stations on the entire Bukharan territory. The Amir and officials of this country at once fell into confusion, went back and forth, and gathered troops. Seeing the Russian soldiers being inactive and doing no harm to anybody, they supposed that Russia was afraid of them. They supposed that the result of this case would be like that of Kolesov’s incident. They considered the prevention of that to be a needless waste of time, the expenditures for that to be a needless waste of money. Because of it, they dismissed most of the assembled soldiers, others without their permission returned to their quarters. The Amir, Vizier and other dignitaries relapsed into feasts and banquets, not interested in this matter and doing nothing for settling it. If accidentally they recalled it or someone asked them about it they only laughed it off: ‘Five or six hungry men have come, within two or three days they will line their stomach and be off.’\(^2\)

Shukurov, having remarked how “suddenly” the Red Army had arrived, details the extent of the emir’s perceived “carelessness,” in dismissing the soldiers and ignoring the threat of the Red Army. Shukurov also echoes his earlier writings in denouncing the emir and his functionaries as “relapsing” into feasts and banquets, certainly a moral injunction against a leader and those in his employ who could not even care to defend themselves against the Russians. Once the Red Army had arrived, it was not long before the Emirate collapsed. Alim Khan and several ministers quickly fled east to Dushanbe and then south to Kabul, whereupon he dispatched a messenger to Kashgar in an effort to deliver a letter formally requesting inclusion in the British Empire.\(^3\)

\(^2\) Shukurov, The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual, 351.
\(^3\) Kasymov and Eugashev, “Bukharskaia revoliutsiia: dorogu vybral kurultai.”
Shukurov recalls a troubled conversation with an *alim* on the first day of the Russian invasion:

On Sunday [29 August 1920], after the prayers suddenly arose sounds of artillery fire... Gun-shots followed one after another more and more often. I hurried and went to the Qurghan [citadel] to see the Governor. He sat free from care and showed surprise at my visit, regarding it as being incongruous. I asked him about the situation at the [railway] station. He laughed in my face and answered: ‘Today is a Russian *paraznik* [sic], this is why they are discharging their guns.’ I said: ‘There were Russian *parazniki* before, but never such gun-shooting... Moreover, in *paraznik*, at the most, they shoot with blank cartridges.’ During this dialogue a baneful shell hit the wall.94

While difficult to corroborate, Shukurov’s account may be understood as a condemnation of those Bukharans who, like the governor and Alim Khan, “sat free from care,” which precluded any real attempt to defend their homeland. That the governor mispronounced the common Russian word *paraznik*, and could provide only a humorously irrational explanation for the tumult, reveals the extent of the worldly ignorance Shukurov perceived among his fellow officials in the Emirate.

---

The fall of Bukhara was, in the immediate aftermath, less a cause for celebration for many Bukharans than a cause of confusion. While Khodzhaev would declare these days the “greatest . . . in the life of the Young Bukharan Party and the workers of Bukhara,” what is apparent from the sources is that Bukharans were not sure how to respond to these events.95 Many understandably were concerned that they would be among the victims of the next round of violence. Shukurov, who assumed at the time that the Bolsheviks had acted alone, wrote, “I was in great haste and at a loss about what to do, because I did not know anything about partaking [in this campaign] of my comrades, the progressivists. I thought it was the Bolsheviks, only. I was

95 Khodzhaev, “K istorii revoliutsii v Bukhare.”
perfectly sure that these persons did not know me. I fearfully imagined that I could have been [shot] by mistake."\textsuperscript{96}

Shukurov concludes this entry of his diary with a subtle lament for the missed opportunity of the Reformist period in Bukhara, which had now come to a violent end: "If only the Emir of Bukhara had kept his promise of modest reforms, made in the first days of the February Revolution, he might have remained in power considerably longer; so frightful, so fear-inspiring, seemed to his subjects the experiments of the Turkestan Bolsheviks."\textsuperscript{97} The Soviet experiment would continue, however. To the credit of certain of the Young Bukharans, such as Khodzhaev, the Soviet incorporation of Bukhara would indeed provide another opportunity for realizing the reformist vision that had its roots not in communism, but in the Jadidism of pre-revolutionary Central Asia.

\* \* \*

The Bolsheviks and their revolution fundamentally altered the intellectual trajectories of the Bukharan intelligentsia, who, after October, began to consider revolution a viable instrument of change. However, while the Russian Revolution and the emergence of the Soviet Union brought about important and radical political change in Central Asia, the main intellectual project of the Bukharan reformists, the creation of a modern nation, maintained its pride of place after the Bolshevik conquest of Bukhara; it should be understood as having pre-revolutionary origins. This is not to say that the reformist vision of the Bukharan intelligentsia was not empowered and to some extent made possible by the Russian Revolution. In fact Central Asians, for political reasons or otherwise, coopted the Bolshevik revolution, seeking to situate themselves in the

\textsuperscript{96} Shukurov, \textit{The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual}, 352.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 413.
Soviet canon of history. Khodzhaev, for example, triumphantly declared, in the aftermath of the conquest of Bukhara and its incorporation into the Soviet sphere, “The Bukharan revolution of 1920 [and, therefore, the establishment of the BNSR] finally completed the Jadid movement that emerged after the Russian revolution of 1905.”98 Khodzhaev, in characterizing the events of 1920 as a “Bukharan revolution,” instead of the fall of the Emirate or the Bolshevik conquest, for instance, reveals the central place that Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans assigned themselves in these critical events.99 Khodzhaev also makes a direct link between the 1905 Revolution in Russia and the Jadid movement, illustrating the extent to which the Bukharan reformists considered themselves both within the Russian intellectual sphere and also possessing their own version of modernity, one invented by Muslims and Turkic peoples. The People’s Soviet Republic of Bukhara, established in the wake of Alim Khan’s defeat, was a manifestation of the combination of the disparate and sometimes conflicting ideological strands of the Bukharan intelligentsia.

99 Cf. n. 72. Note the difference in tone between Khodzhaev’s remarks on the 1920 coup, now called a “revolution,” and Kolesov’s invasion in 1918.
CHAPTER 4
THE EXPERIMENT: MUSLIM REFORMERS AND YOUNG COMMUNISTS IN POWER

The Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic (Russian: Bukharskaiia Narodnaia Sovetskaia Republika, BNSR; Uzbek: Buxoro Xalq Sovet Respublikasi) was declared as a semi-autonomous socialist state on 14 September 1920. The revkom issued the following statement: “All lands and crops belonging to the emir, his family, government officials, large landowners and the rich are now the property of the Republic.” In addition to the seizure of assets and property, the statement declared that the “taxes imposed by the emir’s government [will be] completely abolished. The old judicial institutions will be abolished. Abolished also [will be] capital and corporal punishment, as these are degrading and contrary to the spirit of the free people.” The Bukharan reformists, after at least a decade of effort, were able to enjoy in the BNSR the institutionalization of key reforms of the exchequer and the judiciary, in addition to the displacement of the ulama as the ideological paragons of Bukhara. More important than achieving these long-sought reforms, however, was the sense that, now, Bukharans felt they had a chance to further reconstruct society in a modern way, that is, down the dizzying and sometimes unclear path of secularism, rationalism, and idealism.

\[100\] "Iz manifesta Vremennogo Revkoma Bukharskoi Narodnoi Sovetskoi Respubliki," quoted in Kasymov and Engashev, "Bukharskaia revolutsiia: dorogu vybral kurultai."
Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans were quick to declare the establishment of the BNSR as a triumph of Muslim reformism, and the Tashkent Young Communists were pleased to see the “Revolution in the East” proceeding in due course, especially now that the bourgeois elite of Bukhara had been seemingly displaced. The older Bukharan liberals, such as Shukurov, were hopeful that simple peace was in order. Upon his return to Bukhara from exile, Shukurov wrote, “when we entered our darling homeland I saw that one of the walls of my house had been struck by a cannon shell and a breach had appeared in it. All my goods and necessary things had been sacked and robbed. In any event, I gave thanks for this as well.”

---

Unfortunately for Shukurov and the Bukharan reformists, the struggle for a new, better life would continue in the increasingly divided political environment of the BNSR. A new Bukharan Communist Party was created, with several key reformists such as Khodzhaev, Fitrat and Mukhedinov in positions of power. For a short time they were able to endeavor to create a new order of things in Bukhara, however, increased importance begat increased scrutiny from the Party and Moscow; many, if not all, of the Bukharan reformists began to have their motives questioned in the decade as the charge of "nationalism" became deadly. However, despite significant challenges faced by Bukharan reformists in the BNSR throughout its brief existence (8 October 1920 - 17 February 1925), this period should be understood as one of Bukharan reformists in power, in association with communists, and not the other way around.

