

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

OLD ELITES UNDER COMMUNISM: SOVIET RULE IN LENINOBOD

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY
FLORA J. ROBERTS

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

JUNE 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	iii
List of Tables	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
A Note on Transliteration	ix
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One. Noble Allies of the Revolution: Classroom to Battleground (1916-1922).	43
Chapter Two. Class Warfare: the Old Boi Network Challenged (1925-1930).....	105
Chapter Three. The Culture of Cotton Farms (1930s-1960s).....	170
Chapter Four. Purging the Elite: Politics and Lineage (1933-38)	224
Chapter Five. City on Paper: Writing Tajik in Stalinobod (1930-38)	282
Chapter Six. Islam and the <i>Asilzodagon</i> : Wartime and Postwar Leninobod	352
Chapter Seven. The Leninobodi Elite in the Postwar Period.....	402
Conclusion	464
Bibliography	472

List of Figures

Figure 1: Soviet era map of Khujand/Leninobod.	55
Figure 2: The mazar of Shaikh Muslihiddin, Khujand.	68
Figure 3: Khudoiar Khan, last Khan of Kokand.	70
Figure 4: Bashir-khon Ishoqi	93
Figure 5: Apak Khoja mazar in 1910.....	126
Figure 6: Mu'min Khojaev and friends in Moscow, 1927.....	143
Figure 7: <i>Mushfiqi</i> cover illustration.....	148
Figure 8: "Strengthen Worker Discipline On Collective Farms"	171
Figure 9: Family tree of the Khujandi doctor Akram-khon Akbarov.	173
Figure 10: "Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev, Twice Hero of Socialist Labour"	186
Figure 11: A Soviet-era shashmaqom ensemble.....	204
Figure 12: Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev chairs a meeting.	210
Figure 13: Voroshilov visits the Moscow kolkhoz.	211
Figure 14: Location of the Arbob Palace.	212
Figure 15: "Palace in the village"	215
Figure 16: The Palace of Culture on Arbob hill.	216
Figure 17: <i>Sut' delo</i> , 1970	217
Figure 18: Relief Map of Tajikistan.....	227
Figure 19: Partial family tree of Abdurahim Hojiboev.....	230
Figure 20: Nusratullo Makhsum	256
Figure 21: <i>Tokcha</i> in a traditional Khujandi home of a tura household	275
Figure 22: Illustrative connections between prominent Khujandi khoja families	281

Figure 23: Stalinobod street view, 1928.	301
Figure 24: Aerial view of central Stalinobod in the 1930s.	303
Figure 25: Lenin monument in the Central Park of Culture and Rest	304
Figure 26: The National Theater of Tajikistan	304
Figure 27: Pairav Sulaimoni (1899-1933)	308
Figure 28: Scenes from a buzkashi match	373
Figure 29- Saifiddin Osimi	412
Figure 30: Partial family tree of the Osimi family.....	418
Figure 31 - Bobojon Ghafurov.....	436
Figure 32: Mohammad Osimi	439
Figure 33: The Tajik State Medical Institute, Spring of 1949	453
Figure 34: Network of Leninobodi khoja families	471

List of Tables

Table 1 - Notable pupils of Russian-native schools in the Ferghana Valley.....	67
Table 2 – Divergent reports on the outcome of the Land and Water reform.....	122
Table 3 – Arrests made during the Ittihad-i Sharq investigation.....	243
Table 4 - Reasons for expulsion from the Tajik Communist Party	266
Table 5 - Members of the Tajik branch of the Writers' Union in 1934.....	332
Table 6 – Wartime school absenteeism	361
Table 7 - The Leninobodi Elite in Politics, 1940s-1980s	431

Acknowledgements

My thanks go first of all to my dissertation committee – to my supervisor, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and to Adeeb Khalid, to Holly Shissler and to Faith Hillis. Time and again, I left office hours with Sheila Fitzpatrick reeling with new ideas, armed with better questions and a fresh dose of inspiration: I felt free to follow my own interests, make my own choices, and felt supported in doing so – the highest possible praise for a midwife, as for a dissertation supervisor. The comparison goes no further, for Sheila Fitzpatrick is also a formidable role model, whose endless curiosity, eye for the absurd, dedication to the field and prose style I admire enormously. Holly Shissler combines kindness, wisdom and perspicacity, and Chicago would have been a far colder place but for her warm encouragement and friendship over the years. I owe a great intellectual debt to Adeeb Khalid, who has supported my project from the very beginning, generously shared insights and sources on the Central Asian Soviet intelligentsia, and saved me from many grievous errors (all those remaining, of course, are my own). Faith Hillis was so generous as to join my dissertation committee soon after joining the faculty at University of Chicago, and her fresh perspective and attentive feedback greatly improved my project. I also owe a particular debt of gratitude to those who supported the language acquisition endeavors which made this project possible: to Valentina Pichugina for Russian, to John Woods for Tajik, and to Kagan Arik domla for Uzbek – thank you for putting up with my questions and foibles over many years. For language lessons in Khuan, my gratitude goes to the gracious and erudite Bakhtiyor Olimov.

Thank you to my comrades in arms in the University of Chicago's Soviet History program – I benefited greatly from the advice and support of those further ahead in the program than I was, who showed me how varied and fulfilling the life paths of *Chicagtsy* could be. I am

particularly grateful to Alen Barenburg, for welcoming me when I first arrived on campus, and to Rachel Applebaum, for her friendship, may our paths continue to cross! Graduate school would have been lonelier and far less fun without the sharp wit and comradeship of Leah Goldman, founder of the lunching loonies. I am grateful to Kristy Ironside, for reading chapter drafts, sharing archival tips and pointing out the best pirozhki, and to Natalie Belsky, ditto for all of the above, and for showing me how Muscovites do theatre, and Russian Jews do Thanksgiving. The camaraderie of fellow Central Asianists on campus was particularly precious – my thanks go to Sam Hodgkin, founding genius of the occasional Hyde Park musha'ira, to Brinton Ahlin and to Claire Roosien, in solidarity and with hugs.

I benefited enormously from feedback given to drafts of my dissertation chapters presented at various workshops at the University of Chicago over the years: at the Russian History workshop, the Modern Europe workshop and MEHAT, the Middle East History and Theory workshop. The Russian history kruzhok founded by Faith Hillis proved an extraordinarily helpful and inspiring sounding board for another dissertation chapter, as did the Midwest Russian History workshop, and the summer laboratory on Eurasia and the FSU organised by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign – I thank all participants for their thoughtful feedback and support over the years. While in Chicago, my research benefitted enormously from the rich collections of the Regenstein Library, in particular thanks to the peerless bibliographic support offered unstintingly by June Pachuta Farris, more supportive of my thirst for Tajik provincial newspapers than I would have thought possible.

My field research in Tajikistan would not have been possible without the help and advice of countless friends and colleagues there – indeed, this dissertation would not exist if the people of the Ferghana Valley had not been so gracious and kind in sharing their homes, stories and

lives with me, giving me ample proof of their boundless *mehmondusti* over the years. Many are the Khujandis whose assistance I most gratefully acknowledge without naming here – my oral history respondents remain anonymous, but will always have my gratitude. Among the many dear friends who brightened my days in Khujand I thank Prof Nazira Toshmatova, Ilhom Gulomjanov and all my other former colleagues at ACTED Khujand, Abdurashid Ochilov, Munisa Vahobova, Farzona, Nigina, Valentina and Rex, and of course my tireless research assistants, Farangis and Dildor. I am grateful to the faculty and dean for the warm welcome I received at the Department of History at Khujand State University, and to Latofat Kenjaeva of Dushanbe for her generous gifts of books. I have a great debt of thanks to several scholars who share my interest in Khujand – to Abdullo Mirbabaev, for his patience in answering my elementary questions, to JoAnn Gross, and to Stephane Dudoignon, for their encouragement and support, and above all to Marianne Kamp, who took me with her to visit the Kalandarkhona mentioned in my final chapter, and provided me the wherewithal for the crash course in oral history methods that greatly enriched this project.

I am fortunate in having luminous examples of scholarship within my own family: my courageous and loving Nonna read History at Oxford, as did my mother, and did her very best to set a high standard in scholarship as in fun, and made sure that I did not fail Latin again. My mother, who has sometimes thought life too short for fiction (but never for laughter), and my erudite father, peerless editor and matchless storyteller who taught me to never go anywhere without a book, both read and improved my dissertation. Thank you to my children for keeping me sane and making me laugh every day, and to my husband Ed, for everything. Come te nessuno mai.

A Note on Transliteration

Sources used for this dissertation include Tajik language materials written in three scripts (Arabic, Latin and Cyrillic), as well as Russian language sources, which makes complete consistency in transliteration hard to achieve. The range of orthographies possible for a single word transliterated from different scripts is quite wide. For Russian, I have employed the standard Library of Congress transliteration system. The matter of Tajik transliteration is more complicated, in part because the decision to follow Tajik orthographic conventions, which were developed in the Soviet period to heighten regional differences in pronunciation, brings with it the danger of rendering some words less recognizable to speakers of other forms of Persian. This means, for instance, that the letter “o” is used to represent the long “ā” in Persian, as in *khona* (for *khāneh*). I can only hope that those who may be irked by the decisions I have taken do not feel that these detract from the value of the work as a whole.

The transliteration system followed in this dissertation is guided for the most part by the orthographic conventions of contemporary Tajik, which has used the Cyrillic script since 1940. In transliterating from Cyrillic script Tajik, I have devised a modified form of the Library of Congress transliteration system, without recourse to special characters. An unfortunate feature of the Library of Congress system is that three Tajik letters, и, ъ and Ѣ, are all represented by the letter “i”. Here, I use “i” to represent the short and long vowels и and Ѣ, but use “y” to represent ъ (as well as ы). To aid pronunciation, I have transliterated the Tajik letter ё, which is pronounced like the opening diphthong of yacht, as “yo,” as in the given name Hayot. Again to aid pronunciation, I have transliterated beginning я as “ya” rather than “ia,” as is commonly done in English with Russian words, such as Yalta. The Tajik Cyrillic alphabet uses some additional, modified letter forms (such as к, х) to represent sounds not found in Russian, such as “h” as in

happy and “j” as in jam. However, many documents and reports in Tajik were produced on Russian typewriters which lacked these special characters, which can lead to some confusion and many variant spellings. At the risk of being repetitive, I have frequently signaled variant spellings in the footnotes.

On proper nouns, names and titles

Many citizens of the Tajik SSR used different forms of their own names in different contexts, and there were also changes in orthography over time, and from one generation to another. I have adopted the contemporary Tajik form as a general rule (for instance, Abdurahim Hojiboev rather than Abdurakhim Khodzhibaev), except for those who consistently used the Russian form of their name, such as in the case of Abdurahim Hojiboev’s daughter, Baroat Khodzhibaeva, who has many Russian-language publications to her credit under that name.

As is commonly done in English translations from the Persian, I have used a dash to mark the *izofat*, as in Makhdum-i A’zam. This does not affect the transliteration, as Tajik, unlike Farsi, represents all vowels. For the sake of readability, I have also used a dash to separate honorific prefixes, such as say[y]id-, and suffixes, such as -khon. from the given name to which they are attached. I follow Tajik orthography for loan words from Arabic and Turkic languages, aside for the exceptions listed below.

Regarding titles, I have used the more recognizable English form sayyid, rather than sayid, which would be the result of following the transliteration system outlined above, because the word refers to a group found in Muslim populations throughout the world, subject of an extensive literature. Where Sayyid is used as a given name, I have followed the orthography of the source, with the variant in brackets: say[y]id. On the other hand, I have preferred the standard LC Tajik transliteration for Hoji, instead of the more common English form Hajji (for someone

who has performed the Hajj), because in my dissertation Hoji appears most often as a given name. Likewise, I have followed the Tajik transliteration system to render “shaykh” rather than the more recognizable English form “sheikh,” on account of the regional specificity of the way the word is used in Tajikistan.

Finally, I follow many others in using the most common English spellings for Central Asian towns such as Tashkent (not Toshqand), Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khujand.

Tajik		English		Tajik		English	
Capital	Small	Capital	Small	Capital	Small	Capital	Small
A	a	A	a	У	у	U	u
Б	б	B	b	Ц	ц	TS	ts
В	в	V	v	Ф	ф	F	f
Г	г	G	g	X	x	Kh	kh
Д	д	D	d	Ч	ч	Ch	ch
E	e	E	e	Ш	ш	Sh	sh
Ё	ё	Yo	yo	Щ	щ	Shch	shch
Ж	ж	Zh	zh	Ъ			'
З	з	Z	z	Ы			y
И	и	I	i	Э	э	E	e
Й	й	I	i	Ю	ю	Iu	iu
K	k	K	k	Я	я	Ia (Ya)	ia (ya)
Л	л	L	l	Ғ	ғ	Gh	gh
M	м	M	m	Ү	ү		y (not “i”)
H	н	N	n	Қ	қ	Q	q
O	o	O	o	Ү	ү	U	u
П	п	P	p	Ҳ	ҳ	H	h
P	p	R	r	Ҷ	ҷ	J	j
C	c	S	s				
T	т	T	t				

Introduction

In April 2015, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Tajikistan proposed to ban the use of family names containing honorific suffixes such as “mullo, khalifa, tura, khoja, shaikh, vali, okhun, amir, and sufi.”¹ The purported aim of this measure is to outlaw names that “divide people into classes” (*odamonro ba tabaqakoi judo menamoiad*).² It may seem rather far-fetched that the use of hereditary honorific suffixes in contemporary Tajikistan should be deemed capable of “provoking disunity.” Explanations for this, as for many other patterns underlying social dynamics in contemporary Tajikistan, are most usefully sought in Tajikistan’s Soviet past. It may seem odd that, after seventy years of ostensibly atheist, socialist rule, and a further two and a half decades of rather militantly secular, one Party rule since independence, suffixes signaling descent from Islamic notable lineages would be deemed threatening – a bone of contention worthy of legislation. In fact, as I will show, the relationship between the old, pre-revolutionary elite and the Soviet regime was far more complex and productive than might be supposed.

When the militantly atheist, socialist Russian revolution reached the Ferghana Valley in Central Asia, it encountered a profoundly alien society: deeply religious, rigidly stratified, and inflected by dynamics and tensions most Bolsheviks understood nothing of. I found that, surprisingly, many of the first local recruits to the Bolshevik party came not from any putative native proletariat, but from the families of Islamic notables, or *asilzodagon*, that for centuries had

¹ The same law also proposed to ban “surnames based on the names of animals and birds,” on the ground that they offend human dignity. The proposal is expected to be signed into law by President Rahmon in 2016. Source: <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-ban-arabic-names-marriage-between-cousins/27486012.html>

² Mirzonabii Kholiqzod, “Tarhe ziddi nomhoi noloq va ‘tura’-vu ‘mullo’-yu ‘khuja’,” *Ozodi* 13 April 2015, accessed online at <http://www.ruzgor.tj/ijtimo/12038-tarhe-ziddi-nomhoi-noloq-va-tura-vu-mullo-yu-khuja.html>

formed the social and political elite across much of Central Asia. Many Islamic notables became Communists and served the state loyally for decades, while others rejected the new system and persisted – as far as possible – in their traditional occupations as religious leaders and scholars, guardians of shrines and mosque complexes. From both these camps, many died in the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. I argue, however, that those purges – profoundly traumatic though they were – did not mark an end to the prestige of Islamic notables: in the post-Stalin period they underwent a remarkable resurgence.

My dissertation explores the ways in which the prestige, status and identity of local families of Islamic notables interacted with the project of Socialist construction, charting many ways in which *asilzodagon* identity was both shaped by and contributed to the norms and codes of Tajik soviet society and culture. One of the central questions with which my dissertation wrestles is the effects of social and cultural capital, both on school performance, and on subsequent career trajectories, under conditions of socialism.

The interplay between ruptures and continuities is an important theme, and those found from the vantage point of Leninobod province are not those that previous research might have led one to expect. The revolutions of 1917, followed by civil war and famine in Central Asia, did constitute an important rupture, but not in the sense that might be expected. The old social elite was not swept away by the gradual onset of Stalinism, but rather it was profoundly transformed. Even the deadly purges of the late thirties, which reaped many victims among every social, ethnic or professional group with the Soviet Union, do not appear, on balance, to have disproportionately affected Tajiks or Uzbeks of patrician status, nor were they successful in striking a decisive blow against saintly lineages or the heirs of the old elite, however defined. The generation whose parents had been purged in the 1930s, however, emerged from the ordeal

and from that of the Second World War profoundly transformed. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, both the political and cultural life in the Tajik Republic was marked by a pronounced dominance of Leninobodi elites. This Leninobodi ascendancy, which lasted until the Tajik Civil War of the 1990s, has often been remarked upon,³ but rarely, if at all, has it been linked to the continuing survival of pre-revolutionary elite lineages and their enduring status and influence.

By maintaining focus on a genealogically defined social group hailing from a single urban area in the Tajik Ferghana Valley – albeit one with close ties to *asilzodagon* in other cities of the region – I hope to achieve several goals. Firstly, I share with practitioners of microhistory a distrust of the sweeping generalizations that the vast expanses of the Eurasian steppe seem to invite: I do not believe that a single, unified account of Stalinism, or even collectivization, across Central Asia as a whole is possible or desirable. My narrower geographic focus allows me to trace social changes over several generations in greater detail than would otherwise have been possible. Furthermore, by focusing on Leninobod, an amphibian, multiethnic city which passed peacefully from the Uzbek to the Tajik SSRs at the close of the 1920s, I seek to avoid the pitfalls of national histories, which are particularly unsuited to dealing with a socio-cultural ecosystem like that of the Ferghana Valley, which was divided between three republics following intense and fraught negotiations in the 1920s and 1930s.

The historian Devin deWeese has argued that the study of the *khoja* phenomenon – and, by extension, I submit, that of *asilzodagon* lineages more broadly, promotes a more nuanced and integral understanding of Central Asian social history, crucial to the understanding of the

³ Olivier Roy is among those who consider the ascendancy of the Leninobodi elite to have been inaugurated by Bobojon Ghafurov, who was the First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party between 1946 and 1956. Roy also attributes the riots of February 1990, which preceded the outbreak of the Tajik Civil War, to “the fact that the Leninabad faction exercised a monopoly of political power.” See Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 113, 139. See also: Kirill Nourzhanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (Australian National University E Press, 2013), 95 and ff.

emergence of nations in the region. Khoja communities cut across the territorial borders, that became international borders between sovereign states only after the fall of the USSR. Khojas also elide other conceptual boundaries that have been proven unproductive by recent Central Asian historiography, “whether borders of language and ‘ethnicity’ that somewhat artificially divided Central Asian peoples into Soviet nations, borders between rural and urban populations, between traditionally nomadic and sedentary groups, and between supposedly ‘less Muslim’ and ‘more Muslim’ peoples.”⁴ These are the merits I see in focusing on a relatively small group of influential families in a single town over the course of a half century.

In the present work, my task is to assess the success of a certain genealogically defined social group in navigating the conditions of Soviet rule. I argue that the *asilzodagon* of Khujand survived Stalinism as a group, and that a portion of them even thrived and prospered under Soviet conditions. But what does survival mean in this context? What does it mean to thrive, and by what means did the *asilzodagon* succeed in perpetuating their status? Given that I also argue that the values of the postwar generation of urban *asilzodagon* were profoundly transformed by Stalinism, and thus differed substantially from those of their parents’ and grandparents’ generation, how does this complicate or alter the notion of their survival as a group? Beyond the mere demographic fact of the endurance of certain lineages and descent groups, what is the content and significance of survival as a group, and how does it operate?