**The New Bukharan Communist Party**

After the invasion a newly established Revkom, which included several Young Bukharans, in addition to older BKP and Communist Party of Turkestan (KPT) members, worked to install a ruling party capable of administering the region. This was accomplished via a forced merger of the Young Bukharan Party and what remained of the older BKP. Members of these two groups, despite sharing the goal of creating a modern Bukhara, often disagreed with and disliked each other: in the words of Fedte, "The Bukharan Communists declared the Young Bukharans to be bourgeois and nationalistic. The Young Bukharans on the other hand did only condemn the communists as being godless." 102 In addition, most of the new BKP ministers in the BNSR were inexperienced in government—according to Kasymov and Ergashev, the average age of Central Committee members was around 29 years old.103 Nevertheless, the activities and

---

102 Fedte, "How Bukharans Turned into Uzbeks and Tajiks," 27.
103 Kasymov and Ergashev, "Bukharskaia revoliutsia: dorogu vybral kurultai."
intrigues of the new Bukharan Communist Party, an unstable coalition of reformists and previously low-profile Central Asian communists, was to have important ramifications for the intellectual trajectories of the Bukharan intelligentsia from 1920-1924, the only period in Central Asia where Muslim modernist reformists had any direct role in Soviet government. In the political and intellectual environment of the BNSR, some BKP members, most notably Khodzhaev and Mukhetdinov, were able to exert considerable influence, under Soviet conditions, on the evolution of Central Asian identity. Many former Bukharan reformists, including Fitrat, joined the communist party and underwent a seeming transformation, motivated by the at last realistic possibility of remaking Central Asian society according to the imagined tenets of modernity, especially the Soviet promises of anti-imperialism and self-determination.

The Young Communists and younger members of the BKP and the KPT were awarded political opportunity in Central Asia by early loyalty to the Bolshevik cause. They were, politically speaking, more connected to Moscow and Tashkent than to Bukhara, where the presence of communists was limited before 1920. As such, the Young Communists understood much better how to operate within the ideological framework of the Party. Many of its members, most notably the Kazakh communist Turar Ryskulov (1894-1938), seemed to hold a genuine belief in the Soviet system; however, the Young Communists were most importantly the earliest Central Asians to successfully (for a time) present themselves as communists.104

By contrast the Young Bukharans, by number and influence the greater portion of the new BKP, were still invoking Islam in an effort to legitimize their party work. In 1920, even after their incorporation into the Soviet system, Bukharan reformists were still not prepared to

104 Ryskulov was one of Central Asia's first communist revolutionaries. He had a command of Russian and, unlike the Bukharan reformists, no political career before the revolution. He was studying in Tashkent during the February Revolution and, by the winter of 1917, was active in the local ispolkom (executive committee).
abandon Islam or the rejection of foreign exploitation of Central Asia. However, this is not to say the establishment of a socialist republic in Bukhara had little effect on reformist ideology. Notably present in the official language of Young Bukharan publications after 1920 was an emphatic rejection, in Marxist terms, of capitalist exploitation, which, in retrospect, formed the basis for world imperialism. The 1920 Young Bukharan platform, for example, reads, “The Young Bukharan party based on religion and the belief of the Muslim masses is a party of the poor. . . . It protects their interests against the power of the exploiters and the power of world imperialism. . . . Our religion is against exploitation, against the power of the capitalists.”\(^{105}\) The notion of class as an analytical category was practically nonexistent in Bukharan reformist discourse before 1920, before the Bukharan reformists became Soviets. The Young Bukharans, however, were beginning to imagine the disparity between the rich and poor in Central Asia as a new explanation for the backwardness of Central Asians.

**Economic Stagnation and Uplifting the Worker**

Soon after the creation of the BNSR, the BKP worked quickly to address the issue of economic stagnation and install a bureaucratic structure capable of governing in a Soviet way. Great care was taken to instruct local authorities to “follow proper procedure in all respects, to keep good accounts, and to collect taxes efficiently.”\(^{106}\) In a 1921 BKP circular, for example, the state concluded that “there is no real commerce” in Bukhara because it was “based on old principles.” Interestingly, Russian investment and trade in Central Asia was suspected of depriving the state of an opportunity to industrialize: “our merchants have become middlemen between Russian merchants and our peasants, i.e., our commerce sells the wealth of the peasant

\(^{105}\) RGASPI, f. 122, op. 2, d. 42, l. 36ob, quoted in Fedtke, “How Bukharans Turned into Uzbeks and Tajiks,” 26-27.

to other countries... [and] all the profits from the commerce go to other countries.... It is well known that a state that is unable to find the proper path of commerce cannot have industry either.\footnote{TsGARUz, f. 48, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 32об-32, quoted in Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 130.} Ten years later, in 1931, Chokaev would condemn what he called the “complete transformation [of Central Asia] into a cotton plantation of Soviet Russia,” and becoming a “supplier of raw material,” unable even to feed its own citizens without grain imports from Russia.\footnote{Chokaev, “Turkestan and the Soviet Regime,” 416.}

In addition to economic concerns, the BKP also hoped that otstalost’ could be overcome by mobilizing the working population. An efficient, modern government would be able to educate its citizens in secular subjects—something the Bukharan reformists consistently portrayed the emir and the ulama as unwilling to do. The same 1921 circular placed the blame for backwardness on the “incorrect policies of the emir,” which had left Bukhara “among the most backward in the world in terms of science and technology, industry, agriculture, or commerce.” The circular continues, “As a result, today two percent of our people can read and write, and the remaining 98 percent cannot, and as a result are completely ignorant of the world.”\footnote{TsGARUz, f. 48, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 32об-32, quoted in Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 130.} One way forward, then, appeared to be renewed efforts to educate the Bukharan population, which had long belonged to the central platform of Jadidism.

Educating the rural population of Bukhara was a task as difficult for the BNSR as it was for Jadids and New Method educators. The cities of Tashkent and Samarkand had been centers of Soviet power for several years, and the city of Bukhara was coming along, owing to the presence of party functionaries and Red Army troops, but ordinary Bukharans and Central Asian villagers, especially women, still had very little exposure to socialism to this point. As Akmal’ Ikramov
(one of the first influential Central Asian communists with no substantial career in reform or agitation efforts before the Russian Revolution) wrote in 1921, “By now we all know that four years have passed since the beginning of the October Revolution, and we also know that so far the majority of the Turkestani poor have not been organized.” Ryskulov, preceding substantial efforts later in the decade for the “emancipation” (with the crucial component of discarding the veil) of women, remarked that, “The woman of the East has fallen behind. The revolution has made great changes in the position of women-natives, but the household emancipation of the woman of the kishlak and aul is still a matter of the future.”

Ryskulov similarly had been arguing for increased effort at organizing the working population of Central Asia for several years, stating in 1919 that “Soviet power [in Central Asia] . . . exists only in the cities; in the villages, kishlaki, and the volosts...So far there are kulak and bai executive committees . . . and in some places in the ‘good memory’ of the Nikolaev regime there are simply ‘volost rulers’ or ‘village foreman.’” Ryskulov in 1919 blamed the Provisional Government for the presence of kulak and baev in party committees, but did not hesitate to ask why the Bolsheviks had not yet done more to remedy the situation: “what do the Soviet organizations and their workers do to suppress this kulak self-will [samovol'stvo], and what do

---

10 Ikramov, “Organizatsionnyi vopros: Doklad na 1 Vseturkestanskom s’ezde soiuza ‘Koshchi’ i zemel’nykh organov Turkestanskoj ASSR—dekabr’ 1921 g.,” in Izbrannye trudy, 120, previously published as “Pervyi Vseturkestanskii s’ezd soiuza ‘Koshchi’ i zemorganov Turkrespubliki” (December 1921): 28-30.

11 Ryskulov, “8 Marta i zhenshchina sostoka,” Izbrannye trudy, 95-97, previously published in Turkestanskia pravda (8 March 1923). A major unveiling campaign began in Central Asia in 1926, under the direction of Serafima Liubimova, Zhenotdel Director of the Sredazburo, who would declare that “The way of life [byt] which has been preserved until now is women’s slavery (qalin, polygyny, seclusion, the giving of underage [in marriage]) etc., that is in contradiction to economics and hampers the movement among broad masses of women toward economic independence.” RGASPI F. 62, op. 1, d. 173, ll. 94-104, Ispolburo protocol No. 56, quoted in Shoshanna Keller, To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia, 1917-1941 (Praeger, 2001), 102. The topic of hayum (unveiling), out of scope of the present study, is explored in great detail in Keller’s book. See also Marianne Kamp’s excellent study, The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism (University of Washington Press, 2007).
the organizations of the power of the poor — the executive committees of the poor and party cells — do? Nothing. In the center of Russia, these tasks have long been accomplished.”

Ryskulov, in portraying the Center’s efforts as both crucial for the sustenance of Eastern communism and currently negligent, echoed the concerns of many of the BKP, who felt that they, in the latter part of the 1920s especially, were unfairly expected to sustain and build communism on their own.

**Toward a New Order and a “Dictatorship of the Proletariat”**

In Bukhara new party members, despite their personal and ideological differences, could at least agree on the necessity of constructing a new order of Bukharan society—the problem was that many of the Bukharan reformists and communists had differing notions of what the new order of things would be. Reformists saw the Bukharan Revolution as a reclamation of their homeland and society and an opportunity to both regain what perceived prominence had been lost after centuries of imperial domination and build a better, more rational future. The early communists saw their task as the liberation of Central Asia from oppressive and imperialist capitalist forces. The collapse of the Emirate was, in the final analysis of both groups, seen as an important first step toward the liberation of Bukhara, but much work was needed to remedy the economic and political turmoil of the region. The Russian Revolution had come and gone, bringing fundamental change to Russian society, but Central Asia was seen as lagging behind, owing both to the presence of the Bukharan Emirate, previously a potential alternative to Soviet rule, and, before 1920, general Soviet weakness in the region. After Frunze’s campaign the Bolsheviks, by way of force, extended communist rule to Central Asia.

---

Among the first orders of business for the Party in Bukhara was to develop a stable constituency of workers. This was, of course, easier said than done. The challenge for Central Asian communists was identifying the proletariat, or at least those among the peasantry who, with a proper Marxist education, might be transformed into an industrial working class. This issue, the “proletariat question,” was not unique to Bukhara; Tashkent communists, including Ryskulov, publicly criticized the insufficient efforts of the Center to nurture an industrial working class in Turkestan. Ryskulov wrote of the importance of a strong guiding hand from Moscow, without which the creation of the proletariat in Turkestan (including Khiva and Bukhara) would be impossible. In 1922 he wrote, “[without Soviet power] the structure of the proletariat of Turkestan faces certain death. We, the oppressed labor class of the East, will not let go of Soviet power. We must try to spread the idea of Soviet power among the working people of Khiva and Bukhara. We will be able to free them—it is our duty.” In the opinion of Ryskulov, the communists of Turkestan had a moral obligation to uplift the villagers of Bukhara, to “[free] and [unite] the entire oppressed East from the yoke of capitalism.” However, this could be accomplished “only if the Center’s plans [were] implemented.”

For the Bukharan intelligentsia the problem seemed more obvious, and more troubling: there was no proletariat in Bukhara. Chokaev would later complain of Central Asia’s status as a “cotton plantation” of Russia, and he remained clear in his assessment of the existence of an industrial working class in Central Asia: “If the ‘proletariat of Turkestan’ is a somewhat vague category, the ‘proletarian substance’ of the so-called ‘national republics’ [Bukhara] is also more than ‘somewhat vague.’” Posing the question as a hypothetical, Chokaev asked simply, “does

---

113 Ryskulov, “Doklad na II kraevoi konferentsii musul’manskikh organizatsii RKP(b) Turkestan a tekushchem momente,” in Izbrannye trudy, 67, previously published in Masbiuro RKP(b) v Turkestane (1922): 34-36.
there exist that ‘national proletariat’ whom the Moscow Government could entrust with the
government of Turkestan? Does the ‘national proletariat,’ if any, actually participate in the State
building in Turkestan?” His argument, that the Central Asian proletariat was nonexistent, carried
the dual implication that whatever existed of the industrial class in Central Asia was Russian, not
Uzbek, Kazakh, or Tajik, etc. Nevertheless, he concluded, “this does not in any way restrain the
Bolsheviks of Moscow from announcing to the world the ‘Proletarian Dictatorship’ in Turkestan.
. . . But the ‘Dictatorship of the Russian proletariat in Turkestan’ is more than the realization by
the Russian Bolsheviks and the Russian workers of the State power in our country; it is an
unheard-of affront to the national dignity of our people.”³¹⁴ For some of the intelligentsia such as
Chokaev the presence of a Central Asian proletariat was illusory, meant to provide legitimacy for
Bolshevik, Russian rule. In any case a declaration of a “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” in Central
Asia was premature.

“Nationalism”

The group of older Bukharan reformists hoped that the BNSR would eventually become
the “modern,” Muslim state they had sought since at least the fin de siècle. The existence of a
Bukharan state, legitimated not by hereditary rule (especially from that of a figure as morally
bankrupt as Alim Khan was portrayed to be) but, ideally, by popular rule, was seen as an
immense victory for Muslim modernism. Importantly it was understood as a continuation of
previous Muslim modernist movements, i.e. in Turkey, and the BNSR was unafraid to publically
draw the connection, despite the obvious concerns it provoked from Moscow. In early 1922, for
example, a Turkish newspaper published a provocative speech from a Bukharan delegation. The

article, which would later become a stain on the reputations of the central ministers of the BNSR (including Fitrat, Khodzhaev and Mukhstedinov), laid bare the spiritual and ethnic connection of Central Asians to their Turkish counterparts, declaring, “The Bukharans, in addition to being citizens of the East [şarqlı], are of Turkic descent. Because Bukhara is a Muslim state, it has many spiritual relations with the Turks, who have of old been the defenders of Islam.” The BNSR had indeed proclaimed Bukhara a Muslim state; there was no mention of communism or socialism.

There was, however, an explanation for the lack of political connection with Turkey: imperialism. “These brothers, like the various other citizens of the East, could not stretch out their hands to one another despite being one by virtue of race [ürk] and religion, because of the known policies of the imperialists, who wanted to keep the nations of the East divided in order to keep them under control and to oppress them.” Most worrying, from the Russian perspective, however, was the following insinuation, that Revolution itself originated in Turkey, not Russia: “The heroic defense during the Gallipoli war inspired dread in the West and made the sun of revolution rise in the East.” Nevertheless, the article did praise the “trustworthy liberating hands of Russian revolutionaries, who raised the banner of humanity, [and] were united with [those of] the oppressed of the East.” Ultimately, however, it concluded that the BNSR was a triumph of the Bukharans, accomplished only with the assistance of Russia: “The enlightened youth of Bukhara, who had worked continuously for 15-20 years, overthrew the cruel and despotic government [of the emir] with the help of Eastern revolutionaries.”

---

Despite their desire for historical ownership of the Bukharan Revolution and increased connection to Turkey, the Bukharan intelligentsia were still less “nationalistic” than anti-imperialist and anti-colonial. The BNSR repeatedly sought to emphasize the anti-colonial platform of the socialists and use this mutual goal to encourage future cooperation. Anti-imperialism itself was always central to the ideology of the Young Bukharans. Khodzhaev, reflecting on the earliest days of the reformists and Jadids in Bukhara, wrote that they “embarked on the path of the struggle against the imperialists, having experienced the bitterness of our enslavement and all the misfortunes that flow from it.” Even after the successes of the Bukharan Revolution of 1920, even as the principle of self determination was being refined and later effectively dismissed by Stalin and the Communist Party, the Bukharan reformists never wholly abandoned their desire for an excision of imperialist forces in Central Asia.116

The Soviet authorities and Party heads, however, did not see the “national” situation in Bukhara the same way as the reformists. The Party was quick to dismiss the national, cultural efforts of the BNSR as pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic, two accusations which, along with simple “bourgeois nationalism,” would accompany the execution warrants of the majority of the pre-revolutionary Central Asian intelligentsia in the 1930s under the madness of Stalin’s purges.

117 Stalin’s thoughts on this issue, presented at the Tenth Party Congress in 1921, would become the standard Party interpretation of the question of “nationalism” in Central Asia: “Communists from the local native population who experienced the harsh period of national oppression, and who have not yet fully freed themselves from the haunting memories of that period, often exaggerate the importance of specific national features in their Party work, leave the class interests of the working people in the shade, or simply confuse the interests of the working people of the nation concerned with the ‘national’ interests of that nation; they are unable to separate the former from the latter and base their Party work on them. That, in its turn, leads to a deviation from communism towards bourgeois-democratic nationalism, which sometimes assumes the form of Pan-Islamism, Pan-Turkism.” Iosif Stalin, “The Immediate task of the Party in the National Question,” Theses for the Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) Endorsed by the Central Committee of the Party, February 10, 1921, in Works, Vol. 5, 1921 - 1923, Foreign Languages Publishing House (Moscow: 1954).
The Bukharan intelligentsia, for their part, seemed to have never given serious consideration to a political union of Muslims or Turkic peoples. Even Chokaev, later writing from the safety of Paris, dismissed pan-Islam and pan-Turkism in favor of autonomy by way of self-determination, one of the central tenets of Lenin’s message to non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union. Chokaev again drew a comparison between “national principles” and anti-imperialism, and even suggested, perhaps correctly, that Moscow had encouraged this effort: “The revolutionary appeals of the Moscow Bolsheviks for the unification of the Mussulman world, for the struggle against the West, could not have passed without producing ‘nationalistic’ consequences within the frontiers of Soviet Russia itself as well.” For the Communist Party, however, especially before the national delimitation of 1924, this “nationalistic” language was disturbing mainly for its geopolitical implications. The fact remains, however, that the liberal intelligentsia in Bukhara and Central Asia in general, despite being influenced by international Muslim and Turkish thought, sought primarily to regain control of their own culture in Central Asia.