There is no doubt that Stalinism caused huge numbers of premature deaths in Khujand district, but it is less clear that the pre-revolutionary elite bore the brunt of the violence. Even the

⁴ Devin DeWeese, “The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19th-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31/4 (1999), 523. See also Sergei Abashin, translated by Caroline Humphrey, “[Gellner, the ‘Saints’ and Central Asia: between Islam and Nationalism](#),” *Inner Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Dedicated to Andre Grunder Frank (1929-2005) (2005), 70-71.

most lethal challenge to the physical survival of the *asilzodagon* – the Stalinist purges of 1936-38 – was ultimately overcome by the strikingly gendered implementation of the various waves of repression: against bourgeois nationalists, Islamic clerics, Sufis, wreckers, and all those labelled traitors for whatever reason. Even when lineage was named as a specific reason leading to arrest and prosecution, the vast majority of those arrested were men, while the women in their households were arrested for relatively brief periods, or not at all. Many women were thus able to safeguard their ancestral legacy throughout even the darkest years of Stalinism, hiding precious manuscripts and documents – when necessary, even by wrapping the family’s dynastic documentation (*shajara*) in linen around their bodies.⁵ In this and many other instances, women’s physical survival not only greatly increased their children’s odds of survival, but played a crucial role in preserving family histories going back many generations, and passing on to the next generation a code of conduct and norms considered vital to their family’s identity.

Beyond the matter of mere physical survival, the role played by cultural and social capital, and the *asilzodagon*’s success in transmitting these forms of symbolic capital on to the next generation, is a crucial component of my argument. In an extremely influential 1986 essay on the forms of capital, Bourdieu theorized that capital, which can take various forms, has an innate tendency to persist. The processes highlighted by Bourdieu by which the most material types of capital “can present themselves in the immaterial form of cultural capital or social capital”⁶ are helpful in understanding how the prestige and influence of the *asilzodagon* were

⁵ One instance of wearing a shajara document is reported by Ashirbek Muminov, who writes “Šābir-Khwāja Sayyid-Khwājayeve [Khoja / Khojaev] received the document from his mother. His father Sayyid-Khwāja (died in April 17, 1967), had suffered repression as an observant Muslim. His mother wrapped the document up in its cloth cover and preserved it by keeping it next to her body.” Source: Ashirbek Muminov, “A Holy Place and Its Shaykh in the XIX Century History of Southern Kazakhstan,” in Sugawara Jun and Rahile Dawut (editors), *Mazar: Study of Islamic Sacred Sites in Central Eurasia*, (Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Press, 2016), 142.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, translated by Richard Nice, “The forms of capital,” in J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, Greenwood: 1986), 241-258.

able to endure even after the material bases for their prosperity and power had been greatly curtailed by an openly hostile state.

Although not all the *asilzodagon* of Khujand were immediately, or irreversibly, pauperized by the onset of Stalinism, the challenges and risks encountered in maintaining control of their economic capital were certainly much increased. In the case of Bourdieu's France, transformations between the three main forms of capital which he identifies – economic, social, and cultural – take place by and large with the (often tacit) support of state and bureaucracy. The class warfare waged by the Soviet state, on the other hand, posed a direct challenge to such exchanges while also – in moving to divest the former elite of its financial assets – greatly increasing the value and importance to the *asilzodagon* of their social and cultural capital.

Before 1917, the *asilzodagon* possessed ample stores of cultural capital in all three forms described by Bourdieu: in the *embodied* state, “in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body” (for the *asilzodagon* these would include the high value placed on knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, Persian poetry, horsemanship, shashmaqom, hunting, norms of female seclusion, certain habits of dress, and so forth), “in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods” (in our case books and manuscripts, musical instruments, silk embroidery), and “in the *institutionalized* state,” primarily in the form of the madrasa system.⁷

My interest in cultural capital is as a means to explain how the *asilzodagon* of Khujand, whose elite status seemed poised to incur the enmity of the Soviet regime, were nonetheless able to navigate the extreme social and economic upheavals that Stalinism entailed without

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, “The forms of capital,” *ibid.*

substantial losses to their status or prestige.⁸ For Bourdieu, cultural capital began as a theoretical hypothesis to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children from different social classes in France: he did this by relating academic success (which, overall, correlates well with professional success thereafter) to the uneven distribution of cultural capital between classes. Could an uneven distribution of cultural capital also account for the educational and professional successes of the *asilzodagon*, even after the madrasa system – which had performed the function of perpetuating the social and cultural elite – was replaced by a radically secular, universal system of primary education? I argue that cultural capital did indeed play a key role, in no small part thanks to the active role taken by many urban *asilzodagon*, not only in Khujand but also in Samarkand, Bukhara and elsewhere, in staffing and shaping the Soviet school system.

The interest taken by large numbers of *asilzodagon* in the establishment of a universal, secular school system contributed in no small part to the relatively early and successful establishment of Soviet schools in the Ferghana Valley (though such schools by no means reached all children), but the consequences of their involvement for the *asilzodagon* as a group were no less momentous. Although the *asilzodagon* who moved swiftly into careers in the Party and state apparatus may initially have exerted a more visible influence on public life, and exerted power in more obvious ways, their cohort was eventually thoroughly purged, and it was arguably educators who more profoundly shaped the landscape of postwar Tajikistan, through their pupils.

The *asilzodagon*'s participation in the shaping of the first system of universal primary education positioned them as the arbiters of value for the country's first "truly Soviet" generation

⁸ There is an important distinction to be drawn between two broad camps (or, more accurately, a range of attitudes along a spectrum) among the *asilzodagon* of Khujand that emerged in the years following the Bolshevik seizure of power: to one side those who more or less willingly embraced Soviet rule, and actively sought accommodation with it, and to the other those whose attitude remained antagonistic, who eschewed contacts with the state and Party organs as far as possible, and who remained invested in their traditional sources of social and cultural capital.

– ensuring that the qualities and merits of those whose education took place entirely after the establishment of Soviet power, and whose careers would reach their apex in the postwar war decade, would in many cases be assessed and judged by members of hereditary status groups. Those whose influence on the political and cultural life of the Tajik republic in the postwar period would be most determinant – Bobojon Ghafurov, Mohammad Osimi, Jabbor Rasulov, Zikrullo Khojaev, Yusufkhon Ishoqi, and others – were all educated, formed and promoted by patrician teachers who, consciously or otherwise, valued in others an appreciation of the values they themselves considered to be constitutive of a meritorious elite.

One of the winning qualities of cultural capital is that its transmission is so well hidden, which makes it hard to discern even for those with a vested interest in levelling the playing field or indeed, in the case of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, actively discriminating on the basis of social origin. Cultural capital is transmitted in the home, away from public scrutiny, and its effects are compounded when schools obscure the considerable parental investments in time and resources that cultural capital represents, by labelling them as talent or natural ability. Thus the education system – the Soviet, no less than that of republican France – can be seen as contributing, however unwittingly, “to the reproduction of the social structure, by sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital.”⁹ This can be seen as an unintended consequence of the Bolshevik aim of building a modern state with a literate, politically conscious citizenry – in which a system of universal primary schooling would function as a crucial means for determining rank and preparing those deemed deserving for positions of responsibility. The key positions assumed by the *asilzodagon* in Soviet schools of the 1920s and 1930s, however, allowed them to preserve their gatekeeping role. This frequently resulted in the promotion and

⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The forms of capital,” *ibid.*

advancement of the next generation of *asilzodagon*, but not because notable educators were maliciously, or even consciously, subverting the aims of Soviet schooling. On the contrary: the evidence of memoirs suggests that many believed in the system and considered it to be meritocratic. It is not unusual for cultural capital and its effects to be invisible to its bearers.

The *asilzodagon* who were such a visible presence in primary education in the early years of Soviet rule did not necessarily remain there, but moved on in many cases to higher status occupations when these became available: thus, the postwar period is characterized by the preponderant presence of notable families in fields such as academia, law, and medicine.

In Bourdieu's view, cultural capital can be acquired, often quite unconsciously, in the home, but unlike economic capital it cannot be accumulated, and its hereditary transmission depends on a certain effort being expended by the younger generation. Thus, it "manages to combine the prestige of innate property with the merits of acquisition." Further, "because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital" – that is, to be unrecognized as capital, but instead acknowledged as "as legitimate competence."¹⁰ The cultural competence of the *asilzodagon* – whose literacy once enjoyed great scarcity value, and conferred distinction – continued to be valued long after the vast majority of madrasas in the region were shuttered, while they continued to see themselves as the cultural and moral arbiters of their communities.

While my argument stresses the importance of cultural capital and its transmission, the profound transformation undergone by many members of an elite once defined in purely Islamic terms is also an important motif. Although members of the first and second postwar generation of *asilzodagon* (whose careers launched respectively in the immediate postwar years, and in the

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, "The forms of capital," *ibid.*

1960s) would, in certain contexts emphasize continuity with the past and their loyalty to the values of their forbears, ruptures were also very much in evidence. For many of the *asilzodagon* who enjoyed successful careers in a stridently secular society, Islam remained an important marker of identity, but played a markedly diminished role in everyday life. Observance of many tenets of the faith, including circumcision, fasting during Ramadan, continued but was largely delegated: to women who did not work outside the home, and to the elderly, while others were sharply curtailed, or foregone entirely for years at a time, such as the five daily prayers.¹¹ Once the visibility of Islam increased again in the late Soviet period, there were many who felt the need to reach out for new sources of information on their heritage, having lost the opportunity to inherit knowledge from the older generations of their families.

When one considers the interplay between the state and the social elite in the transmission of cultural capital as theorized by Bourdieu, as applied to the Tajik Soviet case, an interesting feature emerges. Although the “sovietised” wing of the *asilzodagon* enjoyed significant recognition, prominent careers and material benefits from the Soviet state, their status as a group never wholly depended on the state, as the source of their prestige continued, in part, to transcend and predate the state. This surely helps to explain their success and dominance in different fields, and the stability of their prestige over time: not only did they have capital that the state could not but value, but in the eyes of their communities, their status was, to a degree, impervious to regime change.

The other form of capital that the *asilzodagon* proved adept at maintaining, inheriting and profiting from was the strength of their networks, both horizontal and vertical, or, in other words, social capital. Following Bourdieu’s definition of social capital, I argue that a “durable network

¹¹ See for example “Islam as National Heritage” in Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 84-115.

of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” was an important element of the *asilzodagon*’s success and adaptability. Membership of a group, in other words, provides “its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital.”¹² Like cultural capital, social capital can also be acquired by means of economic capital, in exchanges that to outsiders or concerned state parties may seem wasteful or reckless. Indeed, both during Soviet times and since independence, the state has often taken steps to curtail conspicuous expenditure on life-cycle events and ritual celebrations which fulfill a valued function of shoring up social capital, but can therefore also correctly be perceived as a challenge to an institutionalised system of power.

Finally, although Bourdieu did not concern himself directly with the transmission of capital under conditions of state socialism, his observations on the effect of state-driven efforts to weaken the elite’s dominance through legislation, to limit its ability to transmit power and privileges by direct means, are nonetheless quite apt. In such a scenario, in which the possibilities of inheriting economic capital are diminished or curtailed, “the holders of capital have an ever greater interest in resorting to reproduction strategies capable of ensuring better-disguised transmission, but at the cost of greater loss of capital, by exploiting the convertibility of the types of capital. Thus the more the official transmission of capital is prevented or hindered, the more the effects of the clandestine circulation of capital in the form of cultural capital become determinant in the reproduction of the social structure.”¹³

Historiography

¹² Pierre Bourdieu, “The forms of capital,” *ibid.*

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, “The forms of capital,” *ibid.*

My dissertation joins a small but growing body of scholarship evaluating the extent of Sovietisation in Central Asia, and intersects with recent scholarship on the formation of a Central Asian Soviet intelligentsia,¹⁴ the Soviet secularization project,¹⁵ and the resilience or otherwise of Islam in the region – to the extent that the prestige of the *asilzodagon* was predicated on Islamic values, and on the global phenomenon of *sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet Mohammad) in Islamic societies.

In Soviet Central Asian historiography, a focus on the dynamics and tensions *within* local communities, rather than on Moscow's policies in the region, or the dynamic between Russians and locals (both of which are secondary in my account), is still a relatively recent development. As Isabelle Ohayon has argued, one of the effects of this approach is that allows one to decenter the Russian experience of the Soviet period, foreground the internal diversity of the USSR and put the soundness of an “imperial model” to the test.¹⁶ For many years, Soviet historians' view of the revolution was that the Russians had brought revolution to Central Asia, where the population had experienced events passively, too alienated from the remote colonial metropole to perceive the significance of the events taking place, and too weak or divided to wield significant agency. More recently, historians focused on Uzbekistan have challenged this account: Adeeb Khalid has argued that the two revolutions of 1917 had an electrifying effect on the local intelligentsia and elites, and soon intensified divisions and rivalries between conservative and progressive voices.¹⁷

¹⁴ See for instance Adeeb Khalid's books: *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (University of California Press, 2007), *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

¹⁵ See for instance Hélène Thibault, “The Soviet Secularization Project in Central Asia: Accommodation and Institutional Legacies,” *Eurostudia*, vol. 10, N.1 (2015), 11-31.

¹⁶ Isabelle Ohayon, “Réformes et société en Asie Centrale Tsariste et Soviétique,” introduction to *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol. 49, No.1 (Jan-Mar. 2008), 75-78.

¹⁷ Adeeb Khalid, “1917: The Moment of Truth” (chapter 8) and “Epilogue” in *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (University of California Press, 1998); “The Moment of Opportunity,” chapter 2

Following on to some extent from these diverging perspectives on the revolution in Central Asia, historians have offered up different interpretations of the degree of Sovietisation achieved (or perpetrated) in the region in the course of the interwar period. A crucial factor affecting interpretation offered appears to be the source languages deployed and the region of focus, and perhaps it is indeed time, as Paolo Sartori has proposed, to abandon the pretense of constructing a unitary narrative for Central Asia as a whole.¹⁸

On Empire, and colonies

Some have seen the Central Asian nations during the Soviet period as virtual colonies whose sole agency consisted in resisting to a greater or lesser extent the policies forged in Moscow. The colony question is closely related to that of the center's relationship with the periphery: did Central Asia continue to function as a colony within the Soviet Union, was the Soviet Union an Empire? Under what definition of Empire might the Soviet Union be considered one? Douglas Northrop, for example, is among those who considers the USSR to have been a colonial empire very much in the mould of its Tsarist predecessor.¹⁹ The vantage point of the Khujandi intelligentsia inclines me rather to the opposite view, espoused by Adeeb Khalid and others, that the nature of the Soviet project, and its interpretation and reception among its supposedly colonized citizens, distinguishes it markedly from European colonial empires such as those of Britain and France.²⁰

in *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015). ON the revolution, see also Marco Buttino, *La rivoluzione capovolta: l'Asia centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS* (Napoli: L'ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003).

¹⁸ Paolo Sartori, "Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: A View from Central Asia," *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010), 315-334.

¹⁹ Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

²⁰ Adeeb Khalid, "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer, 2006), 231-251.

On the one hand, Central Asians were never offered a meaningful opportunity to choose whether or not to join the Soviet project: when a small group of rather isolated members of the local intelligentsia gathered in Kokand to explore the idea of Muslim self-determination, that experiment was promptly snuffed out by the Red Army.²¹ On the other hand, policies of female emancipation, indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) and related efforts at “decolonization” appear to forestall an unequivocal, straightforward answer to the question of the colonial character of the Soviet experience in Central Asia. Strikingly, several recent studies have addressed the intent and effects of Soviet policies of “decolonization” while relying exclusively on sources in Russian, the colonial language.²² Meanwhile, recent studies relying on Central Asian sources and archives have provided some support for the anti-colonial character of some of the interwar policies developed in Moscow, not only in terms of their intent but also that of their reception and interpretation by local communities.²³

One way of shedding light on Central Asia’s status as a colony is to ask whether the Soviet period was bad for the region as a whole. From the micro-historical vantage point adopted in this study, I have no basis to argue that the Tajik Ferghana suffered more than other parts of the Soviet Union. My argument, however, does not extend beyond the Tajik Ferghana Valley, as reasonable cases can and have been made that, for example, Kazakhstan did indeed suffer disproportionately during collectivization, relative to the bulk of the Soviet Union.²⁴

²¹ See chapter one. For a fuller treatment of the “Kokand autonomy” episode, see Adeeb Khalid, “Tashkent 1917: Muslim Politics in Revolutionary Turkestan,” *Slavic Review* Vol. 55, No. 2 (Summer, 1996), 270-296.

²² Christian Teichmann, “Canals, cotton, and the limits of de-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924–1941,” *Central Asian Survey* (December 2007) 26(4), 499–519.

²³ Ohayon, “Réformes et société en Asie Centrale Tsariste et Soviétique,” 76-77.

²⁴ See, for example, recent work conducted on the famine in Kazakhstan by Sarah Cameron, “The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934,” PhD diss., Yale University, 2010. ProQuest (AAT 3440506); Niccolo’ Pianciola, “The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4 (Fall 2001) and *Stalinismo di frontiera. Colonizzazione agricola, sterminio dei nomadi e costruzione statale in Asia Centrale (1905-1936)* [Frontier Stalinism. Agricultural Colonization, Extermination of the Nomads and State Building in Central Asia (1905-1936)] (Rome: Viella, 2009); Isabelle Ohayon, *La*

That the agency of local actors on the ground was crucial to the implementation of major policies developed by the centre has been eloquently demonstrated by historians including Marianne Kamp, for women's emancipation, and (in a separate project) collectivization in Uzbekistan, Sarah Cameron, for collectivization in the Kazakh steppe, and by Adrienne Lynn Edgar and Francine Hirsch, for the national-territorial delimitation process.²⁵ Further, Beatrice Penati has argued that the process whereby waqf endowments were nationalized was developed locally, in Ferghana, rather than in Moscow. One effect of paying close attention to voices "from below" and on the ground, in recent Central Asian historiography, as in Soviet historiography of the revisionist school, seems to be to attach greater credence to the possibility that local actors could be genuinely invested in the Soviet project, as opposed to forced into compliance by violence alone – all stick, and no carrot.

The risks for research that evaluates the impact of Stalinism in Central Asia solely through the eyes of the central state organs (a top down perspective, in other words) were pointed out decades ago by Sheila Fitzpatrick in the case of Russia: the legitimacy and stability enjoyed by the Soviet system become far harder to explain. The focus tends to be only on the victims of the purge, and not its beneficiaries.²⁶ Christian Teichmann, for example, concludes that "the aim to modernize the 'Soviet East' was implemented largely by state terror, food shortages and only very few incentives" – a roster to which he later adds "crude economic

Sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'URSS de Staline. Collectivisation et changement social (1928-1945), Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose-Institut Français d'Études sur l'Asie Centrale, 2006.

²⁵ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), and, with Russell Zanca, "Stalinism as Collectivization in Uzbekistan: The Making of Uzbek Soviet Citizens" (forthcoming in *Central Asian Survey*, 2016); Sarah Isabel Cameron, "The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934," PhD diss., Yale University, 2010. ProQuest (AAT 3440506); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

²⁶ See for instance, Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Stalin and the making of a new elite, 1929-1939," *Slavic Review* Vol. 38, No. 3 (Sep., 1979), 377-402.

surveillance, and terror.” Readers are not surprised when this toolkit is found to have been inadequate to the task, such that by the 1930s, “the Bolshevik de-colonization mission seemed to produce nothing more than frustrating outcomes, failures and deficiencies.”²⁷ The current project, conversely, finds evidence from among the ranks of the *Khujandi vydvizhentsy* (those promoted from below, beneficiaries of affirmative action policies), that they understood the opportunities offered to them as intended to atone for the evils of colonialism, and accepted them as such, frequently offering the regime lifelong loyalty in return.²⁸

Secularization and Islam in Soviet Central Asia

As has by now become clear, mine is not a story of successful resistance to cultural change, and the changes brought by gradual Sovietisation had a huge impact on the status of Islam in the region. There has been some debate in recent years over the nature and content of the Muslim identity of the populations in Central Asia during the Soviet period. Different understandings of what describing a population as “Muslim” might entail, are at least partially responsible for diverging assessments of the population’s perceived attachment to Islam. Paolo Sartori, for instance, argues that Islam “remained a source of knowledge, ethics, morality and spirituality for many (*but by no means all*) Muslims in the USSR [emphasis added].”²⁹ This raises the question of what it was that makes it appropriate to designate the others, for whom Islam may not (or no longer) have been a “source of knowledge, ethics, morality or spirituality,”

²⁷ Christian Teichmann, “Canals, cotton, and the limits of de-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924–1941.” *Central Asian Survey* (December 2007) Vol. 26(4), 514.