**Political Literacy and Personal Rivalry Revisited**

The Bukharan Communist Party itself was a hotbed of political and personal conflict, combined as it was from two groups with fundamentally different ideological bases. Even among the loose coalition of Bukharan reformists operating in the city before the emir’s ouster, not everyone was interested in joining the communists to administer Bukhara. Aini, for example, wrote that he “did not want to participate directly in the work of the People’s Government of Bokhara as some of the people in the leadership seemed . . . to be suspicious characters.”118 Aini and Khodzhaev thus still had no desire to work together, but Mukhetdinov, another key rival of

---

Khodzhaev’s, was heavily involved in early efforts to create the new Bukharan government. Working together for the creation of a new government did little to improve relations among those of the Bukharan intelligentsia who, like Khodzhaev and Mukhiedinov, had hated each other for years before even the Russian Revolution. In fact, political opportunity and uncertainty exacerbated these relations.

A frustrated Khodzhaev had previously complained to the Turkomissiia in August 1920 that, “in the current situation . . . not guaranteed against attempts at my life, there can be no talk of fruitful work.”\textsuperscript{119} It turned out that Khodzhaev’s concerns were not misplaced. Isomiddin Mukhiedinov (Mirzo Isom Muhitdinov), brother of Abdulkadyr, was suspected in an April 1921 plot for moving “against Xo’jayev [Khodzhaev] and his supporters, using tactics such as assassinations and the planting of incriminating evidence on them,” and another attempt was made on Khodzhaev’s life in the summer of 1922, which was attributed to the Basmachi movement (Russian: basmachedo), an extended uprising of Muslim peoples in Central Asia with pre-revolutionary roots.\textsuperscript{120} The marked increase in rebel activity in eastern Bukhara would later become convenient for political opponents of the Bukharan intelligentsia, who were often able to conflate the “nationalism” of Bukharan reformists with anti-Russian insurrection and disloyalty. Ryskulov and other liberal intelligenti, however, considered the Basmachi to be directed not by Jadids or reformists, but by “reactionary elements from the native bourgeoisie and clergy . . . [who] are inevitably transformed into the agents of British imperialism in the East

\textsuperscript{119} Khodzhaev to Turkomissiia, 17 August 1920, RGASPI, f. 544, op. 4, d. 16, l. 48, quoted in Khalid, \textit{Making Uzbekistan}, 126.

\textsuperscript{120} After Alim Khan’s deposition, he took nominal control of the Basmachi, and at one point, during 1921-1922, the Red Army had to deploy nearly 20,000 troops in response to mounting unrest. For a more thorough examination of the Basmachi movement, see Keller, \textit{To Moscow, not Mecca}, and Khalid, \textit{The Making of Uzbekistan}. 
and supporters of the reactionary elements of feudalism." Khodzhaev thus experienced threats of violence from Bukharan liberals and conservatives alike. These attempts, despite our understanding of the final context of Khodzhaev’s execution in 1938, during the height of Stalin’s purges, reveal the extent of disarray present among Central Asian intellectuals and politicians during the 1920s. Khodzhaev’s most serious enemies at this time were not from Russia, but Central Asia.

But what was it about Khodzhaev that drew so much contempt from his contemporaries? It is worthwhile to explore further the relationship between Khodzhaev and Mukhetdinov, as their political and ideological differences became magnified by newfound opportunity in the Soviet system of the BNSR. Their mutual distaste had important implications even for the creation of new political identities in Bukhara and Central Asia. For example, Khodzhaev and Fitrat worked to ensure the dominance of Uzbek (Turkic) language and culture in the BNSR, while Mukhetdinov, who had previously thought of himself as an Uzbek from Bukhara, began to develop a Tajik identity, eschewing the Uzbek language in favor of Persian. According to Khalid, it was not ideology or ethnic background that separated Khodzhaev and Mukhetdinov, who were probably the two most important figures responsible for the creation of modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, but personal enmity which had deep roots in the “commercial competition between the two wealthy families.”

It becomes important in the Soviet context to remember the wealthy backgrounds of many of the Bukharan intelligentsia. In the second half of the 1920s, as many of the Bukharan

---

122 Fitrat, despite already being an important Persian-language poet and writer, had given up Persian in favor of Uzbek by this time.
123 Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 140.
reformists lost favor with the Party, they found it increasingly difficult to defend themselves from accusations of “bourgeois nationalism.” This was alleged of both Khodzhaev and Mukhettinov, who were in addition accused of repossessing many of the riches of Alim Khan. Fedtke has argued that, in the BNSR, “Khojaev [Khodzhaev] played the role of the Emir, taking over for instance the Emir’s luxurious railroad carriages. The family of Muhuddinov was less successful in claiming political power, but they were more successful in reacquiring their former possessions as well as acquiring huge treasures from former officials of the Emir.” The sources, however, reveal that, at least in their respective capacities as party officials in the BNSR, Khodzhaev and Mukhettinov portrayed themselves quite differently.

During the first days of the BNSR, the Soviet plenipotentiary Iurenev visited the offices of Khodzhaev and Mukhettinov. He recalled the distinct differences in the self-presentation of Khodzhaev and Mukhettinov, and it was clear who was more appropriately “Soviet”:

“[Khodzhaev] was wearing a simple uniform. Only in public did he put on a turban and draped himself with a glowing silk khalat. When I visited his rival [Mukhettinov], an oriental man of the traditional type, I met him in a small, dark room in the palace of the Emir dressed in his traditional clothing . . . sitting on his heels.” Interesting here is the contrast given between the “simple” dress of Khodzhaev (at least when he was at work) and the “traditional clothing” of Mukhettinov. More interesting still is Iurenev’s description of Mukhettinov as an “oriental man,” considering he and Khodzhaev were both from Bukhara.

---

Iurenev’s account continues with the unflattering (to the intended Soviet audience) depiction of Mukhetdinov: “To get through to him one had to pass through several decaying arcades on both sides of a tower and through gardens full of pheasants and peacocks and finally one had to pass the barred windows of the former seraglio [harem].”¹²⁵ Iurenev apparently much preferred to work with Khodzhaev, who was perceived to be straight-forward and a Russophile. Mukhetdinov, on the other hand, was deemed “nationalist, pan-Islamist, and a manifest

---

Russophobe. Thus Mukhtetdinov, by not expressing himself as a communist, was quickly losing support in the Party; Stalin himself declared him “dangerous” in 1922.

***

The Bukharan Revolution of 1920, and the establishment of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic that followed, did not, of course, immediately transform the Young Bukharans into communists. The intellectual lineage of the BNSR was derived much more from Muslim modernist ideologies of the early Tatar Jadids and Ottoman reformists than the communism of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. However, the cases of the new Young Communist Party in Bukhara and the BNSR show that the Bukharan intelligentsia were more than willing to carry out their vision from within the Soviet system; Khodzhaev himself argued for the subsumption of the BNSR under the Soviet Union, after it had been established in the winter of 1922. The case of the BNSR, which may be considered both a Muslim and Socialist Republic, demonstrates the extent of ideological deviation (from the Bolshevik perspective) permissible in the time of the NEP (New Economic Policy). In this period the various strands of the liberal intelligentsia in Bukhara worked to imagine the Bukharan state as capable, and legitimate, in supporting both Islam and socialism. Although the leaders of the BNSR were forced to acknowledge the serious challenges to this proposition, including conflicting ideologies and infighting, economic struggle and the absence of a popular base of communists in Bukhara, they were mostly successful, in the final analysis, in their efforts to institute substantial change in Bukharan society.

---

126 Genis, Vitse-konsul Vvedenskii, 317, quoted in Khalid, Making Uzbekistan 141.
127 Stalin to Ordzhonikidze, 14 April 1922, in Bolshevistkoе руковоdство. Peregiska, 1912-1927 (Moscow, 1996), 251.
CHAPTER 5

THE CHALLENGE: DIVERGENT MODERNITIES AND DISILLUSIONMENT

On 1 February 1924, less than two weeks after the death of Lenin, Ryskulov appeared on the pages of Pravda with an assessment of communism in the East. According to Ryskulov (who, as we have seen, sharply criticized the Soviets in 1919 for failing to contain the “self-will” of the Central Asian kulaks), the communists of Central Asia had been behind in their Marxist education ever since the revolution. He lamented that, in essence, the new communists of the East were still inexperienced when political realities of the 1920s (and Moscow) demanded otherwise:

Lenin tried to ask us, in our conditions, precisely who is a dekhan (peasant), a bai (kulak), in what form usury develops, what is the basis for resolving the land question, etc. These questions for us, the young Eastern communists, were unexpectedly posed. In a conversation with a great man, we felt like children at the teacher’s exam, and we, of course, could not answer all of Vladimir Ilyich’s questions in a Marxist way [po-marksistski].128

In comparing himself and fellow early communists to children “at an exam,” Ryskulov seemed to evoke an anxiety that may have been shared by many of the Central Asian intelligentsia, regardless of their standing in the Party. The early 1920s were part of an era of uncertainty for the entirety of Central Asia (and Russia indeed). By 1924 it had become apparent that Jadidism (and its corollaries, pan-nationalist movements, etc.) were becoming, in the minds of Soviet authorities, if not yet the intelligentsia themselves, incompatible with Bolshevik communism. This era also tested the Bolsheviks’ promises regarding Central Asia, especially the principle of self-determination. Throughout it all, the Red Army remained billeted in Bukhara, ostensibly to

---

combat the Basmachi, as the Center worked to construct a new history of October, one which sought apparently to minimize the influence of Central Asian “nationalists” in their own history.

Nevertheless, Ryskulov, a committed communist, concluded in his assessment that, essentially, all was well—or would be—because the “working masses in the republics and autonomous regions are actively involved . . . in the construction of the practical work of raising young Communist parties . . . young people are growing, and the remnants of the heritage of the tsarist regime and patriarchal-feudal life are rapidly passing.”\textsuperscript{129} Khodzhaev, for his part, did not exactly share Ryskulov’s optimistic assessment of the situation in Central Asia. After accounting for the numerous “defects” in the organization of the BNSR, Khodzhaev compared the situation to Soviet Russia, which by comparison had a powerful military and an economic base from which to support the establishment of a Soviet order: “While it is impossible, of course, to deny that the work of our organization has many defects . . . we should not be judged too harshly for them. Soviet Russia, having far greater forces at its command, is also not in a position to organize everything all at once.” Interestingly this note ends with a subtle threat by Khodzhaev: “We know very well that any obstinacy on our part or coercive measures on yours will be fraught with pernicious consequences.”\textsuperscript{130} Unfortunately for Khodzhaev, he probably had little idea of how right he would be.

**The Emerging Primacy of Bolshevism**

The Muslim modernity imagined by the Jadids, and later taken up by the Bukharan reformists, including the Young Bukharans, was not imagined, at the beginning, to be mutually exclusive of socialism. Rather, it appears that some of the Bukharan intelligentsia, including

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 44.
\textsuperscript{130} Khodzhaev to Tomskii, 28 August 1921, RGASPI, f. 122, op. 2, d. 142, ll. 13, 14, quoted in Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 141.
Aini, Fitrat and Khodzhaev, may have been genuine in their attempt to become communists—they certainly understood the importance of presenting themselves as such. Khalid has argued that “the need to placate the Soviets drove the BNSR government into an ideological bilingualism,” whereby they “spoke Bolshevik’ in their communications with Soviet authorities but conducted the internal business of state in the very different conceptual categories of national sovereignty and independence.”131 This certainly appears to be true after 1924, which coincided with the delimitation of Central Asia and the first purge of its intelligentsia, but there appears to be evidence that, in the first years under Soviet rule, that is, from 1920-1923, there was genuine consideration for ideological synthesis between Muslim modernism and Bolshevism.

Aini and Khodzhaev, the most politically significant of the Bukharan intelligentsia, each developed arguments for why the Muslim modernism practiced in Bukhara before the revolution was a direct ideological precursor to Bolshevism. This carried the implication that the emergence of Bolshevism in Bukhara was facilitated by the reformist efforts of Jadids and Young Bukharans. Aini’s argument was that Bolshevism and Jadidism were ideologically quite similar; Khodzhaev argued that, in essence, Bolshevism was an extension of the reformism of the Young Bukharans. Both of these theses were, unfortunately for their authors, derided in the Soviet press. Their most significant detractors, however, were younger Central Asian communists like Ikramov, who wrote of the need to “fight against the equation of Jadidism and Bolshevism [Aini’s thesis] and against the absurd thought that Bolshevism sprang from a Jadid group [Khodzhaev’s thesis]—that Jadidism was the beginning of Bolshevism.” He continued:

We must fight on the journal’s pages against attempts to cover up the role and the historical ways of the development of the Uzbek intelligenciya, especially its counterrevolutionary part, and of this part’s role in the deciding days of the revolution, its  

131 Khalid, Making Uzbekistan, 127.
evolution in the direction of counterrevolution, mysticism, sophism etc. . . . The Party is fighting against the phenomenon of great power chauvinism and will continue to fight against it, but at the same time it will not relent in its fight against local nationalism which is growing under the conditions of NEP.132

Thus by 1927, when Ikramov published this article, Jadidism had become as much of a dirty word to communists as it had been to the conservatives in the emirate. Khodzhaev himself, however, had never claimed to be a Jadid, and even publicly declared that the age of Jadidism had passed with the Bukharian Revolution in 1920.133 This did not stop Ikramov from equating Khodzhaev’s political philosophy with Jadidism in 1927, and indeed the former Bukharian reformists were never quite able to distance themselves from the term, which, in the Soviet conception, was counter-revolutionary because it was revolutionary on different terms.

A Question of (Political) Identity

In the early 1920s, as the Bukharian intelligentsia were working to identify their place in the “modern” world, catalyzed by revolution and an increase in regional Soviet power in the environment of the BNSR, they began to reconsider their own historical identities. In the early 20th century, an era of nation-building and revolution, this meant, for the Bukharian intelligentsia, a reconsideration of not only whether or not they were communists, Muslims, reformists, or some combination thereof, but to which Central Asian nation they belonged. The issue was complicated by the political realities of the BNSR, which, led by Khodzhaev, Fitrat and the Young Bukharans, defined itself as wholly Turkic. This, of course, was a substantial modification of the historical tradition of Bukhara, which had for centuries been a center of Persianate culture. The official language of the Bukharian courts and chancellery had always been

133 See Khodzhaev, “K istorii revoliutsii v Bukhare,” 178-179.
Persian until the establishment of the BNSR in 1920, whereupon it was changed to Uzbek by Fitrat and Khodzhaev. In the words of Fedtke, “It became apparent . . . that Central Asian communist activists saw themselves as being parts of different peoples and different language communities—although they could all be classified as belonging to the Turkic world.”134 But what was it about the political environment of the BNSR that helped to manufacture a division between the shared Uzbek (Turkic) and Tajik (Persianate) heritage of Bukharans, and how did this reassessment of cultural heritage coincide with the ideological struggle between Muslim modernism and communism?

The reality is that political maneuvering seems to have played a substantial role in the creation of these new Central Asian identities. Tajik culture was portrayed by ranking members of the BNSR as the most backward of all Central Asian cultures, especially because the area of Bukhara where Tajik language and culture was the most predominant was in the mountains of eastern Bukhara (what would become Tajikistan), where there were as yet no major cities, and a vast majority of the population was illiterate. This was also the area controlled by the Basmachi, and the sole remaining base of power for conservative Muslim partisans. Persian was the language of the ulama and the emir’s courts, and, in the minds of the Young Bukharans, should be replaced with modern Uzbek, which coincidentally was reinvented during this decade.

Those falling on the side of Khodzhaev and Fitrat had long thought of Turkic as the most authentic, and most modern, language of the region, but Mukhetdinov and Aini, who had both previously identified as Uzbeks (Mukhetdinov as late as 1923), seem to have retreated into a Tajik identity in opposition to the Young Bukharans. “According to the Stalinist criteria for a

---

nation (shared language, territory, economy and culture), the Bukharans could have formed a single nation instead of two,” writes Fedtke, “But if these criteria did not apply, according to which criteria did Bukharans turn into Uzbeks and Tajiks?”135 Perhaps the answer lies in the political fortunes of the Bukharan intelligentsia in the age of communism. According to Khalid, “If Uzbekistan was to be based on Bukhara, then Tajikistan was conceived as the place not wanted in Uzbekistan . . . Tajikistan became the dumping ground for losers of political battles in Bukhara.”136 So while Khalid argues that “Political defeat had finally made Muhiddinov a Tajik,” he implies that political success in the Soviet system had made Khodzhaev and his associates Uzbeks.

**Self-Determination in Practice**

A most important issue for the Central Asian intelligentsia, and a key reason for much of their increasing disapproval of the Soviet mission in Central Asia, was that of self-determination. The precept of self-determination had long been central to Bolshevik ideology with regard to non-Russian peoples of the Russian Empire and the early Soviet Union, however, in Central Asia, it quickly became clear that self-determination, what the Bukharans imagined to be the freedom to design their own government (which, in the case of the BNSR, was imagined to be a Muslim republic), was never going to be possible without Moscow’s assent.

Unfortunately for the Bukharan intelligentsia, Stalin had already argued in 1920 that self-determination was not actually a question of the “rights of nations,” but a question of the “people.” His thoughts on the matter reveal the Party’s tendency in this period to equate Central Asian “determination” with “counter-revolutionary” activity:

---

135 Ibid., 24.
Of course, the border regions of Russia, the nations and races which inhabit these regions, possess, as all other nations do, the inalienable right to secede from Russia; and if any of these nations decided by a majority to secede from Russia, as was the case with Finland in 1917, Russia, presumably, would be obliged to take note of the fact and sanction the secession. But the question here is not about the rights of nations, which are unquestionable, but about the interests of the mass of the people both in the centre and in the border regions; it is a question of the character—which is determined by these interests—of the agitation which our Party must carry on if it does not wish to renounce its own principles and if it wishes to influence the will of the labouring masses of the nationalities in a definite direction. And the interests of the masses render the demand for the secession of the border regions at the present stage of the revolution a profoundly counter-revolutionary one.  