²⁸ Beatrice Penati has made a similar point, in contrasting the historiography of Central Asia with that of Soviet Russia: “In particular, historiography has not yet gauged and explained the eagerness of some to join the system, reap the fruits of ideological credibility and political loyalty, and hope for rewards in the form of investments or public expenditure. To focus on consensus does not mean to deny the violence, resistance, and repression, which formed an integral part of Soviet rule at the time. Source: Beatrice Penati, “On the Local Origins of the Soviet Attack on “Religious” Waqf in the Uzbek SSR (1927), in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, tomus 36, 39–72.

²⁹ Paolo Sartori, “Towards a History of the Muslims’ Soviet Union: A View from Central Asia,” *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010), 322.

as Muslims at all. Unless faced with direct evidence of individuals describing themselves as both Muslim and atheist, a Muslim identity should probably not be assumed – on the bases of ethnicity or nationality – for those who identify as atheist.

Central Asian Communists might well be atheists, but it needed hardly be added that membership of the Communist Party did not correlate with atheism, or even any lapse in Muslim belief or practice. Here too, I concur with Adeeb Khalid, who argues that “for the vast majority of Central Asians, being Muslim was not repugnant to being Soviet.”³⁰ In the Central Asian context, “Muslim Communists” has often used as a means of identifying local Communists, an expression to which the usual counterpart is European or Russian Communists – and not Judeo-Christian Communists, which would perhaps be more consistent. There were, of course, many instances of individuals who joined the Tajik Communist Party and continued to think of themselves as Muslim, although for the generation coming of age in the 1950s, this Muslim identity carried rather different implications than it had for their parents and grandparents’ generations. I have seen no evidence to suggest that identifying as Muslim necessarily had an “othering” effect on Central Asian communists, or created any insurmountable sense of alienation from the main body of Soviet communists.

Elite lineage and genealogy in Central Asia

The niche occupied in Soviet society by elite lineages is alluded to or described in tantalising brevity in several monographs on Central Asian history and society published in recent years, and it is to these authors in part that I owe my interest in the topic. There is also a relatively well developed field of studies in sayyidology, or sacralised descent groups across the Muslim world, which allows for some comparative analysis.

³⁰ Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, 85.

Several of the pro-Soviet protagonists in Marianne Kamp's book *The New Woman in Uzbekistan* are described as coming "from the *ziyolilar*, the traditional intelligentsia of Central Asia" – within this group, several also have contacts with the Jadid movement, but how their background affects their interactions with the Soviet state or with other Uzbeks is not a focus for this author.³¹ Isabelle Ohayon has written on the intersection between lineage and the construction of socialism in Kyrgyzstan, and charted the efforts expended (in large part by European Communists) in documenting, disrupting and undermining the role of lineage among the predominantly nomadic population. The perceived threat, in the eyes of the secret police, is that alliances based on shared descent would make a mockery of the Soviet regime's attempts to distance itself from Tsarist-era practices of coopting local elites and select their own allies from the local population for promotion. Ohayon does not, however, discuss the particular status conferred by *khoja* identity, which probably reflects the different concerns of Bolsheviks operating in nomadic, as opposed to settled and urban, communities, and serves as a useful reminder that the Soviet state felt the threat of nepotism to extend beyond elite lineages.³²

Adeeb Khalid's *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform* prompted me to picture the old elite I wish to study as operating in a social "field" – as theorized by Bourdieu, and deploying a number of markers of status and prestige, including wealth but also "education, comportment, possession of culturally valued knowledge, and claims to august lineage" to navigate social interactions and maintain their position in society.³³ Khalid's emphasis on elite competition as a lens through which to view the political jockeying of 1917 (the end point of his narrative) prompted my

³¹ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (University of Washington Press 2006).

³² Isabelle Ohayon, "Lignages et pouvoirs locaux: L'indigénisation au Kirghizstan soviétique (années 1920-1930)," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 2008), 145-182.

³³ Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 6.

investigation into how this game played out thereafter, when the stakes were heightened yet further – and the rules changed radically – but to do so in a single town, the better to map links of support that endured, and fault lines that appeared within the traditional elite.

Olivier Roy's *The New Central Asia* was the first book on the region that I read on arriving in Tajikistan in 2003, and I have been in dialogue with the book since then – even as the narrative of Sovietisation that he presents has been contested and expanded by recent archival-based scholarship.³⁴ Roy's emphasis on continuities between Tsarist and Soviet policies in the region, in the religious as in the economic realm, and his characterisation of the process of border delimitation and nation-building as the product of a "divide and rule" approach have likewise been superseded. However, it was Roy, one of relatively few scholars whose writings on Central Asia are based primarily on familiarity with Tajikistan rather than with its Turkic neighbours, who drew my attention to a fascinating paradox created by the Soviet project in the region. In seeking to create a new society on the ruins of the old, the Soviet system had instead succeeded in recomposing pre-existing solidarity groups "within the framework imposed by the system," while also fostering "the creation of a two-level political culture: on the one hand an appearance of conformity with the social project imposed by the authorities, on the other, a subversion of the project by practices of factionalism and clientism."³⁵

My interest was piqued by the discussion of Central Asian infra-ethnic identities and solidarity groupings in the late twentieth century, in which Roy mentions what he terms "socio-religious identity references," glossed as "sayyad or descendent of the Prophet; khwaja or ashraf, kinds of caste which were until recently endogamous and combined a religious origin with a

³⁴ To give but one example, Olivier Roy's claim that Russia's Muslims (a category in which he appears to include Turkestanis) did not take sides in the October Revolution has been amply disproved by Adeeb Khalid and others.

³⁵ Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York University Press, 2000), 85.

superior socio-economic status.”³⁶ Although Roy mentions in passing that in Leninobod (Khujand), the Soviet elite was drawn from the old elite religious families, or the “ashraf,” there is no further discussion of this category in the subsequent chapter on the recomposition of solidarity groups during the Soviet period. Roy alludes to the destruction of “the traditional elite,” but gives no account of how or why the superior socio-economic status of the “ashraf” was brought to an end, if indeed it was. In a sense therefore, my project was born of a desire to amass evidence and thus document what appeared to me, in works of political science, as a promising hypothesis.

Lineage in Central Asia – pre-Soviet

My understanding of the role played by lineage in Central Asian society has greatly benefitted from the work done by specialists in earlier periods of Islamic history in the region, such as R. D. McChesney, Devin de Weese, Ashur Muminov and others. The collection of essays edited by Kazuo Morimoto *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim societies: the living links to the Prophet* explores the distinct social category formed by those who claim descent from the Mohammad in Muslim societies across the world. Most interpretations of Islam include the idea that the relatives of the Prophet must be differentiated from the rest of the population, and that they are entitled to a special love and devotion, but in other respects there have been interesting local developments that have affected the status of sayyids in different parts of the Muslim world. Morimoto provides evidence for the enduring contemporary relevance of sayyids as a distinct social category, and describes how the discipline of shairf/sayyied genealogists arose in response to a fear of imposters, which has been a constant in the history of the Prophet’s descendents for many centuries.

³⁶ Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 18.

Bridging the pre-revolutionary and Soviet periods, Jeanine Elif Dağyeli's story of two ishans, father and son, attempting to levy donations from Ferghana Valley communities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, provides a fascinating case study of how claims to sacralised descent could be negotiated, disputed and rejected. Dağyeli traces the failure of her two ishans to transform the social and symbolic capital implied by their lineage into economic prosperity, and offers a useful reminder that claims to elite status could be met with indifference or scepticism.³⁷

Stephane Dudoignon 2004 analysis of a work of local history, the *Khujandnoma* by Orifjon Yahyozod Khujandi, attests to the continued importance of sacred lineages in articulating regional and political alliances and cleavages – whatever disruptions the Soviet period might have caused.³⁸ Bruce Privratsky's anthropological study of the “Qoja [or Khoja] phenomenon” centred on the town of Turkistan, Kazakhstan, suggests many parallels with the situation in Khujand. For Privratsky, the importance of Qojas lies in their ability to provide Kazakhs an alternative route to enculturation as Muslims that proved “*substantially impervious*” to the Soviet attack on religious institutions. “Since Qoja blood had traditionally purchased high social standing and even wealth, it was natural that Qoja families would seek advancement for their children even under the Communists.”³⁹ Further useful work on saintly lineages in a Central

³⁷Jeanine Elif Dağyeli, “By Grace of Descent: A Conflict between an Ishan and Craftsmen over Donations,” *Der Islam* Bd. 88 (2012), 279–307.

³⁸ Stephane A. Dudoignon, “Local Lore, the Transmission of Learning, and Communal Identity in Late 20th Century Tajikistan: The Khujand-nāma of ‘Ārifjān Yahyāzād Khujandī,” in Stephane A. Dudoignon (ed.), *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century*. Series Islamkundliche Untersuchungen band 258 (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 2004), 213–33.

³⁹ Bruce Privratsky, “‘Turkestan Belongs to the Qojas’: Local Knowledge of a Muslim Tradition,” in Stephane A. Dudoignon (ed.), *Devout Societies v. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century*. Series Islamkundliche Untersuchungen band 258 (Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 2004), 207 (italics mine). See also: Bruce Privratsky, *Muslim Turkistan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2001).

Asian context has been published by anthropologists Sergei Abashin, John Schoeberlein and historians Devin deWeese, Bakhtiyor Bobojanov and Robert McChesney among others.⁴⁰

DeWeese sees the “khoja phenomenon” as rooted “in a notion of genealogically derived sacrality as a basis for social cohesion,” which, he argues, plays an important role in the post-Soviet nation states as it did for centuries in the pre-revolutionary period. Khojas merit our attention, he adds, in that “Through the focuses of their genealogical lore, their ties with specific shrine traditions, their historical connections with Sufi communities and hagiographical lore, and their religious functions in pre-revolutionary society, they mark a point of convergence for some of the most important religious currents of Islamic Central Asia.”⁴¹

On the basis of extensive ethnographic research conducted in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Sergei Abashin has provisionally proposed that the descendants of “saints” (in the sense employed by Gellner in 1969) fall into two broad categories, “village saints,” (quotation marks are used in the original) or those for whom “the former identity is still an important resource in local society,” and “ ‘urban saints,’ who have completely reconstructed their earlier Muslim status into a new educational, cultural and political kind of ‘capital’ linked to national identity.” The asilzodagon in the present study are all more or less urban, but I too have see the group as

⁴⁰ See for instance Abashin, S.N., Arapov, D. Yu. and N.E. Bekmakhanova (eds). *Tsentral'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii* (Series: Historia Rossica: Okrainy Rossiiskoi imperii. Novoe literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2008); S. N. Abashin and V.O. Bobrovnikov, *Podvizhniki Islama: Kul't sviatykh i sufizm v Srednei Azii i na Kavkaze* (Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2003); and S.N. Abashin's articles in *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii: Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'. Tom I*. Moscow, Vostochnaia literatura press, 2006; Bakhtiyar Babadjanov and Muzaffar Kamilov, “Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the “Great Schism” among the Muslims of Uzbekistan,” in Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao, *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*. Series: Islamic Area Studies (London, New York, Bahrain: Kegan Paul, 2001); DeWeese, Devin. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tukles and Conversion in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994; Robert McChesney, *Central Asia: foundations of change* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997). Schoeberlein-Engel, John Samuel. “Identity in Central Asia: Construction and Contention in the Conceptions of ‘Özbek,’ ‘Tajik,’ ‘Muslim,’ ‘Samarqandi,’ and Other Groups.” Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1994.

⁴¹ Devin de Weese, “The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19th-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups Linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Nov., 1999), 507-530.

falling into two broad categories based on the extent to which they engaged with and sought accommodation with the Soviet regime. Those *asilzodagon* on the “more sovietised” end of the spectrum have much in common with Abashin’s “urban saints,” while his “village saints” find close echo in other urban Khujandis who endeavoured, to the greatest extent possible, to keep the Soviet state at arm’s length.⁴²

Groupedness, collective identities and identity manipulation

A study whose influence on my topic can very readily be seen, and whose methodological approach I find particularly engaging, is Sheila Fitzpatrick’s *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia*. This collection of articles provides me with a model for investigating and charting how identities are remade in times of social upheaval and extreme uncertainty. Fitzpatrick shows how Soviet citizens, under continual prompting from the authorities who demanded the completion of “ankety” (biographical questionnaires) at every turn, forged their own autobiographies – defending, editing and revising their constructs, while at times leaping at the chance to denounce others for obfuscating their true social identities. The class labels employed by the Soviets (often particularly inappropriate to the Central Asian context) could become a matter of life and death, but were far from black and white in their application – which, as Fitzpatrick demonstrates, left plenty of scope for individual manipulation and resourcefulness.

We would expect members of the Khujandi old elite who did not actively resist Soviet power, or who somehow escaped being included among the anti-Soviet elements, to be much less readily identifiable in official Soviet records, as impolitic details of their family background would have been expediently hidden. However, when society was periodically convulsed by the

⁴² Sergei Abashin, translated by Caroline Humphrey, “Gellner, the ‘Saints’ and Central Asia: between Islam and Nationalism,” *Inner Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Dedicated to Andre Grunder Frank (1929-2005) (2005), 71.

unmasking rituals described in Fitzpatrick's *Tear off the Masks!*, no embarrassing detail could be relied upon to remain secret. During periodic party purges, incriminating evidence regarding family origin was often discussed, and could result in otherwise blameless party members being expelled – although such an outcome was not inevitable.⁴³

The Tajik nation

Finally, as to the national historiography of Tajikistan, Paul Bergne's *Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic* (2007), left unfinished at his death, is one of a small handful of monographs devoted to the history of Soviet Tajikistan.⁴⁴ Bergne's work, however, ends with the establishment of the Tajik SSR as a full republic in 1929. Rahim Masov, longtime head of the Institute of History at the Tajik Academy of Sciences, has enjoyed considerable power to shape the young nation's understanding of its Soviet past. Masov has used his platform to denounce the original sin perpetrated by the multilingual and ethnically ambiguous Central Asian intelligentsia, who failed to ensure the inclusion of the regional centres of Persian culture, Samarkand and Bukhara, in the body of the Tajik nation.⁴⁵

The bitter legacy of the civil war, rampant poverty, unemployment, organised crime, decaying state infrastructure, susceptibility to natural disasters and deepening energy crisis

⁴³ For an example of someone purged from the party following 'unmasking' as a social alien, see for example RGASPI, F. 121, op. 1, d. 327 concerning the case of Maksudov Ishankhodzha, found to be the son and nephew of "eshans" (corrected in pencil to "mullahs") – although he himself had also incriminated himself in various ways, including allegedly by teaching religion ("chisto religioznye uroki") in schools between 1921-23. In another case, the offence of belonging to a family of "clerics" was compounded by persistent drunkenness. For more on the Party purges and the unmasking of class enemies, see chapters two, four and five.

⁴⁴ Paul Bergne's *Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic* (International Library of Central Asia Studies. IB Tauris, 2007); see also Nourzhanov, Kirill and Bleuer, Christian. *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (Australian National University E Press, 2013).

⁴⁵ Rahim Masov, *Istoriia topornogo razdeleniia*. Dushanbe: Irfon press, 1991. Unsurprisingly, Masov's irredentist claims vis a vis Samarkand and Bukhara bring him into frequent and spirited exchanges with his Uzbek colleagues in the press. For recent examples, see R. Masov, "Tadzhiki nikogda ne byli odnim narodom s Uzbekami (otvet G. Khidoiatovu)," *Sadoi Tojikon*, 14 March 2015 (Accessed online at <http://sadoitojikon.com/tajiks/history/611-rmasov-tadzhiki-nikogda-ne-byli-odnim-narodom-s-uzbekami-otvet-ghidoyatovu.html>); "Akademik Rahim Masov: Balans nedrugov i druzei. Ochered' v poddannye (otvet akademiku R. Abdullaevu)," *TsentrAziia*, 13 July 2013 (accessed online at <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1373697600>)

continue to ensure that Tajikistan is of greater interest to international development organisations, political scientists and anthropologists than to historians.⁴⁶

Structure of the dissertation

Although my dissertation chapters are arranged in rough chronological sequence, with the first chapter focusing on the revolutionary years around 1917, and the last chapter dealing with the postwar period, each chapter also has a broad thematic focus, reflecting the various fields of activity in which the *asilzodagon* of Khujand were prominent at different times.

The *asilzodagon* – though a relatively homogenous, compact cohort – were already showing some signs of centrifugal drift due to widely differing worldviews and educational experiences prior to the Revolution, but the pace of change picked up dramatically thereafter. Some *asilzodagon*, traditionally trained members of the ulama, continued in their professional profiles as mudarris, qadi, shaikh or imam, some chose a life of exile, while others went undercover for as long as they were able. Some embraced the changes promised by the Bolshevik revolution, and joined the Communist Party, carrying out a wide range of Party work, from teaching school to fighting the basmachi guerrillas. Widely differing career trajectories did not, however, preclude *asilzodagon* from maintaining close contacts with those in their *avlod* (extended family, kinship group) or solidarity network.

⁴⁶ See for example Lena Jonson, *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam* (International Library of Central Asia Studies). I.B. Tauris, 2006; Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001); Martha Brill-Olcott, *Tajikistan's difficult development path* (Carnegie Endowment for Int'l Peace, 2012), Colette Harris, *Muslim youth: tensions and transitions in Tajikistan* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2006); John Heathershaw, *Post-conflict Tajikistan: the politics of peacebuilding and the emergence of legitimate order* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009); Dagikhudo Dagiev, *Regime transition in Central Asia: stateness, nationalism and political change in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013); Sophie Roche, *Domesticating youth: youth bulges and their socio-political implications in Tajikistan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

Given their traditional position in society as the educated elite, and the conscience of the community, is it not surprising that, beginning in the Revolutionary period, a relatively large number of *asilzodagon* made their careers in education, in spite of the staunchly secular curriculum that rather gradually became the norm. Education is therefore the thematic focus of the first chapter: not only due to the *asilzodagon*'s role in shaping the new educational model, but also because so many of the early recruits to the Communist Party from among the native population were products of a single school, the Russian-native school, founded and funded by the Tsarist administration.

By rushing to help establish – and shape – Soviet education in Turkestan, and later Tajikistan, *asilzodagon* educators saw themselves as promoting efforts to raise up the children of the poor and the illiterate and set them on a path to success. They also, however, consciously or unconsciously played a role in undermining these efforts, as *asilzodagon* school teachers and university professors – who would remain a prominent feature of Tajik education throughout the 70 years of Soviet rule – tended to favour and promote children of backgrounds like their own. Although the Communist Party was committed to promoting new cadres from the ranks of workers (and peasants, given Central Asia's paucity of workers), at the expense of the old social elite, these policies proved hard to implement, as the cultural and social capital of the *asilzodagon* proved a formidable challenge to affirmative action.

Although the focus of my dissertation is on the urban Islamic notables of Khujand, because the city's economy depended primarily on agriculture, and on closely connected craft industries such as weaving, the protracted efforts at (rural) land reform that eventually culminated in full out collectivization at the end of the 1920s inevitably had a profound effect on the status and material circumstances of the *asilzodagon*. Therefore, the assault on the "bai class"

(*baistvo*) and the battle for cotton are also part of my story, even though the heat of the battle can make it hard to distinguish *asilzodagon* participants, whether as perpetrators or victims of violence, from landowners and merchants of more humble background, or those labelled as class enemies out of simple malice.

The first serious attempts to shape and frame existing social tensions as class warfare took place in the 1920s, and this is the subject of the second chapter. The principal tools of class warfare – redistribution of land, punitive taxation, deprivation of voting rights and, eventually, forced collectivisation – collectively aimed to break the power of the old religious and landowning elite. Each of these policies, however, was open to interpretation and manipulation by local actors on the ground, many of whom in fact belonged to the old elite being targeted. Of the many advantages held by the *asilzodagon*, one of the most threatening in the eyes of European Communists was that termed “*gruppировshchina*,” or the tendency to form groups or factions to advance shared interests at the expense of the collective. In the 1920s, in fact, as a group the *asilzodagon* were remarkably successful at deflecting the tools of class warfare, and defining the enemy to be fought in such a way as to preserve much of their prestige and influence untouched, albeit at the cost of donating land to a collective farm or a house for use as a Soviet school.