Chokaev and others became alarmed at this, what was considered a broken promise by Moscow. According to Chokaev, Central Asians welcomed the Russian Revolution as a harbinger of change, and they awarded proper significance to Russian assistance in their reclamation of Bukhara from the morally corrupt traditionalists of the Emirate, but they chafed at what was interpreted as a loss of autonomy by 1924, amid ideological sparring between communists and Muslim liberals. “It seems strange that we—the Turkestanians—who so heartily welcomed the February Revolution,” Chokaev wrote, “began in course of time to fear the very same elements without whom that Revolution would have been impossible.” He continued, having expressed the “fear” that he and other Central Asian intellectuals were feeling as they felt their own society slip out of their hands:

We were seeking closer contact with the Russian Socialists, but we observed in the Soviets . . . tendencies very alarming to us. And this is not because we ourselves were becoming extreme Nationalists. Our modest desire for a local autonomy for Turkestan [Muslim Central Asia] we were ready to leave to the decision of the Constituent Assembly of All-Russia. But we did naturally express our wish to participate more actively in the building up of new life.  

---


138 Chokaev, “Turkestan and the Soviet Regime,” 405-406. It should be noted that Chokaev is referring to the larger Central Asian population of Muslims in his usage of the term “Turkestanians.”
Chokaev’s wish was the ultimate expression of the goals of the Bukharan intelligentsia, going back all the way to 1905. Although some notable figures, most notably Khodzhaev, were indeed able to participate heavily in the construction of a “new life” in Central Asia, it was becoming clear by 1924, on the eve of the national-territorial delimitation, that political opportunity for Bukharan reformists was quickly fading.

**Disillusionment**

By 1924, after nearly four years in the “Soviet system,” the ideological divide between Bukharan reformists and the Party was becoming more pronounced amid the inauguration of the first substantial purge of Central Asian “nationalists.” Bukharans with pre-revolutionary careers in politics, religion or publishing (the majority of Jadids and Young Bukharans) were challenged by newer, even younger, Central Asian communists, who were eager to portray their older rivals as relics of an earlier age. The reformists, for their part, were hardly ever less unified. Khodzhaev remained the de facto leader of Bukhara for the time being, but Fitrat had been again exiled in 1923 and was facing immense criticism in party circles for alleged subversion. Mukhetdinov had taken over as Khodzhaev’s replacement as Chairman of the Council of People’s Ministers in 1923, but his political influence was greatly reduced by this time. He would later be reassigned to the newly created Tajikistan in 1924, where he would join Aini and a number of other former Bukharan *intelligenti* in promulgating a new Tajik, that is Persian, culture in what was eastern Bukhara.

By 1924 Fitrat, now exiled from Bukhara for a second time, seemed to have given up on politics, and appeared to be enjoying the time away from government:

I love these nights,  
There is no running, no rushing;  
No straying from the path;
There are no falsities, no frauds.
The enemy is far away.
Friends are even further.
How I love these nights!  

By leaving behind his political career, Fitrat was hoping that no one could accuse him of "straying from the path" any further; however, his two major publications from this time, *Bedil* (1923) and *Satan's Mutiny Against the Lord* (1924) were both heavily criticized (although apparently critics could not agree on whether Fitrat’s texts were primarily anti-Islamic or anti-Soviet). Nevertheless, these two texts give voice to the Fitrat’s disillusionment with the experiment of the BNSR in Soviet conditions, and he would precede the large-scale disillusionment of the Bukharan intelligentsia that would occur later in the decade. As such, his writings become important to understanding the mood shared by many of those Central Asian liberals who became dispossessed of a direct voice in their own affairs during the Soviet era.

In *Bedil*, for example, Fitrat appeared to capture the anxiety and cynicism of Bukharans regarding the large Red Army presence in the region. Fitrat cleverly paraphrases centuries-old writings of Bedil (Mawlānā Abūl-Ma'ālī Mīrzā Abdūl-Qādir Bēdīl, 1642-1720), the Sufi saint and master Persian poet, to give voice to his own perceptions of current society: “Said the cat: ‘there are powerless, orphaned, feeble mice here. I stand guard so that a raven will not catch them; there are no protectors for them here other than I’, it said.”  Although the BNSR may have faced extreme difficulties in defending themselves from the Basmachi and the remnants of the forces still loyal to Alim Khan without the Red Army, they were worried by the presence of thousands of Russian troops in Central Asia, who, especially in Bukhara, were often billeted in

---

140 Fitrat, "Bedil," 168.
mosques. In the words of Khalid, “The Young Bukharans could not exist without the Red Army but also resented it deeply. The distrust was mutual and its arc short and steep.”

In *Bedil*, Fitrat may have also been commenting on the situation of the proletariat and peasantry in Bukhara. He writes, “[As a result of arrogance,] which constantly occurred behind a curtain of justice, the world of the ploughman was plundered to the end. The ploughmen were separated not only from the harvest but also from their lands. They totally evolved into mere ‘day laborers.’” He continues, “the ploughman sows, he reaps. He harvests. But, like the oxen positioned at the head of the threshing floor, his mouth was bound. It was impossible for him to eat a thing.”

Fitrat’s veiled text, while indeed exploring the timeless themes of exploitation and hunger, nevertheless echoes similar comments by those such as Chokaev, who were much more forthcoming: “the Soviet power were taking everything from the Mussulman population, exposing the latter to certain death by starvation, while the Russian immigrants guarded their wheat and other agricultural produce safely in their barns.”

Finally, in *Satan’s Mutiny Against the Lord*, published a year after *Bedil*, Fitrat portrays a valiant, self-aware Satan as an angel in revolt against the Lord’s injunction to worship man. Whether read as an anticlerical text or a commentary on emerging Soviet conditions in Bukhara, it is apparent that Fitrat was becoming disillusioned with “great animators,” who, in their creation of self-aware and nominally independent subjects, were in reality fostering only dependence, especially when their purpose remained so unclear:

Having vivified these dependent creatures,
Having stacked them like logs,
You have wished to make them boast throughout life

---

141 Khalid, *Making Uzbekistan*, 140.
143 Ibid., 411.
about Your “purity” . . .
Why did you give hands and feet?
If they will not stir,
Why did they come to life?
If they cannot fly—for what were they given wings?

Finally Fitrat, with Satan as his mouthpiece, condemns the “hidden meanings” and meaningless speech he encountered in those ideologues who purport to have all the answers:

In every speech of mine I adduced so many proofs;
However, today . . . here is my own thought for You:
I did not believe in those speeches, myself!
Whenever my tongue warbles on for You,
Something makes my heart uneasy!
    (in a decisive manner)
My eye cannot see Your hidden meanings,
Right from the tongue, my words fall foul and putrid.144

Thus, Fitrat portrays Satan at the time of the Fall as finally in possession of his own thoughts.

His heart is uneasy, but he is decisive.

Reformism and Its Place in the History of October

After the establishment of the BNSR the Young Bukharans were able to redirect their cultural efforts from education and agitation to the reconstruction of a “nation” of Uzbeks, one which they had imagined to be a direct successor to the Timurid legacy. In this they may be said to have been “nationalistic,” just as the Jadids were before them, but their nationalism was primarily concerned with the imagination of a cultural, not necessarily political, union of Turkic peoples in Central Asia. Crucially there was never a serious argument from the BNSR made in favor of independence from the Soviets. Despite this, for Party ideologues and rivals of the Bukharan intelligentsia, “nationalism” became inextricably connected to counter-revolutionary

activity. The Party had begun to imagine that any pre-revolutionary agitational efforts of
Bukharans were inextricably linked to nationalist activities (for which the Basmachi proved to be
an enduring and all-encompassing example), and therefore incompatible with Bolshevism, no
matter the actual practices of the reformists.

The Young Communists, for their part, worked to fashion a narrative of the Revolution in
the East, whereby Central Asians had apparently met the revolution “with all their hearts.”
Ikramov again provides a useful example, in a published “response” to one comrade Rakhim
Inogamov, who, according to Ikramov, admitted that “since the first period of the revolution . . .
the representatives of the national intelligentsia . . . did not meet her with all our hearts.”
Inogamov allegedly continued, arguing that Bukharans were unable to consider the merits of
Bolshevism because the intelligentsia “were at the front lines of the struggle for national freedom
(!?), for the formation of an independent (!?) Uzbek government.” Less important than the
second-hand quotation of Inogamov’s speech, however, was Ikramov’s response to it, in which
he offered a different perspective of the Central Asian response to October: “judging by the
historical documents, all this is false [Inogamov’s admission of the half-hearted consideration of socialism]. It was just the opposite. . . . but there was a group of intellectuals who opposed
October. It is necessary to clarify this issue.” Ikramov appeared to argue that groups of Young
Communists, such as he, had been socialists from the very beginning. More important to
Ikramov, however, were the phrases “national freedom” and “the formation of an independent
Uzbek government,” which he immediately associated with bourgeois nationalism:

What does ‘national freedom’ and ‘the formation of an independent Uzbek government’ mean? How can we make sense of this, and how did the Uzbek intellectuals themselves understand it? The Great October Socialist Revolution took place thanks to the struggle

145 Ikramov, “Neskol’ko slov,” 474-475. The parenthetical commentary is Ikramov’s.
146 Ibid., 475.
between two irreconcilable classes, two opposing forces. . . . If the nationalist sentiment of the intelligentsia speaks to “national liberation,” [or] the “formation of an Uzbek nationality,” even if it did not fight for it, then it really speaks for the national bourgeoisie, to protect its interests.  

Thus, in Ikramov’s formulation, only Bolshevism could liberate Central Asia, and the only political identity worth legitimizing was a Soviet one. As responses similar to Ikramov became more commonly expressed in the press and in Party meetings of the decade, it became clear that the version of modernity put forward first by the Jadids, and later adopted by the Bukharan reformists, had no place in the Soviet conceptualization of Central Asian history, other than that perhaps given to other “opponents” of the revolution.

* * *

By the summer of 1924, as plans were being drawn up in Moscow for the delimitation of Central Asia, it was apparent that much of the enthusiasm for the “Muslim Republic” of Uzbeks, as imagined in the BNSR, had faded. Fitrat had abandoned politics and religion by this point. Khodzhaev and Aini were being attacked in the press, and Mukhetdinov had been effectively silenced. There was reason to believe, for the former Bukharan reformists, that both their political careers and physical safety were in question. For this reason perhaps more than any other, direct criticism of the Soviet system was uncommon. Only Chokaev, who had fled to France, was publishing direct criticism of Soviet rule in the region, as he declared that, “Were not practical realization of the Soviet ‘liberation’ slogans providing us with weapons of attack, our struggle would have no meaning at all.”  

It seems clear, however, that Fitrat at least had completely given up on the Soviets. We may return again to Bedil, where, in the last passages, Fitrat paraphrases Bedil once again: “‘Do not lament, it seems our constant condition is just such

---

147 Ibid., 475.
darkness. In this universe where you live, a revolution will be contrived." Thus, according to Fitrat, Bedil “gives tidings about a revolution that will occur, about its being beneficial for the oppressed, sooner or later.” Fitrat, with these words, may have given voice to those of Central Asia who were beginning to wonder when the Revolution in the East would bring its promised liberation. For Fitrat, the future was dark, as evidenced by the marked position of the last verse of Bedil: “‘The tyrant’s place finally will fall to the oppressed. As soon as a flame topples from its foundation, it leaves its place to ashes.’”

CONCLUSION
TOWARD NEW HISTORIES OF CENTRAL ASIA

Bukhara in 1924 was a very different place than it was in 1917; the same may be said for its intellectuals. In 1917 those who comprised the liberal Bukharan intelligentsia, older Jadids, educators, reformists and even revolutionaries, were operating in what they imagined to be a traditional Muslim society, one governed by a hereditary prince, a descendent of Genghis Khan, in concert with Islamic scholars, the ulama. Following the ideological lead of the great western powers, including Europe, Turkey and revolutionary Russia, the Bukharan Jadids, and their ideological descendents the Young Bukharans, worked to imagine a more rational and modern society of Muslims in Central Asia. In the case of Bukhara, reformists and Jadids were spurred into action by what they considered to be endemic backwardness in their society, most exemplified by the arbitrariness and increasing (perceived) immorality of the emir and the ulama. The political aims of the Bukharan intelligentsia were, before 1920, based on the premise that peaceful reform was the most innocuous way to achieve society’s transformation. However, the window of reform began to close amid two years of failed efforts on behalf of the reformists. By the end of 1918 many of the Bukharan intelligentsia had met physical violence, arrests or were exiled for their association with reform efforts. Whether owing to increasing desperation or opportunity, Bukharan reformists began to increase their contacts with Bolshevik communists, whose revolutionary methods had apparently been successful in overthrowing the old order in Russia.
The Bukharan Revolution of 1920 was made possible by a cadre of Bukharan revolutionaries, including the Young Bukharans, working together with communists of the Tashkent Soviet in Turkestan and Mikhail Frunze, who held aspirations to liberate his native Central Asia and instigate a Revolution in the East. The deposition of Emir Alim Khan in 1920, as the Red Army captured Bukhara, marked the end of the traditional order in one of the most traditional and historic cities in Central Asia and the beginning of what was hoped, by Bukharan liberals and Soviet communists alike, to be a better, more modern future. The period of 1920-1924 was an experiment, under Soviet conditions, in government by a collection of Muslim reformists and communists in the BNSR. Over the course of their republic’s brief existence—only 1420 days—the Bukharan intelligentsia, led by Khodzhaev, Fitrat, and their rival Mukhedinov, worked to establish a government in line with their beliefs. Their beliefs, however, were changing, sometimes rapidly and out of self defense, anchored as they were to a political environment in which political success, and later survival itself, was predicated upon finding and expressing a *correct* ideology. Some Bukharans, most notably Khodzhaev, were able to find early success in the Soviet system, but, as the Muslim modernity imagined by the Jadids and Young Bukharans proved to be increasingly incompatible with Bolshevism (in the opinion of Party leaders, not necessarily the Bukharans themselves) due to an insistence on the existence of a “nation” of Bukharans—that is, Uzbeks—that needed to be sustained and developed for the modern age, the Bukharan intelligentsia became again besieged by the powers that were. The story of the Bukharan Jadids and reformists may have ended in tragedy; however, their final triumph, the creation of Uzbekistan, remains down to the present day, and should not be separated from their decades-long efforts for its creation.
“Second Revolution”: The Delimitation of 1924

On 25 February 1924 the Politburo agreed to proceed with the delimitation of Central Asia, which had the immediate result of creating two new Soviet Socialist Republics, the Uzbek SSR and the Turkmen SSR, with full political integration into the Soviet Union. The Uzbek SSR, or Uzbekistan, was created from territory previously belonging to the People’s Soviet Republics of Bukhara and Khorezm (Khiva). Additionally, the Autonomous Republic of Tajikistan (Tajik ASSR) was created from the eastern portion of the BNSR, and was nominally part of the Uzbek SSR until 1929, whereupon it was awarded status as a republic in its own right. These new borders, finalized in 1936 with the further creation of the Kirghiz and Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republics, exist today, and their creation, under Soviet conditions, marked the end of a period of relative autonomy for Central Asians. Central Asia would now forever be associated with and be a part of the Soviet project, even as Central Asians themselves, those who were not Party members anyway, were increasingly shut out of its governance.

The “National Principles” put forward by Moscow remained murky, and, of the Bukharan intelligentsia, only Khodzhaev’s group considered the event a triumph. Aini and Mukhedinov, now Tajiks, were fighting for the inclusion of several key cities, including Bukhara itself, in the Tajik ASSR, noting the large Persian-speaking population (and downplaying the widespread bilingualism) of Bukhara. Khodzhaev and the Young Bukharans imagined, conversely, that Uzbekistan was for the Turkic peoples, and that the place of Iranian peoples must be somewhere else. As this study had endeavored to show, these differences in imagination and self-identification were more personal and political than scientific (that is, ethnographic). “In the official blueprints of the National Delimitation,” writes Fedtke, “Uzbeks and Tajiks appeared to
be significantly different from each other: one group spoke the Turkic language Uzbek, the other group the Iranian language Tajik. . . . In reality the differentiation of Tajiks and Uzbeks according to ethnic-linguistic criteria has proven to be an extremely complicated and in certain cases an impossible matter.”150 Despite its complications and imperfections, however, the emergence of the modern state of Uzbekistan is necessarily and directly tied to the history of the BNSR, whose “nationalist” ideology, what may at this point be considered “Turkism,” was a crucial component of Uzbek and, by (dis-)association, Tajik statehood.

Many western historians and scholars in related fields, however, have argued for a top-down “divide-and-conquer” characterization of the National Delimitation of 1924. According to Malise Ruthven, “The potential for political solidarity among Soviet Muslims was attacked by a deliberate policy of divide and rule . . . [Stalin] responded to the threat of pan-Turkish [sic] and pan-Islamic nationalism by parceling out the territories of Russian Turkestan into the five republics.”151 Philip Shishkin exaggerates even more greatly: “[Stalin] drew borders that sliced up ethnic groups and made it harder for them to mount any coherent challenge to Soviet rule. If you look at a map of the Ferghana Valley, . . . the feverish lines dividing states zigzag wildly, resembling a cardiogram of a rapidly racing heart.”152 This “divide-and-conquer” narrative could only be constructed by ignoring the local language historiography, even in translation, and the continued national ambitions of the Muslim intelligentsia, going back to well before the revolution.