The third chapter, Court music and Cotton Farms (1920s-1930s), charts the relatively rapid development of “millionaire” cotton kolkhozes in Leninobod district, in the immediate environs of Khujand (renamed Leninobod following a petition submitted by the chairman of a “millionaire” kolkhoz in 1936). These collective farms whose yearly income exceeded one million rubles, I argue, played a crucial role in the preservation of pre-revolutionary culture and customs, and contributed to enriching Tajik socialist culture with an infusion of cultural forms

associated with the Persian court. This was a case of old wine in new skins, but with happier results: so long as the kolkhozes fulfilled their quotas, they seem to have been remarkably safe and peaceful sites of cultural production during the deadly cycle of upheaval and repression in the 1930s. Here I expand on Olivier Roy's argument about the role played by kolkhozes in recomposing pre-existing solidarity groups within a new institutional structure.

Just as the early years of Soviet power saw the most significant and concerted period of *asilzodagon* investment in public education, the later 1920s and early 1930s saw the peak of their investment in high politics – which ended in the blood-letting of the Stalinist purges. Two chapters are devoted to the purges: one focusing on the impact on the world of the arts and journalism, which had also attracted significant numbers of high-born Khujandis, and one on the systematic purges of the upper echelons of the Party, and the equally thorough purges by descent group. A remarkable aspect of both of these rounds of purges was the extent to which they left family groups untouched, removing only the (invariably male) head of household. This, I argue, laid the ground to the remarkable resurgence and increased visibility of many *asilzodagon* lineages in the postwar period.

The fourth chapter, Purging the elite: politics and lineage (1931-38), deals with the effects of Stalin's purges on two distinct but interconnected branches of the local elite: those who had climbed the Party ranks and launched a career in politics, and those who had hitherto sought only minimal interactions with the Soviet system, and continued to occupy traditional positions in the ulama. In the first half, I focus on the so-called "Makhsum and Hojiboev affair," which ultimately led to the execution of a Khujandi khoja⁴⁷ and Tajikistan's first head of state, Abdurahim Hojiboev. This was one of the many witch hunts that sought to neutralise the

⁴⁷ Khoja is one of the honorific suffixes banned by the 2015 law, and in Khujand denotes membership in, or descent from, a Sufi dynasty. Khoja families often also claim sayyid status, meaning descent from the Prophet Mohammad.

centripetal forces feared to have been unleashed by earlier policies aimed at fostering distinct national cultures for each republic. In the latter half, we see the deadliest phase of attacks on outward manifestations of Islamic piety and an attempt to eradicate old elite families systematically, mahalla (neighbourhood) by mahalla. Although the years 1933-38 dealt a series of vicious blows against the lives and culture of the old elite, killing many and cowing many others for decades to come, I argue that the ultimate result fell short of the regime's goal of terminating the particular status and privileges enjoyed by the old elite among the local population.

Chapter five, City on Paper: writing Tajik in Stalinabad (1931-38), concerns the purges of the Writers' Union, press and theatre in the Tajik capital. In combination with the previous chapter, chapter four completes the argument that, although devastating for the traditional elite of Central Asia as for every other sector of Soviet society, the Stalinist purges did not fatally compromise the prestige of aristocratic and Islamic descent groups. Furthermore, women were far more rarely targeted than men, and, once the head of the household had been removed, the rest of the family tended to be left intact, allowing for a resurgence of many lineages in the post-Stalin era.

During the Second World War, due largely to severe shortages of manpower and logistical difficulties, conditions of virtual autarky were created across much of the Tajik republic. This allowed for an extraordinary resurgence of Islamic piety and practice, and of pre-Soviet modes of social and economic interaction, which significantly bolstered the prestige and influence of the old elite. The conditions created by the war, and the continued Islamic revival in the immediate post-war period, are the subject of the sixth chapter.

In the postwar period, the *asilzodagon* of Khujand were pre-eminent in the fields of medicine and academia, but largely avoided careers in politics. At the same time, however, the postwar period also saw the Leninobodi political elite become entrenched and, although the most politically powerful Leninobodis of the postwar period – Bobojon Ghafurov, Jabbor Rasulov, Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev, Tursunboi Uljaboev – were not themselves necessarily drawn from the ranks of the *asilzodagon*, their solidarity networks most certainly intersected with Islamic notables, whose prestige and theirs was thus enhanced, and their respective positions secured. The seventh and final chapter focuses on the next generation, the sons and daughters of the purged of '33-'37 who had careers in academia and medicine, and documents the entrenched monopoly of top party and state positions achieved by the Northern (Leninobodi) elite, which would ultimately become a precipitating factor in the Tajik Civil War (1992-97).

Although the organisation of the chapters is partly thematic, in that in each chapter I focus on a different sphere of activity in which the old elite were successful (education, the arts, politics, literature, religion, and medicine), the chronological progression allows me bring unity to the narrative by charting the fortunes of a few influential families over three generations.

The Soviet state's commitment to a class-based revolution, led by the proletariat, combined with a rapid succession of legislative measures enacted to disenfranchise the privileged and dispossess the wealthy, meant that the *asilzodagon* made every effort to disappear as a group from public discourse. In official documents, the press, secret reports, the *asilzodagon* ceased to identify themselves (or their allies) as such, and soon, unfavorable class background was only brought up to criticize, censure or punish. "Social-alien" class background became grounds for dismissal from one's place of work, party membership, and voting rights. Many people changed their names, and honorific suffixes used to distinguish the *asilzodagon*

(tura, khon, khoja, mirzo, makhsum and so on) were avoided, although sometimes such suffixes did remain as part of people's family names, which were Russianised by the addition of “-ev/-ov/ova.” In many cases, therefore, particularly with less prominent characters whose genealogy is unknown, it is hard to be positive that individuals mentioned in an archival document are, or are not, members of a specific notable descent group.

Solidarity networks formed around *asilzodagon* families certainly included “commoners,” and *asilzodagon* formed solid connections with work colleagues, neighbours, friends who were not themselves Islamic notables. For each chapter, in the fields of education, medicine, the arts and journalism, there are a few clearly marked *asilzodagon* who form the chapter's main characters, and who were often leaders in their respective fields. The chameleon-like qualities of adaptation of the *asilzodagon*, which lead them to thrive in academia, education, medicine, the arts, journalism and the law, do not always make it easy to identify them with certainty, but I have noted in each case where this is the case. The story of the *asilzodagon* of Khujand is also the story of those who wore similar paths through the vicissitudes of Stalinism and beyond: their networks of neighbors, school friends, colleagues and friends whom they relied upon and who relied on them. Had the *asilzodagon*'s solidarity not extended beyond their own narrowly defined, lineage-based circles, it is hard to imagine that they would have been as resilient, or as successful.

The linguistically amphibious attitude of the *asilzodagon* of Khujand, even as Soviet nationality policies heightened the relevance of ethnic categories often assigned based on “mother tongue,” is quite striking. Throughout the period covered by this dissertation, we will see that the principal players are often bilingual, and equally able to pursue careers in the Uzbek as in the Tajik SSR, and to pass several times from one to the other in the course of their careers.

Many Khujandi authors and journalists wrote in both Tajik and Uzbek. This phenomenon was facilitated not only by the historic bilingualism of the Khujandi population (to which the ulama added the ability to read Arabic), but also by the almost complete congruity between manifestations of Uzbek and Tajik urban culture. When the Soviet states tried to create distinct national cultures for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the attempt looked something like an operation to separate conjoined twins: the maneuver could not be carried out without considerable damage to both parties, and the results looked very similar to one another. The Uzbek national dish is the Tajik national dish, the national dress and national hats are the same; both celebrate Navruz in the same ways, share a musical tradition, a religious topography of shrines and miraculous places (located without regard for national borders), squabble over the same national heroes, and so on. In Khujand today, there is no sense in which the Uzbek population does things differently from the Tajik population; the case is very different, on the other hand, for the small Kyrgyz minority in Khujand district. Some Khujandi *asilzodagon*, finally, eschew the Turk/Tajik dichotomy altogether, and identify as Arabs by ethnicity.

Methodology and sources

Too often and for too long, Soviet Central Asia has been viewed through the quasi-exclusive lens of Moscow and the central archives, to the detriment of local voices. Empire is a dominant category within modern Central Asian studies, and yet any serious discussion of the possible colonial dimensions to the Soviet presence in Central Asia is surely hamstrung by research which considers only sources in Russian, the language of the hegemonic power. Of course, the Central Asian political and cultural elite soon acquired Russian-language skills, and after the relatively brief phase in the 1920s of affirmative action aimed at non-Russians, and

promoting the use of local languages in the various titular republics,⁴⁸ Russian assumed an increasingly dominant position in the public sphere across the Soviet Union. Fully bilingual Central Asians however, still preferred to use their mother tongue(s) in certain contexts and registers, as did those for whom Russian was the dominant language – as it was, for instance, in academic writing in many disciplines. Local and mother tongue languages predominated, by contrast, in the private, domestic sphere, and in discussing topics considered largely beyond the purview of the state (such as religion).

There are undeniably formidable bureaucratic obstacles, as well as serious logistical and security issues, in accessing many archives in Central Asia, but there are many other source categories that can be invaluable in providing local, from below perspectives to balance those provided by reports intended for consumption in Moscow. Memoirs, belles lettres, and the local press published in the titular languages of the republics, remain underutilized historical sources despite their relative ease of access, and proved invaluable in the present work. I cannot therefore share Uyama Tomohiko's surprising contention that in studying the Soviet Union, "it is more difficult for Central Eurasian specialists to make a specific contribution because of the more standardized character of state (and party) institutions and the lack of freedom of speech, which made local language sources less relevant than in the tsarist period."⁴⁹ Topics like mine, which focus on a social category and marker of identity that was always more important to native Khujandis than to Russians, are particularly reliant on local perspectives, but there are surely few

⁴⁸ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁴⁹ Uyama Tomohiko, "The Contribution of Central Eurasian Studies to Russian and (Post-) Soviet Studies and Beyond" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 16, Number 2, Spring 2015 (New Series), 336.

topics in twentieth century Central Asian history that would not benefit from greater familiarity with locally produced sources.

None of the above is intended to disparage the value of the Central Asian materials stored in Moscow archives such as RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, and formerly the Communist Party archive), GARF (State Archives of the Russian Federation), and RGANI (Russian State Archive of Recent History), which also remain underutilised relative to materials dealing with other areas of the Former Soviet Union.⁵⁰ I was also able to consult the state archives in Tajikistan, both the central branch in Dushanbe (TGA RT – Tsentralnyi Gosudarstvennyi Archiv Respublika Tadzhikistana), and in Khujand (Leninabadskii filial TGA RT), which preserves documents in Tajik and Uzbek as well as Russian. The Party archives in Tajikistan, meanwhile, appear to be completely closed to local as well as foreign scholars. The State archives are intermittently accessible, though run on such a shoestring budget that in Khujand I was often told that documents I asked for could not be found without some delay, because the relevant section of the stacks was unlit and there were no spare lightbulbs. The nature of my topic is such that archival research must per force be conducted against the grain, as for most years, *asilzodagon* do not exist as a category in soviet archives. This made gathering materials more complicated than it might have been for a group whose “groupness” was both legible and deemed relevant to the Soviet state, such as women, youth, teachers, or even “servants of a cult.” When direct references to lineage do occur in documents generated for State and Party consumption, as they do in a relatively concentrated phase in the mid to late 1930s, the

⁵⁰ Sergey Abashin provided a comparative assesment of recent literature devoted to Central Asia with that devoted to other areas of the FSU in “Soviet Central Asia on the Periphery,” published in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 16, Number 2, Spring 2015 (New Series), 359-374.

intent is classification as class enemies, and thus those named enter the public record only once on the verge of being permanently expunged from it.

The central public library for the Leninobod region was built in 1964, and at that time the decision was reportedly taken, as library staff explained, to get rid of all the books rendered obsolete by the adoption of the Cyrillic script for Tajik in 1940. This included books published in Tajik using the Latin script – in other words, almost books published between approximately 1926 and 1939, as well as most printed books in Arabic-script Tajik (published prior to 1926), with the exception of manuscripts from the pre-revolutionary period. Together with the books, the library also jettisoned its collection of periodicals, on the rationale that the State Archive had kept a run of the local newspapers (which were not, however, accessible during my visits). Thus, a significant portion of Tajik publishing record was deliberately expunged from the public record. In the post-Soviet period, the steep decline in the budgets of state-funded cultural institutions, whose staff are very poorly paid, has led to the loss or theft of many of the more valuable books. It is a sad reality that Russian and western research libraries have better access to material published in and about Central Asia than do many researchers based in Tajikistan.

Memoirs and family histories are a crucial source for reconstructing relationships and genealogical connections that Soviet-era official publications and even archival documents generally pass over in silence. The family histories and memoirs I consulted can be divided into two broad categories: those whose aim is to intervene in the national historiography to restore the reputation of a formerly prominent victim of Stalin's purges, and those destined for a more limited and private consumption by relatives and admirers, often produced to mark a specific anniversary of the head of the family. In the first category, the descendants of Abdurahim Hojiboev, the first chairman of Tajik Sovnarkom, have made a particularly concerted effort to

restore his reputation, beginning with a conference celebrating his 90th birthday in 1990, followed by new publications to mark the 100th, and 110th anniversaries of his birth. In the latter category are several family histories written to raise awareness of *asilzodagon* lineages. These feature prominent genealogies: sometimes both a reproduction of a manuscript *shajara* (family tree) in the Arabic script held by the family, and transcriptions into Cyrillic script Tajik. Some of these volumes gather together memories and testimonials by many people, producing something akin to a festschrift.

There has also been a vogue in recent years for biographical and genealogical dictionaries, cataloguing and describing the lives of eminent citizens selected according to a combination of Soviet and genealogical/religious criteria.⁵¹ In contemporary Tajikistan, too, the daily press is also often used as a vehicle for members of prominent (or formerly prominent) families to share information about their history, presumably deemed to be of somewhat general interest. Sometimes such pieces may be triggered by a recent event, such as when the Osimi family finally located the grave of the eldest son of Zainiddin who was killed outside Leningrad in WW2, some 70 years after his death. At other times, such articles might represent the result of genealogical research going back centuries undertaken over the course of many years. A fee may be required of authors seeking to publish such articles, the readership is generally small (on the evidence of both news print runs and online page views), but nonetheless the authors seem animated by a sincere desire to share their stories and rescue their forebears from an oblivion felt to be both undeserved and shameful.

⁵¹ See for example: Hoji Sayid Abdujalilhoja, *Az nasabnomai Sayidzodagoni Movarounnahr (bahr-ul-ansob) qismi 4-5* (Dushanbe, 2009), which is basically a compendium of shajarat (family trees), apparently fulfilling a broadly comparable role to that of Burke's *Peerage* in the United Kingdom.

I began to have conversations about the genealogies and family histories of friends and acquaintances in the Ferghana Valley in 2003, when I lived and worked in Khujand and in Osh for a year and a half. I was delighted to discover the existence of a moral injunction (observed as often in the breach) to memorize the *haft pusht*, or the seven previous generations of ancestors in one family. Although not everyone could do this, people commonly seem to feel that they should, particularly if they belonged to one of elite descent groups of *khoja*, *tura*, *sayyid* or *mirzo*. I conducted a series of interviews as part of my dissertation research in 2009 and 2011: these conversations were invaluable in steering me to new sources (particularly the self-published memoirs described above), or complementing information and anecdotes included in those publications. None of my interviewees are identified by name, other than those who also appear as authors of published texts that cover much of the same ground as our conversations.

A note on terminology

Although I knew whose Soviet era experiences I was most interested in, I was unsure for a long time what to call these families as a group, or what collective name to give those who use the honorific suffixes –*khoja*, –*tura*, –*mirzoda*, and so on. Richard Bulliet’s influential study of a Muslim urban elite of X-XI century Khorasan is titled *The Patricians of Nishapur*. He focuses on “a limited number of wealthy families who dominated the city’s educational and judicial life and whose prestige and power derived from land ownership, commerce, and religious knowledge.”⁵² This is a fair description of my Khujandi families, with the partial exception of the involvement

⁵² Ira M. Lapidus, review of Richard Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur: A Study in Medieval Islamic Social History*, in *Speculum*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (Jan., 1975), 92.

in commerce, which some (though by no means all) elite Khujandi lineages profess to hold beneath contempt.⁵³

Another term I considered adopting, often used in English-language scholarship, is Islamic notables. However, although the genealogies in question all had roots in religious leaders, as the decades of the Soviet period went by, the “Islamic” content or quality of these lineages receded from view without noticeably impacting their status; continuing to refer to them as Islamic notables, while correct, seemed to risk downplaying the scale of the changes wrought by Soviet rule. Another complicating factor is that the term Islamic notable is sometimes used interchangeably with the category of sayyid, but in Khujand, sayyids are considered to be lower in status than tura or khoja families.

The present day descendants of the subjects of my study most often refer to themselves in terms of their own specific lineage – in other words, as tura, khoja, etc. If referring to a larger group, beyond their own *avlod* (kinship group), they use words of varying specificity, such as *sayidzodagon* or *ashrafzodagon* (those born from the sayyids, or descendants of the Prophet), *oq suyak*, or white-boned (as opposed to the black, or black-boned commoners), or *asilzodagon*. The latter term, which simply means high-born, seemed more neutral and is the term I eventually chose. In conversation, however, it must be said that a division commonly made is that between the “shajarador,” those who have a family tree, and those who do not; one of my respondents explained that to have a *shajara*, in other words a physical, hand written family tree (often going back to the Arab conquest, or at least to a XIV century Sufi leader) means that one is “born of the Prophet” (*zod-i paighambar*).⁵⁴ In other words, there is some evidence that to the

⁵³ A hostile attitude towards trade and commercial transactions appears, in Khujand at least, to be more pronounced among tura lineages than it is among those of khoja or mirzo status.

⁵⁴ Interview with Kelin-poshsho, Khujand, July 2011. Kelin-poshsho is an honorific title used to address her, which does not identify her; it translates roughly as “princess-bride.”

asilzodagon, the only genealogies considered worthy of keeping track of are sacred, Islamic genealogies.

The setting: Khujand, ornament of the world (*Tiroz-i jahon*)

My case study of continuity and change during the Soviet period is centered on the *asilzodagon* of the town of Khujand, renamed Leninobod between 1936 and 1990, in the densely populated and multi-lingual Ferghana Valley. Khujand is not the largest of the ancient urban centers of Central Asia: in the early twentieth century, it trailed in terms of population size behind Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. With the creation of the Tajik SSR, however, Khujand became the only significant urban center of that republic, while retaining, thanks to its geographical location, close and productive links to the other (Uzbek and Kyrgyz) cities of the Valley and a striking degree of autonomy from the nation's capital, Dushanbe (renamed Stalinobod between 1930 and 1961).

“Hodjent [Khujand] has a pleasanter air than almost any other Central Asiatic city, due, I think, in part to its situation on the river bank, and in part to the sociable and pleasure-loving character of its inhabitants, for by far the majority of them are Tadjiks. In being so close to the river, Hodjent is an exception to most Asiatic cities, but the native town was never exactly on the shore, the intervening space having been since filled up by the Russians, a small colony of whom is stretched along the bank, which results in the destruction of the gardens.”⁵⁵

By making our first approach to Khujand in the company of the American diplomat Eugene Schuyler, who travelled through Russian Turkestan in 1873, our attention will be drawn to some of the early changes brought about by Russian rule. Although his visit occurred but seven years after the town had first been captured by the Russians, Schuyler noticed not only that

⁵⁵ Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co. 1877), 314.

the many orchards on the banks of the Syr-Darya were being cut down to make way for the Russian quarter, but also that the very basis of the town's economy was changing rapidly. Whereas once all trade between the two local powers – the Khanate of Kokand and the Emirate of Bukhara had passed right through Khujand, making Khujand “a place of considerable commercial importance,” “since the Russian occupation, this trade has been in great measure obstructed, and being in part contraband, has been obliged to seek byways, so that the importance of Hodjent has fallen off.”⁵⁶

Schuyler's visit took place before the definitive defeat of the Khanate of Kokand, and the incorporation of its territory into Russian Turkestan, which further sidelined Khujand as a centre of trade. The construction of the Trans-Caspian railroad, which began in 1879 following the defeat of Kokand and reached across the Ferghana Valley as far as Andijon by 1898, would greatly intensify the pace of change in the valley and create new opportunities for social mobility and cultural exchange.

The approach to Khujand, with gardens and fields on either side of the road, impressed Schuyler favourably, and he noted the preponderance of cotton plantations and vineyards, along with the mulberry trees lining the roads, whose branches were stripped regularly to feed the silkworms.⁵⁷ Brilliantly dyed, hand woven silk, cotton and its by-products, and fruit were among the mainstays of the local economy, although rice and wheat were also grown for local consumption. The agricultural land surrounding Khujand, located at the western end of the Ferghana Valley, is very fertile, and is regionally renowned for its delicious fruits, as a local memoirist recites: “apricot and plum, apple and cherry, pear and quince, peach and almond,

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan*, 313-314.

pomegranates, grapes, figs and mulberries.”⁵⁸ Over the half-century of Russian rule in the Ferghana Valley that preceded the Bolshevik revolution, the proportion of arable land devoted to food crops had gradually decreased, giving way to more and more cotton, and the average size of landholdings increased, together with the number of landless peasants. The mulberry trees, meanwhile, had begun to be cut down wholesale by the Russians for firewood, as according to Schuyler the latter were dissatisfied with such coal as they were able to mine locally.

Schuyler comments too on the uprising against Russian-imposed taxation that had been repressed less than a year before his visit: several thousand of Khujand’s craftsmen, small scale farmers and landless peasants had gathered in the area of the main bazaar to protest against the burdensome taxes that were to be exacted even after two years of drought and poor harvests.⁵⁹ This would be followed by a fairly large scale revolt in Andijan – also in the Ferghana Valley, but to the east of Khujand – led by the charismatic Sufi leader Dukchi Eshon, a soldier-led uprising in Khujand in 1905 related to the revolts in Russia, and a popular mass uprising in 1916 against the draft. Contrary to much of later Soviet rhetoric, fond of portraying Tajikistan as a feudal backwater preserved in aspic, a historiographical blank slate,⁶⁰ Khujand and its

⁵⁸ Saidkarim Valizoda, “*Ede az guzashta*,” 3 [1.7]. I consulted an unpublished typescript of Valizoda’s memoir prepared for the 50th anniversary of the Tajik Komsomol, preserved in the Leninobod branch of the Tajik State Archives (TsGART-LF).

⁵⁹ M. Bobokhanov, “Vosstania 1872 goda,” in *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia*, Abdullaev S. A. (editor), Glavnaia Nauchnaia redaksiia Tadjikshikh entsiklopedii, Dushanbe 1999, 212.

⁶⁰ This attitude – which would bear significant consequences for the administration of Soviet Tajikistan – was elegantly modelled by Boris Pilniak in a series of articles published in *Izvestiia* in 1930. An excerpt follows: “On the map of Tajikistan one finds the notation ‘unexplored districts’ and is it quite clear why this is the case. Had Tajikistan been in Europe, poets would have written about it, beginning with Ovid or Dante. But Tajikistan, essentially, was not even a colony of the Russian Empire, but something worse: it was a colony of the Bukharan emirate, referred to as Eastern Bukhara and – ten, seven, five years ago – Tajikistan was in the middle ages *exactly* as Europe was in the ninth to eleventh centuries, with medieval turreted castles, with a sovereign-vassal-baronial system of government lording it over a wholly disenfranchised peasantry ... in such economic straits that not a single carriage or cart could be found in the whole of eastern Bukhara, [...] and the peasants paid tribute [by giving up their] daughters for the harems, and sold them for gold...” Source: Boris Pilniak, “Tadjikistan: sed’maia sovetskaiia,” in *Izvestiia*, 11 October 1930, p.3.

agricultural hinterland (later to join the Tajik SSR) had already undergone a half century of fairly rapid social and economic change prior to the Bolshevik seizure of power.

The social and cultural changes that had taken place over a half century of Tsarist rule affected all tiers of society, but it was a portion of the elite, perhaps ironically, that was best positioned to take advantages of those educational opportunities that would greatly facilitate navigating – indeed shaping – the ostensibly proletarian-led new Soviet order in the 1920s (with a few non-elite exceptions as we will see). In the first chapter, I focus on a particular age cohort of elite urban Khujandis, those born around the turn of the century, who were coming of age at the time of the Bolshevik seizure of power, and explore how they responded to the upheaval, the violence and the promise of the Revolution.

Chapter One. Noble Allies of the Revolution: Classroom to Battleground (1916-1922)

Across the Muslim world, those who claim descent from the Prophet Mohammad or from his early caliphs can be found occupying a distinct and distinctive niche in their respective societies, but how these forms of pre-modern, religiously inflected identity interacted with the stridently materialist, socialist, and theoretically classless Soviet experiment has not yet been studied in detail. By focusing on the Islamic notables of a specific region, not merely as victims but as interlocutors of and participants in the Soviet system, important light can be shed on Soviet mechanisms of rule and social support for the regime in Central Asia.

Surprisingly, as I argue, aspects of the ethos, worldview and cultural formation of the *asilzodagon* of urban Central Asia not only allowed them to come to terms with the tenets of socialism, but also, in many cases, to flourish and prosper in its flawed, incarnate local form. The Islamic notables of Khujand manifested both strong group cohesion and a communitarian focus, a calling to serve as the moral stewards of their communities and a proud tradition of scholarship, all of which, *mutatis mutandis*, helped many of them first make sense of the rules of Soviet society, and then to shape it, at least in its local variants. Here I focus on early recruits to the Communist cause from Khujand's social elite, although towards the end of the chapter, we will also meet some of the *asilzodagon* who chose to remain aloof from, if not actively hostile towards, the new regime. As the power of the Soviets gradually asserted itself in Central Asia over the course of the 1920s, we will trace an increasingly clear distinction between those who held on to their traditional sources of prestige and influence, and those who did not hesitate to seek after and acquire new sources of power and authority which the new regime offered.¹

¹ This distinction echoes that posited by Sergei Abasin, on the basis of ethnographic research in post-Soviet Tajikistan, between the groups he terms "urban saints" and "village saints." The rationale and implications of applying Gellner's terminology and theoretical framework to the Central Asian case are explored in Sergei Abashin,

Another striking contrast discussed in this chapter is that between the careers of high born Communists, whose lineage and connections were more of a help than a hindrance to their political ambitions, and those of early recruits to the Party of the proletariat hailing from more humble backgrounds, who continued to face significant structural obstacles.

The *asilzogadon*, or the patricians of Khujand

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Khujand had been disputed between the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Kokand, changing hands several times without significant disruption to the everyday life of the town's inhabitants. At the time of the Russian conquest in the 1860s, Khujandi society was characterised by a relatively low degree of social mobility, with hierarchies generally structured around descent. The *asilzodagon*,² or “high-born ones,” asserted their identity and status by means of family trees (*shajara*) in manuscript form, tracing their descent back many generations – in the case of sayyids, who constitute a major subgroup of the *asilzodagon*, as far back as the Prophet Muhammad and his early caliphs. The *asilzodagon*, also referred to as “white-boned” (*oq suyak*, in Uzbek), defined themselves in opposition to the commoners, or “the black ones” (*qoracha*) or “black-boned ones.” The *asilzodagon* also rank themselves internally by descent group.

Khujandis have long prided themselves on their city's ancient and aristocratic credentials: not only was a settlement founded there by Alexander the Great, who named it Alexandria Eskhate, the furthestmost Alexandria,³ but a local folk legend has it that the city's “patron saint”

translated by Caroline Humphrey, “[Gellner, the ‘Saints’ and Central Asia: between Islam and Nationalism](#),” *Inner Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Dedicated to Andre Grunder Frank (1929-2005) (2005), 70-71.

² This is the plural form, of which the singular is *asilzoda*.

³ Furthestmost from Macedonia, that is, from among the twenty or so cities that Alexander the Great named after himself.

Shaikh Muslihiddin⁴ after whom the principal mosque and shrine complex is named, was no less than the Prophet Muhammad's own adoptive son. Khujand was conquered and settled in the eighth century by a group of Arabs for whom descent from the Prophet was claimed, and to whom native families who converted to Islam attached themselves. Several families of the city's old elite claim Arab blood to this day, and there is a mahalla (neighborhood) named Arabon (Arabs).⁵ The inheritance of those that converted the region to Islam still, as Sartori has argued, plays a role in the legitimization strategies adopted by certain Islamic notable lineages attempting to retain power and influence in the face of profound social and political upheaval.⁶

The *asilzodagon* of Khujand constituted a highly visible, tendentially endogamous social group, whose lineage-based prestige was reinforced by a reputation for piety and learning, which in the centuries prior to the Russian conquest was often combined with significant wealth. From a genealogical perspective, the main elite identities, or sub-groupings within the *asilzodagon* that will appear in my dissertation are those of the sayyid,⁷ the khoja,⁸ and the tura.⁹ Each of these three categories has a different source of prestige, though in practice they often overlap, due to

⁴ Shaikh Muslihiddin, or Muslih al-Din. On the legends of the founding and Islamisation of Khujand, see Orifjon Yahyozod Khujandi, *Khujandnoma yo qissaho az ta'rikhi Khujand va khujandiyon* (Khujand, 1994).

⁵ Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitie*, 83.

⁶ Paolo Sartori, "L'Islam in Asia Centrale tra recupero della tradizione e movimenti radicali: il caso uzbeko," in *Sfide e opportunita' nel Caucaso e in Asia Centrale* (Istituto per gli studi di Politica Internazionale, 2007), 243-276. See also "Turkistan belongs to the Qojas": Local Knowledge of a Muslim Turkistan, in S.A. in S.A. Dudoignon (ed.), *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russian, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century* (Berlin, 2004), 161-212; S. Abashin, *The Logic of Islamic Practice: A Religious Conflict in Central Asia*, in *Central Asian Survey*, 25, 2006, 3, 267-286.

⁷ Sayyid is the standard form used in English, derived from the Arabic. In Khujand as in other parts of Central Asia, sayyid status is often indicated either by use of the title "Sayid," as in Sayid Akbarkhon, or as a prefix in many common given names, in the form Said- (in other languages of the region, Seid- or Seit-), as for example Saidkhoja, Saidkarim, Saidyunus.

⁸ Khoja is spelled *khodzha* in Russian, including in surnames that are compounds of khoja, such as Mu'min Khojaev, or Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev. In literature focusing on Uzbekistan, the same family name is often rendered as Xo'jaev. On the phenomenon of the resurgence of Khojas in post-Soviet Central Asia, and more particularly on their genealogical ties to specific pilgrimages sites in the region, see Devin de Weese, "The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19th-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups Linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Nov., 1999), 507-530.

⁹ Those that claim descent from the prophet Muhammad (who might identify as khoja, tura or sayyid) are sometimes collectively known as *ashrafon* (the exalted ones).

intermarriage between elite groups over the centuries. The sayyids (elsewhere also known as *sharif*) are those who claim descent from the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fatima and from her husband, the fourth caliph 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. In Central Asia, as in many other parts of the Muslim world, the reverence due to the Prophet and his family, known as the *ahl ul bayt*, which is a religious duty for both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, is also due to his living descendants.¹⁰ About one hundred and seventeen families of sayyids are held to live in Khujand to this day, mostly concentrated in particular mahallas, or neighbourhoods, within Khujand.

In discussing the category of "dihqan," a marker of elite status in the pre-Mongol period that has since fallen into desuetude, Ashirbek Muminov makes the important point that noble families in contemporary Central Asia who claim sacred status through Islam "are marked by the utmost diversity." They differ by origin as well as by the range of honorific suffixes used (sayyid, khon, makhdum-zoda, etc). One result of this, as Muminov shows, is that the descendants of Ali ibn Abi Talib through Fatima, the daughter of prophet Mohammad, those who are known as sayyids or sharifs, in Central Asia do not occupy a special position distinct from the "general mass" of sacred families, as they do in many other Muslim societies. Whereas in some parts of Central Asia, the status of sayyids is equal to that of other sacred families, in some cases they are less esteemed than other noble lineages.¹¹ This is the case in Khujand, where tura and khoja families (who generally also claim sayyid status, alongside other norms of nobility) outrank those sayyids who do not also claim a Sufi connection.

The period following the establishment of Mongol rule after the conquests of Genghis Khan, was characterised by the gradually increasing ascendancy in the religious realm of Sufi

¹⁰ As the Prophet Muhammad had no sons, all his direct descendants are descended from his daughter Fatima – who is also the source of authority of the Fatimid caliphate (909-1171).

¹¹ Ashirbek Muminov, "Dihqans and sacred families in Central Asia," in Kazuo Morimoto (editor), *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet* (Routledge, 2012), 198.

brotherhoods, who represented Islam's mystical dimension, over the traditional Islamic sciences propounded by the ulama. These new spiritual leaders began to claim Arab descent: thus, in Bukhara, the family of Khoja Muhammad Parsa (d. 1420) claimed descent from the Hanafi scholar al-Bukhari (d.1294), while the Juibori Khojas – of whom there are still a significant number in Khujand, claim descent from Abu Bakr ibn Sa'd (d.970). Crucially, in the new post-Mongol milieu "to be a family of Islamic scholars meant to be a family of noble origin."¹²

Most of the sayyid families in Khujand I interviewed consider the fifteenth century Sufi leader Ahmad Kosoni (1461/2-1542/3), known as the Makhdum-i A'zam, as their common ancestor. In other words, descent from the family of the Prophet, which confers sayyid status, is often combined with "khoja" status which derives from belonging to a Sufi lineage. In Khujand, Khojas outrank non-Sufi connected sayyids. The Makhdum-i A'zam was a Sufi leader and political activist, the founding ancestor of two important saintly lineages of Naqshbandi khojas – the Naqshbandiyya being one of the most successful and dynamic Sufi orders. The Naqshbandi order was founded in Central Asia in the fourteenth century, and takes its name from Baha al-Din Naqshband of Bukhara.¹³ As a leading Naqshbandi elder, the Makhdum-i A'zam was able to use his broad following to wrest significant concessions and privileges from Central Asian rulers, so that when he died at his estate in the village of Dahbed outside Samarqand, he left his descendants much property in *waqf* both in Transoxania¹⁴ and in Altishahr (now in Xinjiang). His tomb in Dahbed is an important site of pilgrimage to this day.¹⁵ In Khujand, many legends

¹² Muminov, "*Dihqans* and sacred families in Central Asia," 206.

¹³ Devin DeWeese, "The Eclipse of the Kubraviyah in Central Asia," in *Iranian Studies* Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Soviet and North American Studies on Central Asia (1988), 45-83

¹⁴ Transoxania, or in Arabic *mawara-al-nahr*, or "the land between the rivers" refers to the region of Central Asia north of the Amu Darya and south of the Syr Darya – encompassing parts of both present day Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

¹⁵ J. Fletcher, "AḤMAD KĀSĀNĪ," Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition, 1982, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ahmad-kasani>

have been passed down through the generations by his descendants, such as that his cradle – which subsequently became a site of pilgrimage – descended to earth from the sky.¹⁶ In Eastern Turkestan, the descendants of the Makhdum-i A'zam, known as the makhdumzodas, used the honorific suffix –khoja, and subsequently split into two rival clans, the Ishoqi khojas and the Ofoqi khojas, who struggled over the leadership of the tariqat.¹⁷

Although the khojas, the second important category of elite family in Khujand, trace their descent from Arabs who converted the region to Islam, the more operative component of the khoja identity at the local level is membership of one of the several powerful dynasties of Naqshbandi Sufis, all of whose members are entitled to bear the honorific suffix “-khoja.” The several branches of khojas in Khujand also tend to be clustered together in certain mahallas, such as those of Sari Sang, Kozi Lucchakon, Masjidi Surkh, and Turaho – where the descendants of the wealthy and powerful fifteenth century Sufi leader Khoja Ahrori Vali are concentrated.¹⁸ The most numerous, and, for long periods the most wealthy, branch of Khojas in Khujand, the Juibor khojas,¹⁹ claim descent from a *murid* (Sufi follower) of Makhdum-i A'zam, common ancestor of Khujandi sayyids, thus linking these two groups.²⁰

In Khujand, the most highly respected subgroup of *asilzodagon* is that of the Tura (pl. Turaho), who benefit from multiple, overlapping sources of prestige: they are *sayyids*, linked by intermarriage to the Chingissid ruling dynasties (often, in Khujand, this takes the form of kinship to the Khan of Kokand or the Emir of Bukhara), and also *khojas* descended from important

¹⁶ “*gahvorash az ospon fromdegi*” - Interview with Ona-khon Olimova conducted in Khujand by the author on 21 May, 2011.

¹⁷ For more on the fortunes of the Makhdum-i A'zam's descendents in East Turkestan, see John K. Firbank, *The Cambridge History of China vol 10: Late Ch'ing 1800-1911* (Cambridge University Press, 1978), 79 ff.

¹⁸ Gaziev, I. “*Aristokraticheskoe soslovie starogo Khudzhanda*” (the aristocratic estate in old Khujand). *Khudzhand*, 115

¹⁹ The Juibori Khojas take their name from Khoja Juibor, also known as Khoja Muhammad Islam (1493-1563)

²⁰ Gaziev, I. “*Aristokraticheskoe soslovie starogo Khudzhanda*” (the aristocratic estate in old Khujand). *Khudzhand*, 114.

Naqshbandi Sufis. To sum up, all khojas consider themselves to be sayyids, but the reverse is not true, and all turas are also khojas (but not the reverse): tura lineages are considered to outrank other *asilzodagon* or “saintly” families. Although clarity on how the prestige of a tura differs from that of a sayyid is broadly helpful, my data does not support any firm conclusions on whether as a group, the khojas of Khujand, for example, fared better or worse during the Soviet period than the tura families. There is some evidence, however, that those at the very pinnacle of the social hierarchy in Khujand during the second decade of the twentieth century, a group that included many tura, were somewhat less nimble in adapting to the rapidly changing social landscape, or more reluctant to do so, perhaps because they felt they had so much to lose. In this story, the characters almost all identify as either khoja or tura: the distinction between these two groups, mattered more to some of them than it did to others; on the whole, the distinction between *asilzodagon* and commoners mattered more, and to more people.

Although lineage was of paramount important in Khujand, even when illustrious descent could be proven to the satisfaction of those concerned through a *shajara*, or family tree, lineage was only one pillar of a set of mutually reinforcing claims to elite status, claims that included wealth, cultural capital, and occupation. To be a descendent of the Makhdum-i A’zam was no mere genealogical curiosity in early-twentieth-century Khujand: it entailed a thick web of privileges and societal obligations, strictures concerning whom one might marry (these were particularly incumbent upon women), how to behave, how to dress, and so on. It also meant inhabiting a physical environment in which markers of family status were everywhere – from madrasas endowed by ancestors and close relatives, to the shrines dotted about the countryside

marking sacred places associated with Sufi saints whose tombs were, and are once again, important sites of pilgrimage.²¹

Significant areas of economic activity and positions of power were traditionally reserved for families of Islamic notables, and many important posts were hereditary – a system whose endurance was long guaranteed by the protection of the local ruling dynasties. Among the positions reserved for notable families in Khujand (as elsewhere in Central Asia) were: administrator of specific, ancestral shrines (*shaikh*²²); judge in an Islamic court (*qozi*); jurisconsult (*mufti*); waqf administrator (*mutavalli*); cleric responsible for delivering the Friday (main) sermon in a mosque (*imam khatib*); teacher in a madrasa (*mudarris*). As Adeeb Khalid has shown, the madrasa in particular played a key role in the perpetuation of the cultural capital and social status of elite families, who were at once the patrons and main beneficiaries of the madrasa system, “the site of the social reproduction of Islamic legal knowledge and its carriers, the ulama.”²³ The knowledge acquired in a madrasa – which was grounded in and guaranteed by a personal relationship between master and pupil – was a marker of status that reinforced the social distinction conferred by wealth, sacred lineage and a reputation for piety. It should be noted however that the ulama – Islamic scholars who had graduated from madrasas – were not coterminous as a group with the *asilzodagon* of Khujand, although there was considerable overlap. Though unusual, it was not unknown for a poor boy from an obscure family to manage to complete the lengthy course of study in a madrasa, while conversely not all scions of exalted families did so.