152 Philip Shishkin, Restless Valley: Revolution, Murder, and Intrigue in the Heart of Central Asia (Yale University Press, 2013), 238.
The “Ideological Front” and the End of Autonomy

By 1927 the Party had begun full-scale efforts to reinvent Central Asian society. The older intelligentsia, already marginalized in the Soviet system, were now actively persecuted. Even more significant was the decision finally to dismantle Islamic institutions, which included closing Muslim schools and courts in Bukhara and all of Central Asia. Many mosques were also closed, however it appears that mosque closings were rarely called for explicitly by the Party leadership (in the 1920s). Rather, they were carried out by young communists from the Komsomol or other Party institutions, who perhaps wished to demonstrate their enthusiasm for Soviet anti-religion. These endeavors were accompanied by the *khudzhum* (Arabic: assault), a series of policies demanding women’s liberation and a rejection of the veil. Cultural efforts in Central Asia also included the complete Sovietization of the press and literary publications. For some of the Bukharan intelligentsia, such as Fitrat, who had returned to a literary career after being cast out of the Soviet system (for most of the early 1930s, Fitrat attempted to remake himself in the image of a professor and author of Uzbek letters), this was a sign of more trouble to come. In the words of Khalid, the “‘ideological front’ against the ‘old intellectuals’ . . . imposed a new vocabulary on cultural discourse in Uzbekistan, so that literary judgments could be made only on the basis of categories of analysis based on an authorized definition of revolution.”¹⁵³ The Party, with “Stalin’s Revolution,” had, in effect, declared any ideological unorthodoxy in the spheres of politics, worship, dress, the press and literature to be unacceptable and counterproductive to building the new world imagined by Stalin and the Politburo.

A destructive purge of the Central Asian intelligentsia began in 1929. Shukurov was arrested in 1932 and imprisoned in the madrasa bearing his own name, whereupon he died of typhus, according to his jailers.\textsuperscript{154} Mukhetdinov was arrested in August 1933 and executed on 1 June 1934. The final purge of the pre-revolutionary Bukharan intelligentsia, each of whom had become dispossessed of political power by the time, began in 1937—part of Stalin’s Terror. Khodzhaev and Ikramov, despite their substantial differences in ideology and opinion over the years, were both arrested in the summer of 1937 and executed on the same day of 15 March 1938. Ryskulov was executed on 10 February 1938. Fitrat was arrested on 22 July 1937, and executed in 1938. Fitrat, Khodzhaev, and others “confessed” to being among the leaders of a

\textsuperscript{154} Allworth, \textit{The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual}, 15. This attestation comes from Shukurov’s son, Rustam, who was six years old when he was informed of his father’s death.
subversive society of bourgeois-nationalists working with the Basmachi to overthrow Soviet rule in Central Asia. Of the significant figures of the pre-revolutionary Bukharan intelligentsia, only Chokaev, who was living in France, and Aini managed to survive Stalin's terror. Chokaev died in 1941 and Aini in 1954, having outlived Stalin by a year.

A Final Assessment of the “Revolution in the East”

Knowing the end of the story and the “confessed” crimes of the former Bukharan reformists, it might be assumed that, owing to the power of Soviet ideology and subsequent efforts to reconceptualize history in historiography, the lives and careers of the Bukharan intelligentsia would become further marginalized in the annals of the history of Russia and Uzbekistan, even as many individuals became later rehabilitated, including Ikramov (1957), Mukhetdinov (1958), Fitrat (1962) and Khodzhaev (1965). In a sense this was true, as a focus on Soviet “achievement” in Central Asia would remain persistent. Older scholarship, especially Soviet and Russian, on the role of the Soviet Union and the interplay between communists and the local intelligentsia, echoed the party leadership of the day in emphasizing mostly the “civilizing mission” of communists in Central Asia. These scholars point to the cultural “advancement” of the region under communist control, citing the impressive efforts to eliminate widespread illiteracy and promote education in both Russian and local languages.155 Sahadeo and others have noted the paradoxical nature of this “civilizing mission,” which had been a major justification for Russian involvement in Central Asia going back to well before the revolution. These scholars point to the realities of imperial and later Soviet “domination and colonial

inequality” that were inextricably linked to modernization efforts. In the final analysis, Sahadeo concludes that “imperial and Soviet elites’ desire for power trumped the need to spread modern civilization.” Our understandings of the achievements of the Soviet Union in Central Asia must, therefore, be understood within the context of, in the words of Khalid, their “ostensible beneficiaries.” Khalid, while not totally dismissing the Soviet Union’s cultural impact in Central Asia, argues that “The new culture was not a creation of the Soviet state, let alone its gift to benighted peoples . . . It emerged through a complex interplay between the new revolutionary state and indigenous cultural elites.” He continues with a sober reminder of the potential destructive power of Soviet rule: “The massacre of the indigenous intelligentsia . . . cannot be separated from the achievements of Soviet nation and culture building.”

***

Finally, any retrospective assessment of the Soviet influence upon Uzbekistan and Central Asia must consider the contingency and irregularity of the period, especially within a “colonial” context. Nothing was certain for Bukharan reformists, down even to their last days, except change. However, they themselves participated in much of the change, ultimately resulting in the establishment of one of the world’s first Muslim republics, the BNSR, and the modern states of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Significantly, older narratives, which have variously emphasized or exaggerated the Soviet Union’s impact on Central Asian society and the repressive nature or pragmatic origin of the national-territorial delimitation, have been largely replaced by a new narrative, led by scholars such as Adeeb Khalid, Marianne Kamp, and

---

Adrienne Edgar, which urges us to consider the voices of Uzbeks themselves, and in their own languages. These works form what may be considered an emerging, new history of Central Asia, one which places Central Asians at the center of their own history.
GLOSSARY

Bai. Lit., “chieftain,” from Turkish; in Soviet discourse: bourgeois landowner.

Basmachi. Muslim resistance movement and anti-Soviet insurgency operating in Central Asia from roughly 1916-1934.

Cheka. The first Soviet secret police, from Russian Vserossiiskaia Chrezvychainaia Komissiia (All-Russian Extraordinary Commission);

Dekhan. Peasant; from Persian.

Emir. Lit., “lord,” from Arabic; this also refers to the hereditary title of prince in Bukhara.

Ispolkom. Executive committee, from Russian ispolnitel’nyi komitet.

Jadidism. A term defining the Muslim modernist ideologies of those reformists known as Jadids in Turkey, Russia, Central Asia and elsewhere in the Muslim world in the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries; ultimately derived from Arabic usul ul-jadid (New Method), which described their focus on secular educational practices meant to provoke cultural reform and modernization of Muslim communities.


Kulak. Lit., “fist,” from Russian; in Soviet discourse: wealthy peasants portrayed as class enemies.


Millat. Nation, from Uzbek.

Ostalost’. Backwardness, from Russian.

Proizvol. Arbritrariness, from Russian.

Qazi. Judge of Islamic law, from Arabic.

Revkom. Revolutionary committee, from Russian revoliutsionnyi komitet.

Samovol’stvo. Lit., “self-will,” from Russian; in the context of this study, this term refers to an attitude of willful selfishness on behalf of Emir Alim Khan.
Sovnarkom. Council of People’s Commissars, from Russian *Sovet narodnykh komissarov*.


Ulama. Lit., “the learned ones,” from Arabic; Islamic scholars.

Waqf. Charitable land endowment usually set aside for mosques.

Watan. Homeland, from Arabic.

Zhenotdel. Women’s section of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the All-Russian Communist Party.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

Periodicals

Kommunist. Tashkent, 1925-1931.


Novyi Vostok.

Pravda. Moscow.


Za Partiu. Tashkent, 1926-1929.

Zhizn’ natsional’nosteii. Moscow, 1918-1924.

Books


B., I. “Khiva, Bukhara i sovetskii Turkestan.” Izvestiia Tsentrall’nogo ispolnitel’nogo komiteta Turkestanskoi Respubliki RSF i Tashkentskogo soveta rabochih, soldatskikh i
dekhnanskikh deputatov.


*Iubilennyi sbornik Bukharskogo Doma Prosveshcheniiia imeni I. V. Stalina v Moske*. Moscow: 1924.


---. *K istorii revoliutsii v Bukhore*. Tashkent: 1926.

*Kommunisticheskia partii Turkestania i Uzbekistana v tsifrakh (Sbornik statisticheskikh materialov, 1918-1967gg.)*. Tashkent: 1968.


*Tainy natsional’ny politiki TsK RKP: Chetvertoe soveshchanie TsK RKP s otvetstvennymi rabotnikami natsional’nykh respublik i oblastei v Moskve 9-12 iunia 1923 g. (stenograficheskii otchet)*. Edited by B. F. Sultanbekov. Moscow, 1992.


*TsK RKP(b)—VKP(b) i natsional’nyi vopros; Volume 1*. Edited by L. S. Gatagova, L. P. Kosheleva and L. A. Rogovaia. Moscow, 2005.

Articles


“Buxoro inqilob oldinda.” Hurriyat (8 March 1918).


“Instruktsiiia otdelu po Bukharskim delam.” (16 November 1918)


Ryskulov, Turar. “Iz Istorii bor’by za osvobozhdenie Vostoka” (Vosstanie kirgiz Turkestan a protiv tsarizma v 1916 g.). Novyi Vostok 6 (1924).


SECONDARY SOURCES

Books


Engelstein, Laura. *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle*


Keller, Shoshana. To Moscow, not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign against Islam in Central Asia,


**Articles**