²¹ Interview with Khoji Ofokkhon Tura, aka Mubashir Bashirkhanovich Iskhaki, conducted in Khujand, June 2011.

²² For Sufis, *shaikh* (or *sheikh*) also has the meaning of spiritual master; the primary etymological meaning is “someone whose age appears advanced and whose hair has gone white,” therefore someone who has accrued authority and prestige through experience.

²³ Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998; 31.

The prestige and power of the *asilzodagon* was writ large on the topography and skyline of the city, as the powerful families endowed the construction of mosques and madrasas, nominated clerics and functionaries to these institutions, and administered the charitable endowments (*waqf*) that supported their upkeep. Smaller streets and alleyways within neighborhoods (*mahallas*) were named after the most prominent local families, such as “chakar (alley) Mullo Shamsiboi, chakar Ahror-khon Eshon.”²⁴ Although the topography and skyline of the city would be profoundly altered during the Soviet period, the streets names changed and *waqf* endowments abolished, Soviet rule would also eventually yield a new crop of professions in which *khoja* status was very helpful, if not crucial – including doctors, judges, professors and public intellectuals.

A city of mahallas

The city of Khujand developed around a fortified citadel along the south bank of the Syr Darya river in the Ferghana Valley, and was structured, like Bukhara and Samarkand, around a series of *mahallas* (neighborhoods). Following Krader and Geiss, I find it helpful to think of pre-modern Central Asian cities like Khujand as “dense agricultural settlements (*qishloq*), interwoven with basic urban functions.”²⁵ This characterization highlights the close relationship between the town, in which many owned land or made a livelihood through farming, and the surrounding countryside. It also points to a continuum in terms of internal organization between villages (*qishloq*), that might consist of two or three *mahallas*, and cities, that might have well over a hundred *mahallas*.²⁶

²⁴ Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitie*, 71.

²⁵Paul Georg Geiss, “Mahallah and kinship relations: A study on residential communal commitment structures in Central Asia of the 19th century,” in *Central Asian Survey* (2001), 20(1), 97–106.

Khujand was, and to some extent still is, a city of neighbourhoods, but each mahalla constituted a far more cohesive social unit than a neighborhood or even a parish in a nineteenth century European town. The town was divided into three districts, Razzoq, Qala-i Nau, and Mazar, each one consisting of dozens of mahallas. The mahalla is a social as well as a geographic and administrative unit: theoretically at least, the original inhabitants of a mahalla shared a common ancestor and profession, and were bound to one another by ties of solidarity and marriage.²⁷ A mahalla might be named after a local landmark – an impressively old tree, perhaps, or after a common ancestor, while several others are named for the craft or profession practised by its inhabitants: there is a mahalla for the mirror makers (Oinasozon), the goldsmiths (Tillokoron), the holy storytellers (Maddoho), and the makers of the embroidered skullcaps worn locally (Tuppiduzon). Each mahalla had its own mosque,²⁸ and usually its own maktab (in some ways like a school, but see later), water reservoir (*hauz*), teahouse (*choikhona*), and rather less frequently a bathhouse. In Khujand in 1910 the Tsarist authorities counted 207 teahouses, which served as important social hubs for the male population, especially for a couple of hours after the first prayers of the day, and again in the late evening.²⁹

For the purposes of my argument it is important to note that a mahalla was not a socially homogenous unit, so that although the tura and khoja dynasties were particularly associated with certain mahallas, by the early twentieth century all urban mahallas housed families that might

²⁷ There is an extensive anthropological literature on the mahalla, going back to the nineteenth century, with several important contributions made in recent years, including Morgan Liu, *Under Solomon's Throne: Uzbek Visions of Renewal in Osh* (2012), and "Mahalla" in Sergei Abashin, *Sovetskii kishlak: mezhdur kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2015).

²⁸ A mosque was considered constitutive of a mahalla: constructing a new mosque also meant founding a new mahalla, and there were no mahallas without their own mosque. See Sukhareva, 1959, 58 (in Tursunov, 70). There was, however, at least one mahalla in Khujand that also had a synagogue, in which Jews and Muslims lived side by side (Bozori guza mahalla) – see N.O. Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia gorodskogo i sel'skogo naseleniia severnogo Tadzhikistana XIX-nachala XX vv. (istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki)*, Irfon, Dushanbe:1976, 74.

²⁹ TGA RT, F.6, op.1, d.30, l.23, cited in Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia*, 67.

range widely in terms of wealth, social standing and educational attainment. These types of stratification did not, however, preclude close networks of solidarity existing within the mahalla. Such ties are exemplified by the custom of inviting all residents of the mahalla to celebrate life cycle events, and that of group loans made by mahalla members to one another.³⁰ In the old parts of the city, several mahallas in close proximity to one another constituted a *roat*, a larger unit of population bound by similar ties: Tursunov, a local ethnographer and historian, gives the example that if it was expected that everyone in a mahalla be invited to a wedding hosted by a mahalla residents, from each other mahallas of the same *roat* perhaps only 10-15 people might be invited.³¹ Networks of solidarity and patronage were constantly renewed and affirmed by collective participation, according to an established pattern, in each community member's life cycle events.

Newcomers could not join a mahalla without the approval of the other inhabitants,³² which was customarily secured by appealing to the mahalla elder.³³ The mahalla elders were then responsible for witnessing purchases of land and buildings, compiling demographic information of interest to the Tsarist administration and overseeing tax collection.³⁴ The tasks of representing the mahalla were formalised during the Tsarist period and assigned to an elected

³⁰ Paul Georg Geiss, "Mahallah and kinship relations: A study on residential communal commitment structures," in *Central Asian Survey* (2001), 20(1), 97–106.

³¹ N.O. Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia gorodskogo i sel'skogo naseleniia severnogo Tadzhikistana XIX-nachala XX vv. (istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki)*, Irfon, Dushanbe:1976, 71.

³² Unsurprisingly, Russian colonisers, in line with colonisers elsewhere, sidestepped the mahalla system altogether and built a new Russian quarter of the city ex novo, along the banks of the Syr-Darya.

³³ Paul Georg Geiss, "Mahallah and kinship relations: A study on residential communal commitment structures," in *Central Asian Survey* (2001), 20(1), 97–106.

³⁴ Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia*, 68.

elder referred to as the “*ellikboshi*” (“head of fifty” in Turkic). There were 117 *ellikboshi* registered in Khujand in 1897, representing the same number of mahallas.³⁵

Although according to the results of the 1897 census of the Tsarist Empire, the majority of the inhabitants of the city of Khujand considered Persian to be their mother tongue, Uzbek was also very widely spoken. Most of the other towns in the Ferghana Valley with which Khujandis interacted – Tashkent to the west, and Andijon, Margilan, Kokand, Farghona and Namangan to the east – had predominantly Turkic populations. Toponyms in Khujand speak to the city’s polyglot history: the name of the principle canal that bisects the old town, Kurkhona, is a Turkic word (meaning arsenal), as are the names of several of the gates in the city’s pre-twentieth century fortification walls, such as Chuianchi and Yangi Darvoza.³⁶ Many other older toponyms are Persian, while during the Soviet Period the city also acquired many Russian language landmarks, and a few more international ones.³⁷ Anecdotal evidence suggests that as a group, the *asilzodagon* of Khujand today (particularly tura families) are more likely to speak both Uzbek and Tajik fluently than are other Khujandis who consider themselves Tajik by ethnicity. *Asilzodagon* families in Khujand frequently have ancestral ties to shrines and mosque complexes in what is now Uzbekistan – not only in traditionally Persian-speaking Samarkand and Bukhara, but also in Dilvarzin and Turkestan.

Razzoq, the oldest part of the city, occupies a parcel of land jutting out like a flexed elbow into the Syr Darya river, which curves southwards at that point, surrounding the district on

³⁵ Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia*, 70. Tursunov, however, notes that according to his calculations, by the second decade of the twentieth century there were no fewer than 146 mahallas in Khujand, and compares this figure to the 206 mahallas of Tashkent at around the same time and approximately 100 in Samarkand.

³⁶ See Tursunov, *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia*, 58-60. On the role of mahalla elders during the Russian Colonial period, see also Alexander S. Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand, 1868-1910: a comparison with British India* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁷ I was momentarily stumped by finding a mahalla named “Vonsiti” in the Latin script version of Tajik used in the 1930s, until I realized that the mahalla in question had been renamed in honour of the executed Italian anarchist Bartolomeo Vanzetti (1888-1927).

two sides. Razzoq is densely inhabited, with narrow winding streets and alleyways where silk weavers and dyers, carpenters, bakers and leather workers lived alongside poor wage labourers employed by the day (*mardikor*) and prosperous members of the ulama class, merchants and low-ranking employees of the Tsarist administration (postal workers, clerks).



Figure 1: Soviet era map of Khujand/Leninobod.

Before the Soviet period, the city of Khujand extended only on the southern bank of the Syr Darya, with Razzoq district to the west of the main artery leading southwards from the bridge, and Qala-i Nau to the east.

There were fortunes to be made by some, merchants in particular, following the Russian conquest, especially after the Trans-Caspian railway reached the Ferghana Valley. The newly wealthy also began to build and endow madrasas, as a means of cementing their position, such that Khujand saw a notable efflorescence of new madrasas: at least nine were built in the last

quarter of the nineteenth century.³⁸ Even in uncertain times, endowing a madrasa could be a good investment: when a *waqf* was established to maintain a madrasa or for some other charitable purpose, the donor would also nominate someone – most often a relative – for the hereditary position of *waqf* administrator (*mutavalli*), and another relative or several could be employed as mudarris (teachers) in the madrasas, whose salaries would be funded by the *waqf*.

Under the new social pressures brought about by the Russian conquest, therefore, the madrasa was used as a means of conferring legitimacy on a new, rising mercantile elite, while also continuing to function as the major vehicle for the replication of the traditional elite. Educational institutions – the maktab, the madrasa, and Russian schools – were one of the first and most crucial battlegrounds on which the forces of continuity and change confronted one another (the other, as we shall see, was a more literal battleground, in which charismatic Basmachi leaders skirmished with volunteer troops often led by *asilzodagon*).³⁹ When we survey the responses of the *asilzodagon* to the profound upheaval of the revolutionary years therefore, it comes as no surprise to find that education was one of the primary areas in which they felt able to contribute to society.

As the Russian Revolution runs its course in Central Asia, we witness the emancipatory promise of education being embraced by some of Khujand's most privileged sons, who had previously benefitted – and, indeed, in many cases continued to benefit, from their status as *asilzodagon*. The members of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia who began careers in public education after 1917 were not, by any means, all Communists or even pro-Soviet: throughout the

³⁸ The madrasas of Nakib, Shamsiboi, Bobokhoja, Shaikh Muslihiddin, Hazrati Bobo, Mirzoen, Sharshara, and MirYakub-Devonbegi were all built between 1870 and 1895. See also Abdullozhon Mirbabaev, *Istoriia madrasa Tadjikistana* (Dushanbe, Meros, 1994).

³⁹ For more on the Basmachi movement, see Beatrice Penati, "The Reconquest of East Bukhara: The Struggle Against the Basmachi as a Prelude to Sovietisation," *Central Asian Survey* 26 (2007), 521-538.

1920s and into the 1930s, there would be frequent reports of teachers exposed and punished for continuing “old-style” teaching, or incorporating Islamic precepts into the curriculum.

Pre-revolutionary schooling in Khujand

Because literacy and spiritual leadership, embodied and perpetuated by the madrasa system from generation to generation, were key pillars of *asilzodagon* identity, education is an important prism through which to view *asilzodagon* responses to the upheaval of the revolutionary years. Among a segment of the progressive local intelligentsia, the necessity of education reform had already become a hotly discussed topic in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, and would only gain in urgency following the events of 1917. The provision of universal primary education, meanwhile, a rather distant concern of the Tsarist administration, would become a matter of key ideological and strategic significance under the Bolsheviks, and in Central Asia, the *asilzodagon* were well placed to contribute to and shape the new order, in which both significant ruptures and continuities can be discerned.

As elsewhere in Turkestan, the educational landscape in Khujand, at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, was rather varied. No schooling was compulsory; and many, perhaps most, Turkestani children had none. Formalized educational opportunities available to locals, at least in cities, fell into four broad categories:

- 1) home-based schools for young children and girls; often presided over by a female teacher, or *bibiotun*⁴⁰. These continued, often below the radar, into the 1950s and beyond.
- 2) The traditional *maktab*, presided over by the figure of the *domullo*, usually attached to the neighbourhood mosque;

⁴⁰ The term *bibiotun*, formed from the words *bibi*, a term of respect used for women, particularly older women known for their wisdom, and *otun*, or female teacher, is sometimes contracted to *bi'otun* in Khujand.

- 3) “new method,” or *jadid*, schools were occasionally available;
- 4) Russian-native schools, administered and financed by the Turkestan Governor-Generalship.

Of these, the first two, home-schools and maktab, were the most common by far: there were only a handful of new method schools in major cities, which might also have one or two Russian-native schools at most. Those who completed a course of instruction in a maktab, old or new, might later join a madrasa, or Islamic institution of higher learning, or a *qorikhona*, an institution devoted to the task of learning the Qur’an by heart. The decades-long course of study in a madrasa formed members of the *ulama* (plural of *olim*), whereas those who successfully memorised the Qur’an were given the title of *qori*, and were paid to perform recitations at funerals and other life-cycle events.

The traditional maktab

The purpose of the maktab was not to provide an education in any general sense, but rather to inculcate norms of behaviour, basic religious precepts and prayers, and to teach children how to sound out certain sections of the Qur’an, in accordance to a traditional set curriculum. The children were not taught to understand the Arabic of the Qur’an, which was taught to some extent only in madrasas, nor yet did they necessarily acquire functional literacy in any language. It was quite possible therefore to attend a maktab for several years but remain unable to read, for example, a newspaper printed in the literary version of either locally spoken languages – Persian or Turki (the precursor to what would later be labelled Uzbek).

There was usually a maktab in each mahalla (neighbourhood), and thus well over a hundred in a town the size of Khujand, and they were often attached to the local mosque. Lessons were led by the *domullo*, who was paid for his service by the pupils’ parents according to an established pattern, and almost always in kind. In lieu of a salary, the domullo received

gifts in occasion of the two most important Muslim festivals (the end of Ramadan and the feast of sacrifice). A smaller gift, often a loaf of bread, was given every Thursday, at the end of the Islamic week, and was thus called *noni panjshanbegi* (Thursday bread).⁴¹

Sadriddin Aini (1873-1954) wrote an account of his schooldays which was published in the Soviet period and promptly canonized as a model for literary Tajik. He began his education in the village *maktab* in provincial Bukhara in the late 1870s, and reports in his reminiscences that it was the custom for the teacher to receive a particular present from the parents each time their child mastered a particular *surah* of the Qur'an.⁴² The form these presents took vividly illustrates the state – and status – of literacy at that time. The first words of *surah* 110, by which it is known, are *idha ja'a [nasru'llahi wa'l-fath]*, which translates as “When comes [the help of God, and victory].” *Idha ja'a*, pronounced by Tajiks as *izo ja'a*, was reminiscent of the Persian *ezor-joma* (suit), and therefore upon a pupil's mastering this mnemonic exercise, his parents would make the teacher a present of a suit of clothes. Similarly, *surah* 111, which begins with the Arabic word *tabbat*, meaning perish, recalled the Persian *tabaq*, or plate, and thus furnished an occasion to present the teacher with a dish of food. “Bring me a plate of *shir-birinj* [rice pudding], when your son reaches the *tabbat*,” Aini recalls his teacher urging his mother.⁴³ Given that each pupil progressed through his lessons at his own speed, the careful teacher could ensure a steady supply of varied gifts.

Saidkarim Valizoda, a native of Khujand, also left a first-hand account of his experiences in both a traditional maktab, and in a soviet school. He was sent off to a maktab at the age of

⁴¹ Sadriddin Aini, *The Sands of Oxus, Boyhood Reminiscences of Sadriddin Aini*, translated from the Tajik Persian with an introduction and notes by John R. Perry and Rachel Lehr (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1998), 243.

⁴² Sadriddin Aini (1878-1954), who was brought up and educated in the traditional manner in a village outside Bukhara, published several volumes of reminiscences that became classics of Tajik Soviet literature. As an adult, before the Revolution, he became involved in the Jadid movement and taught in new method schools. His memoir of his own school days, *Maktabi kuhna* (The Old [style] School), written in Samarkand in 1934, was translated into Russian and incorporated into the Soviet school curriculum, as an illustration of the barbaric state of decay into which pre-revolutionary education had fallen in Turkestan.

⁴³ Aini, *Sands of Oxus*, 247

twelve by his uncle, who had been bringing him up since the death of his father – this was in 1920, a few months at least after the first soviet schools had opened in Khujand, although they were by no means the default choice as yet. His uncle left Saidkarim, as well as his own son, in the care of a domullo by reciting the ominous, apparently traditional formula “My children I have brought into slavery, until they have acquired learning [...]: their meat is yours, their bones are mine.” This was a reference to the expectation that beatings would be a standard feature of the domullo’s modus operandi, and indeed Saidkarim was favoured with a request to bring in to school a bundle of branches from a neighbouring quince tree for the purpose. By this age, he and his cousin had already spent some time reading and writing with a female teacher, a *bibiotun*, in what one can only hope was a somewhat more nurturing environment.

For both Valizoda and Aini, the purpose of describing their experiences in an old fashioned maktab is clearly to create as great a possible a contrast to the world of a Soviet school, which had come into being by the time they were writing, and which Valizoda was young enough to experience as a pupil. Their descriptions of the maktab are consistent with one another, and also in line with descriptions made by outside observers, Russians and Britons, among others, who were often likewise struck by the repetitive nature of the lessons, the din of many little boys reciting at once, and the frequent beatings meted out by the domullo and his assistants.⁴⁴

The domullo to whom Saidkarim Valizoda was entrusted is portrayed not only as brutish and cruel, but as cowardly and superstitious to the point of appearing dim-witted. While Saidkarim is lying at home in bed after a particularly vicious beating at the hands of the domullo, he is visited by his friend Mukhtor-khon, who has something important to tell him.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan; notes of a journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja* (New York, Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1877) 164 and ff.

“ ‘My friend, Saidkarim! In our domullo’s opinion, our very own bridge of Hoji Kacchak has a secret. Yes, believe me! At night, on top of the bridge, devils, evil spirits and fairies play all along it, back and forth. If someone impure tries to cross it, that’s it, they’re done for! In a single moment, evil spirits seize the hapless person and strike him dumb!

According to our teacher, it is impossible to cross the bridge without reciting a

“Bismillo” and the *Aya of Ra’ad* (Verse of the Thunder, Q: 13.11).’

‘Is it possible?’ I said, as I didn’t believe him.

‘Yes, believe me Saidkarim!’ – said Mukhtorkhon, continuing his tale. ‘And I have fresh news for you, too. Last week on Wednesday, during school time, our teacher met an evil spirit. And do you know what kind of evil spirit it was? It was an evil spirit holding a lamp in its hands!’

‘Now that’s enough!’ I said as my friends’ words made me clap my hand over my mouth in amazement. ‘Was it really a lamp-bearing spirit then?’

‘And why not?’ asked Mukhtorkhon. ‘It was a lamp-bearing spirit.’

Seeing the lamp move about from one side of the street to another, before disappearing under a gate, the domullo was apparently seized with such terror that he took to his bed for several days. The children were able to skip classes for a week.⁴⁵

Assuming this conversation is not entirely fabricated, it would seem that even as young teenagers, Saidkarim and his friends considered themselves rather above their domullo in terms of intellect and sophistication. In spite of the vivid details, there is nothing unusual about Saidkarim’s characterisation of his teacher – the domullo is routinely described in accounts both local and foreign as rather brutish, superstitious and poorly educated. There was nothing desirable or prestigious about the precarious, hand-to-mouth existence of the domullo, and it was not an occupation chosen by anyone who had the luxury of choice. I have no record of any Islamic notable having any interest in teaching children under such conditions, and indeed the attitude of the *asilzodagon* towards the domullo and the dimly lit world of the *maktab* can fairly be described as snobbery – particularly with the benefit of hindsight. The denigration of the old-style maktab, as Adeeb Khalid has shown, had its roots in the pre-revolutionary Jadid movement,

⁴⁵ Leninobod branch of the Tajik State Archives (TsGART-LF), unpublished typescript of Saidkarim Valizoda’s memoirs, *Yode az guzashta*, 18. The introduction to the manuscript is dated 1975.

whose proponents had been championing the cause of education reform in Turkestan for several decades before the Bolsheviks entered the fray.⁴⁶

Jadid schools

The education reform agenda of the Jadid movement found its adherents in Khujand, as in other urban centres of Central Asia. Following the lead of the Crimean Tatar Ismail Gaspirali (Gasprinskii),⁴⁷ several prominent Central Asian intellectuals, including Munavvar Qari of Tashkent (1878-1931) and Abdurauf Fitrat of Bukhara (1886-1938), advocated for the reform of the maktab and madrasa system. Qari, like Fitrat, was born into a family of Islamic scholars, and had characterised education reform as “the most sacred responsibility of all learned and wealthy notables.”⁴⁸

Although Khujand was not so important a centre for Jadid intellectuals as Tashkent, where Munavvar Qari opened his school in 1901, or Bukhara, a small number of jadid or new method (*usul-i-jadid*) schools were operating there by the second decade of the twentieth century. As elsewhere, these tended to be established and funded by reform-minded notables who hosted the school in their home, making for a more congenial and comfortable physical environment, which was in itself important to many jadid thinkers. Responding to the imperative to provide an education adapted to the needs of contemporary society, Jadid schools had a greater emphasis on functional literacy, a more effective method for teaching reading, and a

⁴⁶ On the Jadids “disowning the maktab,” see Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, 162 and ff.

⁴⁷ On Gaspirali, see Lazzerini, Edward James. “Ismail Bey Gasprinskii and Muslim Modernism in Russia, 1878-1914.” Ph.D. Dissertation. Seattle: University of Washington, 1973. On the relationship between Tatar Jadids and the Russian Imperial state, see Robert P. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*, Cornell University Press, 2001; particularly chapter 8 “Window, Wall or Mirror?”

⁴⁸ Munawwar Qari, “What is Reform?” originally published in 1906, translated by Adeeb Khalid and reproduced in Kurzman Charles (ed.), *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook*, 228.

broader curriculum, which included arithmetic and geography.⁴⁹ One such Jadid school was opened in Khujand in 1912 by Yusuf Muhammedov, who appears not to have been a local. In a strikingly rapid endorsement of his methods, his Khujandi pupil Hasan-Khon Mirzo Eshonov opened his own jadid school only two years later, in 1914, in his own house in Maddokhon mahalla. There were at least two other jadid schools in Khujand, one of which – run by a merchant – provided its students with the necessary equipment free of charge. While the number and reach of the new method schools in Khujand was limited, as compared to the several hundred traditional maktabas estimated to be operating in the city in 1918, their rapid expansion speaks to a growing awareness that new attention to educating the young generation was necessary in a rapidly evolving society.⁵⁰

Adeeb Khalid has argued that teachers from Jadid schools “provided the bulk of the workforce in early Soviet schools,”⁵¹ which would suggest a greater congruence between the numbers of the former and the latter than was the case in Khujand. Although Soviet schools would take many years to establish themselves as the predominant educational option across Turkestan, with private, confessional maktabas clinging on, under the radar, well into the 1930s, by the early 1920s there were already many more Soviet schools in Khujand and the surrounding district (and thus many more “Soviet” teachers) than there had even been Jadid schools, or teachers. In Khujand, at least, it would seem that their status as khojas is a more prominent feature of early Soviet teacher than a readily verifiable interest in, or exposure to, Jadidist thought.

⁴⁹ For the curriculum in jadid schools, see Adeeb Khalid, *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), chapter 5: Knowledge as Salvation.

⁵⁰ A. Mirbabaev, “maktab,” in *Khudzhand: entsiklopediia* (Glavnaia nauchnaia radaktsiia Tadjikskikh entsiklopedii, Dushanbe: 1999), 449.

⁵¹ Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 60.

The Russian-native school

In the Empire's declining years, a proportionally tiny but increasing number of Central Asians began voluntarily enrolling their male children in the small number of schools administered by the Tsarist Education Ministry specifically for the native population, and therefore called "Russian-native schools" (*russko-tuzemnaia shkola*).⁵² The first such school opened, with considerable fanfare, in Tashkent in 1884, after a brief but more optimistic phase in which, under the impatient supervision of General Kaufman, Turkestan's first Governor-General, various attempts had been made to educate Russian and local children side by side. All such attempts were a dismal failure, and for many years it seemed that nothing would induce Turkestani families to surrender their children to be schooled alongside Russians, whose education was invariably steeped in Christianity; most colonial administrators eventually conceded that it was "too soon" to bring Russians and locals into the same classroom.

"Russian-native" schools therefore had been artfully designed to attract native students by mimicking the traditional *maktab* in every particular, but with the addition of Russian language classes. In Russian-native schools the teaching was shared between a Russian teacher, who would teach the Russian language but also be fluent in the children's mother tongue (whatever that was understood to be), and a native teacher who would be free to follow the traditional *maktab* curriculum without interference. As a compromise solution brokered to ensure that some Turkestani (male) children at least learned a little Russian, such schools were hated both by conservative Russians who could countenance no educational endeavour whose

⁵² The tiny minority of ethnic Russians of school age were educated separately, in more standard Russian confessional schools.

ultimate aim was not conversion of the natives to Orthodoxy, and feared by many Turkestanis who suspected precisely that proselytisation was the school's hidden agenda.⁵³

Khujand's only Russian-native school was in operation by the last decade of the nineteenth century, but only gradually earned the trust of the local population. There had been reports, in Tashkent and elsewhere, that elite local families with roles in the Tsarist administration whose children were expected to enrol in the Russian-native schools, were instead paying the sons of the poor to take the places of their own children. Elsewhere, a Russian teacher reported that local womenfolk would gather to witness their sons and brothers begin their Russian schooling and wail as if for the dead.⁵⁴ The high stakes involved in the decision to entrust a male heir to the formative influence of the colonial power are also suggested by grim incidents in which two pupils of the Khujand school were murdered, in an apparent act of intimidation or retribution. Graduation rates in such schools remained extremely low throughout Russian Turkestan: the Khujand school only graduated two pupils in the 1897-98 school year – the khoja Burkhon-khoja Kamolkhojaev and Matkarim Sobirov, apparently a commoner. Local families took from the school what suited them – a working knowledge of Russian, in primis – and were less interested in the formal or institutional aspects of schooling. An interest in a schooling that would – on their own terms – equip their sons to function and flourish in contemporary society, was clearly not, however, a Soviet creation.⁵⁵

The Khujand Russian-native school did eventually become more widely sought after, and enrolment more than doubled between 1910, when there were fifty students, and 1915, when

⁵³ For more on Russian-native schools, and a comparison between these schools and jadid schools, see Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1850-1917*, McGill-Queen's Press, 2001.

⁵⁴ Nalivkin, *Tuzemtsy ran'she i teper'*, 82-83

⁵⁵ "Russko-tuzemnaia shkola Khudzhanda" in S.A. Abdullaev et al (eds), *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia*, Glavnaia Nauchnaia Redaktsiia Tadjikskikh Entsiklopedii (Dushanbe 1999), 655.

there were 114.⁵⁶ By the second decade of the twentieth century, prominent Khujandi families with close ties to the colonial administration, including some *asilzodagon*, were enrolling their sons willingly. Other ambitious and curious young men attended the school secretly, unbeknownst to their own families – one such was Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi, introduced earlier. Overall, the students at the school were the children of prosperous people, in the estimation of Bashir-khon tura's son.⁵⁷ There is even some evidence that the Russian-native school in Khujand had begun to charge tuition, which placed it beyond the reach of some who wished to attend, a fact that would speak to the institution's increased standing in the community. As it turns out, attendance at the Russian-native school would turn out to be one of the most reliable predictors for the ability to adapt swiftly and successfully to revolutionary upheaval and to the demands of the Soviet new order as it came into being. The new opportunities for engaging in politics created by the revolutions of 1917 greatly increased the stock of locals able to speak Russian, not just in Khujand, of course, but in all urban centres of Turkestan.⁵⁸ Graduates of the school rose to the highest ranking positions within the Party and state then available to Central Asians, while former pupils of the subsequent, Soviet incarnation of the same school did even better. The remainder of this chapter explores how and why this was the case.

⁵⁶ Tursunov also cites a figure of 76 pupils enrolled in 1912. *Slozhenie i puti razvitiia*, 76.

⁵⁷ Personal interview conducted with Muboshir Ishoqi, Khujand, July 2008; also see M.B. Iskhaki and K.M. Iskhaki, *Istoriia zarozhdeniia i stanovleniia natsional'noi shkoly v Severnom Tadjikistane (1917-1929 gg.)*, 22.

⁵⁸ See also Adeeb Khalid, "The Moment of Opportunity," chapter 2 in *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

Table 1 - Notable pupils of Russian-native schools in the Ferghana Valley.

The pupils are ordered by age, and all attended the Russian-Native school in Khujand unless otherwise noted.

NAME	Born	Joined Party	Died
Mir Iunus (K)Huseinov	1888		1.5.1938
Qori-Pulat Rahmatbaev	1889	1917	1938
Bashir-khon-tura Ishoqi (Iskhaki) (tura)	1890		1961
Davronbek Ahmadbekov	1894	1918	1938
Bobobek Mavlonbekov	1895	1920	1959
Muhammadjon Khasanov	1896	1919	1985
Abdullo Rahimboev	1896	1919	7.5.1938
Akhmadbek Mavlonbekov	1897	1918	1937
Hoji-khon Umarov (tura)	1897		1970
Mu'min Khojaev (tura)	1898	1918	1943
Abdurahim Khojibaev (khoja)	1900	1920	25.1.1938
Rahmatullo Otabekov	1900		1977
Sharif Rajabov (sayyid)	1900	1919	1937
Khamidzhon Umarov	1900		1987
Muhammadjon Masaidov	1901	1919	1939
Said Nosirov (tura)	1901		1937
Usman Muminov	1904		1938
Zarif Rajabov (khoja) Russian-native school in Andijon	1906		1990
Latif Rajabov (khoja) Russian-native school in Andijon			
Note: The names of those who will appear again in these pages are in bold.			

The family background of many of these pupils would not appear to make them natural allies of the revolution to be unleashed by the Bolsheviks in the name of the proletariat. Hoji-

khon Umarov was the heir to the Shaikh of the central mosque in Khujand – the Shaikh Muslihiddin complex – which was generally a hereditary role, passed between a very small number of related families. Said Nosirov was a tura, as was Bashir-khon Ishoqi – and he was also the nephew of the last Khan of Kokand. Nonetheless, these three would all join the Party, and enjoy rather more illustrious careers thereafter than local party members of more solidly working-class extraction.



Figure 2: The mazar of Shaikh Muslihiddin, Khujand.
The Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque and mazar complex in the centre of Khujand, in a photograph taken in the early 1870s. SOURCE: The Turkestan Album, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division.

Bashir-khon Tura Ishoqi,⁵⁹ who was born in Khujand in 1890, where he died in 1961 was among those who attended the Russian-native school: in his case, he did so behind his father's back. He was the son of Temur-khon Tura (1832/3-1916/7), who traced his lineage back to the Hazrati Hoja Ishoqi Vali.⁶⁰ Temur-khon Tura was a landowner who had "a lot of land" to keep him busy, but who also held positions as imam and mudarris at the main (Friday) mosque and madrasa complex of the city, Shaikh Muslihiddin.⁶¹ Temur-khon-tura had eight sons and two daughters from two wives. The first wife, Tura-posho-khon (an appellation made up entirely of honorific prefixes and suffixes) was the daughter of his father's brother, a marriage arrangement considered particularly satisfactory among the social elites of urban Central Asia. His second wife was the reportedly beautiful and clever Bo'ri-khon, also known as Khon sohib-khon.⁶² *Bo'ri*, which means wolf in Uzbek, is the name traditionally given to infants born with a full set of teeth, and Bo'ri-khon was the younger sister of the last Khan of Kokand, Khudoyar Khan, whose lands were annexed in stages by the Russians until the Khanate was abolished altogether in 1875.

⁵⁹ Although in (post-Soviet) print his name appears as Bashirkhon or Bashirkhontura, I have decided to hyphenate the suffix –khon to make it easier to read, and make clear that Bashir was his given name, whereas -khon and –tura are both suffixes used to indicate his lineage. It would be considered very disrespectful in Khujand today to address a tura without adding the suffix –khon to his or her name. Other honorific suffixes in heavy use include mirzo (a contraction of emir zoda, descendent of the emir) and poshoh, used for female turas.

⁶⁰ The family maintains a family tree tracing their descent back many generations: Temur-khon Tura was the son of Saiid Ahmadkhon Tura-i Khujandi, son of Abdurrasul-khoja, son of Ortiqkhoja, son of Abdulmajid-khoja.

⁶¹ Temur-khon tura, his father Ahmad-khon tura Khujandi, his brother Mavlon-khon tura and his niece Tura posho-khon (daughter of Mavlon-khon tura and Bashir-khon tura's first wife), are the only people whose graves are situated to this day on the precincts of the Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque and madrasa complex.

⁶² It will perhaps be noted that the female names here consist almost entirely of a string of honorific suffixes.



Figure 3: Khudoiar Khan, last Khan of Kokand. Photograph taken between 1865 and 1872. Source: The Turkestan Album, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-ppmsca-14268]

As a child, the young Bashir-khon was educated at home, but then travelled to Kokand as a teenager, to study in the madrasa endowed by and named after his uncle Khudoyar Khan. He knew Arabic well, according to his son, and while still a child became a *qori*, one who has memorised and can recite the entire Qur'an. To illustrate his father's love of learning and the good that this had wrought in his life, his son Muboshir-khon told the following story:

"I have an old lamp from China, more than a hundred years old. I asked my mother about it, and she said that my grandfather [Temur-khon tura] gave my father a gold coin [as a present] when he had finished learning the Qur'an by heart. My father went out and bought that lamp of pure porcelain with the money. My grandfather rejoiced to see this, [and blessed his son saying] 'You bought a lamp and have brought yourself light, you

will have an enlightened life.’ My own children are not so enlightened” – he concluded with a tone of regret.⁶³

Bashir-khon returned to Khujand after several years of study in a Kokandi madrasa that seems to have been more progressive and Jadid-oriented than those to be found in Khujand.⁶⁴ He then continued his studies, unbeknownst to his father, at the Russian-native school, where he was able to learn Russian well, and form a lifelong bond with his Russian teacher there in the process. He was a man of wide-ranging literary interests, and his son remembers him reading a great many newspapers “from Azerbaijan” (presumably Tatar, Jadid publications), and “he was very progressive, though I only learned this much later. In my childhood, all I knew was not to touch his newspapers.”⁶⁵ The importance of knowledge to the *asilzodagon*’s sense of self, and of learning as a lifelong experience, was strongly emphasized by all those whom I interviewed between 2009 and 2011, and is a central motif in published biographies and memoirs. The conviction that the pursuit of knowledge was not only a personal good but an important service to the community would have important consequences for how the *asilzodagon*, individually and as a group, adapted to the challenges of the Soviet period.

In spite of what a strict Marxist might have made of the class backgrounds of this group, it is hardly surprising perhaps that all known graduates of the Russian-native school in Khujand went on to enjoy relatively prestigious Soviet careers (though many of those, as can be seen from the table, ended violently in 1936-37). The comparative advantage offered by their language

⁶³ Interview with Muboshir Ishoqi, Khujand, July 2011. My interviewee mentioned the blessing of the lamp in connection with his father’s having been able to complete the Hajj, and claimed that before 1965 only seventeen people from the entire USSR had been allowed to participate. “Others resented my father as they had not been able to go on Hajj” he explained “but maybe God did not want them to go... The lamp enlightened his life.”

⁶⁴ On the relatively progressive atmosphere in Kokand in the years leading up to the Revolution, see Marco Buttino, *La rivoluzione capovolta: l’Asia Centrale tra il crollo dell’impero zarista e la formazione dell’URSS* (L’Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003), 269-70.

⁶⁵ Interview with Muboshir Ishoqi, Khujand, July 2011.

skills would clearly have been significant, as was their cultural capital that led their families to seek out this educational opportunity for them to begin with. The atmosphere of the school must also have contributed: Russian-native schools were surely among the most conciliatory and liberal manifestations of the Tsarist administration of Turkestan, and the only institutions designed to meet the native population halfway. Russian teachers at these schools were required to use “the native language” (whether Persian or Turki was meant by this in the Khujand case is not clear), and of the officially-sanctioned schools in the Empire, only Russian-native schools had been stripped of an overtly Christian curriculum. Locals could therefore acquire the hegemonic language without having their own culture denigrated or denied, in what was clearly a relatively progressive, if not actually left-leaning, political atmosphere.

In the final years before the Revolution, the Russian language teacher at the Russian-native school was N.I. Voloshin, who appears to have been brought up in Khujand. Voloshin formed lifelong bonds with several of his pupils in Khujand, and was to spend the rest of his life in Central Asia, continuing to work in public education for decades after the revolution. He is remembered with gratitude and affection by former pupils and their families for his role in training “native cadres” of teachers. After the Revolution he was nominated district commissar for people’s education in 1918, a post he occupied until 1920, when he was replaced by Mu’min Suleimanovich Khojaev, one of his former pupils. Although he eventually moved to Samarkand, Voloshin remained a lifelong friend to Bashir-khon tura, throughout the vicissitudes of Stalinism, and visited him for the last time in 1961. On that occasion – as Bashir-khon’s son related – the old friends parted in tears, after Voloshin had had a dream warning him that they would never meet again – and indeed, they both died that year.⁶⁶ It is highly unusual to hear of such close

⁶⁶ Conversation with son of Bashir-khon tura’s son, Khujand, July 2011.

friendships between Russians and Tajiks spanning the watershed of 1917, before which venues for close social interactions between the two communities seem to have been limited.

The Khujand uprising of 1916

The second life experience that played an important role in laying the path towards Communist Party membership – both in terms of developing a revolutionary consciousness and in terms of being able to provide evidence of such a thing – was participation in the uprising against the draft in 1916. This was an experience that Khujandis of both elite and non-elite background might have in common, unlike the other two formative experiences I consider in this chapter: factory work, or attending the Russian-native school.

Khujand was gripped by revolutionary fervour relatively early, particularly if one accepts the periodization of soviet era historians who inserted the 1916 uprising against the First World War draft into the narrative of the Revolution. Although in the early years of the war, Central Asians were not conscripted, the war had taken its toll on the region in other ways. The population of Turkestan was subjected to increased taxes, requisitions of horses and camels, and most importantly, the balance between exports of cotton and imports of grain was adversely affected.⁶⁷ By this time, the colony depended on the importation of significant amounts of grain from Russia, to make up for the increased acreage taken up by cotton, but during the war the price of grain rose sharply against that of cotton, leading to massive inflation – a problem that was particularly acute in the Ferghana valley.⁶⁸ The local merchants, who had prospered thanks to cotton, had no interest in promoting an increase of grain production locally, so ordinary people

⁶⁷ In 1913, for example, the Ferghana oblast had a deficit of 30 million poods (roughly 600,000 metric tons) of grain in 1913. See Marco Buttino, *La Rivoluzione Capovolta: l'Asia centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS* (Napoli, L'ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003), 86.

⁶⁸ Marco Buttino, "Study of the Economic Crisis and Depopulation in Turkestan, 1917-1920," in *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.9, No.4 (1990), 60.

were already under considerable strain when, in late June 1916, the Russian government in Petrograd decided to mobilise the *inorodtsy* (non-citizen aliens) of Turkestan for non-combat roles in the army. Without consulting his administrators in the region, Tsar Nicholas II signed the decree conscripting a quarter of million Turkestani males.

Mistakenly believing that appeasing those perceived to be community leaders – the mullahs and “honoured individuals,” as the Ferghana Oblast governor put it, would be enough to maintain the passivity of the Muslims, the government planned to exempt the elite and recruit from the mass of the population.⁶⁹ This insulting call to enlist – which stopped short of trusting the people of Turkestan to bear arms – sparked an uprising in Khujand before the draft was even officially announced.

Saidkarim Valizoda, who briefly describes the uprising in his memoir, suggests that it was precisely the perception that recruiting would focus on those households who could least afford to lose the manpower, just as cotton-picking season was getting underway, that brought people out onto the streets. On July 4 an angry crowd gathered in the streets, and swelled around the bailiff’s office, demanding that the registration of hired laborers (*mardikor*) be stopped. Valizoda, a young child at the time of the uprising, quotes the protesters as rallying round the cry “we will not give any more of our hired labourers!” Already stretched to breaking point, the peasant-farmers and artisans of Khujand had good reason to fear the loss of their male breadwinners, many of whom relied on wages paid day to day. The tsarist police were swift to intervene and turn their guns on the unarmed crowd, which was soon forced to disperse.⁷⁰ Rumour both of the uprising in Khujand and of its brutal suppression spread quickly across the

⁶⁹ The Ferghana Oblast governor A. I. Gippius is quoted in Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Indiana University Press, 2007), 178.

⁷⁰ Saidkarim Valizoda, “*Yode az guzashta*,” 5[1.10].

oasis towns of Turkestan however, colouring the population's response to the official announcement, which was finally made on July 8.⁷¹

Rumours had spread that local officials, who had been given the unenviable task of drawing up the lists of draftees, were being bribed by the wealthy to exclude their sons from the draft – and it was often these local officials who bore the brunt of the crowds' anger. More than fifty county elders were thus killed, prompting some religious leaders to intervene in support of the tsarist decree. Daniel Brower cites a report which refers to ulama in the Ferghana Valley telling the assembled crowds that “the Sharia does not forbid Muslims to carry out the will of the tsar.”⁷² Such attempts to appeal to the religious sentiments of the crowds had little discernible effect, and the disturbances carried on into the autumn.

The July uprising in Khujand brought together people from different walks of life, from almost every mahalla in the old city. Among the participants in the Khujand uprising was Bashir-khon tura. He was 26 years old in 1916 and being a “hot-blooded young man,” in his (by then elderly) son's characterisation, was among those caught up in the “anti-imperialist” uprising. He became more circumspect as he aged, and took care to document his participation in the July uprising via affidavits a few years later, when it would greatly enhance his socialist credentials. There were short term consequences too, for some of those who took part: Yahio Olimi (1877-1929), a member of the ulama who had completed a course of study at the Umarkhon madrasa in Kokand, was imprisoned for his role in the uprising. He was released only after the February revolution, and then went on to teach for a decade in Soviet schools, before being slain in an attack on a Basmachi band in Garm. Across the Ferghana Valley, the uprisings

⁷¹ Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Indiana University Press, 2007), 178.

⁷² TsGARUz, F.461, op.1, d.1888a, l.60, cited by Daniel Brower in *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (Routledge, 2003), 158.

against the draft that summer drew townspeople as well as farmers, craftsmen, weavers, and members of the intelligentsia and ulama – and in Khujand and Uroteppa (now Istaravshan), women took to the streets as well as men.⁷³

Other participants – seemingly all of more humble backgrounds – were drafted off to the rear, in apparent retaliation for their role in the uprising. Several dozen Khujandi men were sent off to work in industries in Kharkov, in a train manufacturing plant and an electrical power station, which were presumably then suffering from labour shortages due to the war.

One of the fullest accounts of this episode is contained in a collection published in 1967 entitled *Mardoni Maidon* (The Men of the Square), a compilation of character sketches and biographies in the hagiographic mode of eighteen Communist trailblazers, all natives of or residents in Khujand. Of these eighteen, five are authored by the Khujandi novelist Rahim Jalil (of whom we will hear more in chapter five); the others each have a different, local, author. A work clearly intended for a wide readership, it is replete with vivid dialogue and contains no footnotes, making it a historical source as enticing as it is problematic. The authors however, most of whom hail from the same social circles as their subject matter, undoubtedly had good access to oral informants and even some archival documents,⁷⁴ and indeed these are often referred to in the text – albeit without full citations – while the work’s rhetorical purpose is nothing if not transparent (it was published to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the October revolution).⁷⁵

⁷³ Sh. Iusupov and D. Berdiev, “Vosstanie 1916g. v gorode Ura-Tiube i Ganchinskoi volosti,” *Izvestiia AN RT. Serii: vostokovedenie, istoriia, filologiia*, No.4 (28) (1992), 77; quoted in Kirill Nourzhanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (ANU E Press, 2013), 24.

⁷⁴ Better access, perhaps, than that enjoyed by those seeking to conduct research in Tajikistan today.

⁷⁵ Rahim Jalil (editor), *Mardoni Maidon*, Dushanbe, Irfon: 1967.

One of the oral informants anonymously quoted in *Mardoni Maidon*, reflecting on his experience in the factories of Kharkov from the vantage point of the early 1960s, recalled:

“Going to the factories in Russia was not just daywork (*mardikori*) for us Khujandis, but a practical schooling in revolution. We were in contact with the active members of the RSDRP cell and learned from them. [...] During the days of the February revolution, we marched for six kilometers on foot with our fellow workers of the Kharkov train manufacturing plant, and the “Gel’ferik – TODE” power station, raising the red flags and slogans, and took part in the big demonstrations and meetings in Pavlovskii and Nikolaevskii squares, and it was then that we heard the impassioned speeches of the Bolshevik revolutionaries....”⁷⁶

Out of the seven men whose names are known to me, who participated in the Khujand uprising and were subsequently sent to work in Kharkov, six had joined the Party by 1919, with surely impeccable credentials. Their subsequent careers, however, turned out to be rather less brilliant than those of the *asilzodagon* who joined the Party after attending the Russian-native school, taking part in the 1916 uprising themselves, or – as we shall see – proving themselves in the struggle against Basmachi rebels.

Bolshevik rupture

“...the local population did not take any part in this revolution whatsoever”⁷⁷

Following the Revolution of February 1917, over the course of that year, various unions of reservists, local workers and soldiers were formed across Turkestan, beginning in Tashkent: these were local Soviets that roundly ignored the mass of local population and addressed themselves solely to the small minority of Russian speakers. The abdication of the Tsar of all the Russias had, however, made citizens of the Turkestanis too, and the indigenous population also followed

⁷⁶ Rahim Jalil (editor), *Mardoni Maidon* (Dushanbe, Irfon: 1967), 96.

⁷⁷ “Theses concerning the struggle against colonialism and feudal-patriarchal relations in Turkestan,” presented by the provisional central committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan on the occasion of a regional congress of Soviets in Samarkand, August 1920. RGASPI, F.670, op.1,d.56, l.9.

developments with interest and excitement, European protestations to the contrary notwithstanding. Beginning in March, huge crowd began to gather in Tashkent – about a hundred miles away from Khujand, and the Toshkand Shuroi Islomiyasi (Tashkent Muslim Council) was formed to govern the old city (as opposed to the new, Russian quarter).⁷⁸ The Shuroi Islomiyasi also strove to coordinate the work of similar Muslim organisations soon established in other towns in Turkestan, including in Khujand.

The mood among the sections of the local population in Khujand following the February Revolution – particularly, it seems, among the young – was very optimistic and hopeful, even festive at times. In his memoir, Saidkarim Valizoda describes a riotous flowering of open-air folk music performances, poetry recitation contests and wrestling matches in the revolutionary years (which were those of his childhood). Large crowds gathered on the banks of the Syr Darya to watch young people sparring in games of verbal improvisation and wit, and to hear newly composed revolutionary songs. Some of the most popular singers of the day, including Qori Sulaimon Siddiqov, Abduqodir Karimov and Muhammadamin Nazarov, all of of Razzoq district, all hastened apparently to add revolutionary songs to their repertoire of classic Tajik and Uzbek ghazals.⁷⁹

The Russians, meanwhile, were organizing to retain power. On March 9, 1917, fourteen members of the garrison stationed in Khujand met to form a Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies. On March 22, a delegation from the workers of Sulukta⁸⁰ coal mine, some sixty kilometers to the south of Khujand requested to join the soviet, whose name was then changed to the "Soviet of workers'

⁷⁸ Adeeb Khalid, "The Moment of Opportunity," chapter 2 in *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

⁷⁹ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, l.12.

⁸⁰ The mining town is Sülüktü in Kyrgyz, and is today in Kyrgyzstan.

and soldiers' deputies."⁸¹ It is not clear whether any native Khujandis had been formally included by this point, although by August, with a second name change to "Soviet of soldiers, workers and Muslim deputies," at least token local involvement had been formally acknowledged.

The impetus for including representatives of the native population may have been provided by the return, in May 1917, of the Khujandi young men who had been punitively drafted to the plants of Kharkov. It was in May, it seems, that a red flag bearing the slogan "Workers of the world, unite!" was first seen fluttering above the courtyard home (*havli*) of Rahimberdi Egamberdiev, and it began to be rumoured around the mahalla that "Egamberdi's son had become a Bolshevik."⁸²

Another early member of the Soviet was Haidar Usmonov, who was born in 1885⁸³ to a poor peasant family, and as a teenager had been apprenticed first to a blacksmith, then to a baker. The baker was under contract to supply the coal mine at Sulukta with bread, and sent Haidar there to make bread. Haidar's acquaintance with the coal miners seems to have been a formative experience, when his bakery became the secret meeting place for the socialist cell formed among the coal miners, led by one D.T. Dekanov. Ivanitskii too, stopped by the inconspicuous little shop from time to time, and eventually asked Usmonov if the group could meet in the latter's own *havli*, where such a gathering might attract less unwanted attention than it would in the Russian quarter of Khujand. Usmonov agreed, and thereafter (presumably post 1905) meetings were held regularly there between Ivanitskii, Dekanov and others from the coal mine, and a handful of local Khujandis including Abduqodir Rahimboev and Jura Zokirov.⁸⁴ All three of these men subsequently took

⁸¹ LF TsGA RT, F.370, op.1: del postoiannogo khraneniia i po lichnomu sostavu za 1918-19.

⁸² Rahim Jalil, *Mardoni Maidon*, 106.

⁸³ In Rahim Jalil's *Mardoni Maidon*, Usmonov's date of birth is given as 1866, which I take to be incorrect.

⁸⁴ *Mardoni Maidon*, 38. Haidar Usmonov sustained several wounds in campaigns against the Basmachis, until he was obliged to retire from active duty in 1925. From that point until the end of his life in 1956, he served as the vice chair of the village soviet for Shaikhburkhon, a village on the immediate outskirts of Khujand which by the time of his death had become one of the most successful collective farms of Tajikistan (see chapter four).

part in the 1916 uprising, and were among those arrested and drafted to do factory work in Kharkov, where their revolutionary education continued. Following their return from the Ukraine nine months later, Ivanitskii founded a Bolshevik cell that was apparently unusual in including any members of the indigenous population at all.

As Adeeb Khalid has shown, there were deep ideological divisions within indigenous communities across Turkestan, which the tiny socialist cell in Khujand could play no part in overcoming as yet. There were profound disagreements, predicated on different understandings of Islam, concerning the role to be played by the ulama, which had long played a leading role in society. The Tashkent municipal elections held in July 1917 demonstrated that, when it came to the polls, the progressives and Jadids represented by the Shuroi Islomiyasi could easily be overcome by the Ulamo Jamiyati, which represented more conservative members of the ulama and mercantile classes. Both sides, however, included traditionally educated ulama, and members of notable Islamic lineages. Many on the progressive, Jadid camp rallied around the idea of the nation and a national culture,⁸⁵ but that concept created further questions and possible tension in the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual towns of the Ferghana Valley, where as we have seen, the population of Khujand spoke Turki as well as Persian and where most had been – until now – utterly indifferent to questions of ethnicity.

When it came to sharing power across ethnic lines, the stakes increased considerably in November 1917 when, once again following Tashkent's lead, in Khujand too, all power was declared to be in the hands of the local Soviet. Thereafter, throughout the upheaval of the Civil War, neither the Basmachis nor the Whites would succeed in overpowering the Red Army forces in Khujand. The Civil War years took a heavy toll on the Ferghana Valley – not only because it

⁸⁵ Adeeb Khalid, "The Moment of Opportunity," chapter 2 in *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

was one of the main theatres of the anti-Soviet Basmachi resistance movement, but due to the famine. Turkestan as a region lost up to 27% of its population between 1917 and 1920 to famine and related violence.⁸⁶ As Marco Buttino has compellingly argued, the famine greatly heightened the competition for resources between the Russian settler population and the native Turkestanis, ensuring that, for years to come, the defining dichotomy of the revolution in Central Asia would not be along class lines, but along ethnic lines.⁸⁷ The Russian revolutionaries in Turkestan had first seized power in order to gain control over the food supply, and only retrospectively, in Spring 1918, legitimised their actions by forming a local branch of the Bolshevik Party.

When it seized power in November, the Tashkent Soviet included no representatives of the native Muslim population at all, and brusquely refused the coalition proposal put forward by the Ulama Jamiyati, as Adeeb Khalid has found: “The inclusion of Muslims in the organ of supreme regional power is unacceptable at the present time in view of both the completely indefinite attitude of the native population toward the power of the Soviets of soldiers’, workers’, and peasants’ deputies, and the fact that there are no proletarian class organizations among the native population whose representation in the organ of supreme regional power the faction would welcome.”⁸⁸ Thus coldshouldered by the Tashkent Soviet, the Shuroi Islomiyasi and allies regrouped with a congress in Kokand in late November, which concluded by proclaiming an autonomous Turkestani government to be based in Kokand. The Jadids and Russian-educated notables at the head of this fledgling state had no experience of administration, and the end came less than three months later,

⁸⁶ Marco Buttino, “Study of the Economic Crisis and Depopulation in Turkestan, 1917-1920,” in *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.9, No.4 (1990), 65.

⁸⁷ Marco Buttino, “Study of the Economic Crisis and Depopulation in Turkestan, 1917-1920,” in *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.9, No.4 (1990), 61-62.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Adeeb Khalid, “The Moment of Opportunity,” chapter two of *Making Uzbekistan, Turkestan v nachale XX veka*, 74.

in February 1918 – as soon as the Tashkent soviet could spare the manpower to crush the upstarts. Most of the city of Kokand was reduced to rubble.⁸⁹

The lesson of Kokand, less than ninety miles along the valley to the east, surely made a deep impression on the *asilzodagon* of Khujand, where several dynasties had close relations, providing a stark demonstration of what lay behind the rhetoric of self-determination then being bandied about by the Petrograd Soviet. Subsequent Tajik historiography of the Soviet period took great pains to conceal the hostility of the original Soviets towards sharing power with the indigenous population, or the latter's interest in exploring autonomous forms of government. This reticence, given the difficulty of accessing provincial archives, makes it difficult to uncover the precise timeline for the early days of native Khujandis' interactions with the Communist Party.

As far as can be determined, however, the first Bolshevik cell in Khujand was founded by Evgenii Aleksandrovich Ivanitskii, and among its first local members – who all seem to have joined the Party over the course of 1918 – were Haidar Usmonov, and the others who had attended clandestine meetings at his house: Jura Zakirov, Abduqodir Rahimboev, and the brothers Ahmadbek and Bobobek Mavlonbekov.⁹⁰ The Mavlonbekov brothers, whose father was employed at the Khujand post office (and thus, one can assume, spoke at least some Russian) had both attended the Russian native school. Ahmadbek joined the Bolsheviks at Ivanitskii's invitation and personal recommendation, at the age of just 21, in April 1918.⁹¹ By then, the nascent Soviet power structure in Khujand was faced the threat of Basmachi insurgents conducting raids on nearby villages. As indicated by the flimsy records for the first years of Soviet power in Khujand preserved

⁸⁹ On the destruction of the autonomous government in Kokand, see Marco Buttino, *La rivoluzione capovolta: l'Asia Centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS* (L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003), 292 and ff. This chapter also reproduces haunting photographs of the city covered by rubble, and scattered with corpses.

⁹⁰ A. Kadyrov, Sh. Dzhalilov "Ivanitskii," in *Khudzhand: entsiklopediia* (Dushanbe, 1999), 329.

⁹¹ Mardonai Maidon, 57.

in the local state archives, the most pressing concerns of the local Ispolkom (Executive Committee) were providing aid to those stricken by the famine, and forming volunteer units to combat the Basmachis.⁹² Even as skirmishes with the Basmachi intensified, compelling the Khujand Soviet to evacuate people from certain areas,⁹³ the local leadership strove to extend their power beyond the city, by liaising with the TsIK (Central Executive Committee) concerning plans to redraw the boundaries between Samarkand and Ferghana oblasts, and at the ground level by forming village soviets.⁹⁴

The struggle to quell the Basmachi insurgency in the Ferghana Valley relied heavily on the recruitment of volunteers, and also – increasingly – on taking concrete, albeit temporary, measures to appease and win over the local population. This importance of the latter was earnestly pointed out in 1922 by I. Vrachev, the Russian officer commanding all Red troops in Ferghana:

“If, in the early stages of its development, the Basmachestvo encountered support on the part of the population, this can be explained simply by reference to the political immaturity and imprudent – even, at times, clumsy – actions of our own allies among the civilian population. Pillage, massacre of unarmed civilians, and outrages [were] committed against the religious traditions of the locals [...] But the latest political measures of the Soviet power, the New Economic Policy, the return of waqf (church land), the introduction of courts of qozis [or qadis, Islamic judges] and bois, which function in accordance with sharia law, the return of old method schools and the strengthening of inner revolutionary discipline amongst our military units, [...], all this together has promoted closer ties between Soviet power and the working population of Ferghana.”⁹⁵

Readers will note the approving tone with which this military man discusses the measures taken to appease the local population in the context of the New Economic Policy, several of which constitute a tactical retreat relative to policies previously implemented by the Bolsheviks.

⁹² LF TsGA RT, F.370, op.1, d.1, covering the period between 13 May 1918 and 21 November 1919

⁹³ LF TsGA RT, F.370, op.1, d.17, covering the second half of 1921.

⁹⁴ LF TsGA RT, F.370, op.1, d.14, covering the period between 7 December 1921 and 16 December 1922

⁹⁵ RGASPI, F. 61, op.3, d.7, l.10: Order n.233, dated 21 April 1922 and marked “Secret.”

In defeating the Basmachi insurgency, a strategy that was apparently effective both in terms of recruiting volunteers, and in ensuring that those volunteer units trusted their leaders, was that of appointing local notables – the *asilzodagon* – to lead the units. In turn, fighting against the Basmachi uprising turned out to be one of the most reliable mechanisms by which *asilzodagon* were able to prove their mettle and political reliability. Some *asilzodagon* who took part in the Basmachestvo – Boltukhon Turaev and Mansur-khon tura Akramov, for instance, were thus able to join the Party relatively early even without the benefit of significant prior exposure to Russian culture (whether in the form of Russian-native education or travel to Russia). I conjecture that the respect that the *asilzodagon* commanded in their communities, and the ingrained confidence with which they assumed leadership positions, made them particularly successful in leading their groups of volunteers against the sometimes equally charismatic Basmachi chiefs.

Boltu-khon Turaev was the scion of a tura dynasty who made his name in the struggle against the Basmachi cells. He was the nephew of Toshkhoja Asiri (1864-1916), a progressively-minded poet and follower of Ahmad Donish, who denounced the social inequalities of his time, and after whom the central regional library in Khujand was subsequently named. Again, one of the fullest sources on his life is *Mardoni Maidon* (The Men of the Square, published 1967). A sample of this engaging text follows:

The leader of the Basmachis in the Uroteppa area, Kholbuta, was much prone to boasting, but also admitted as follows: “I am not afraid of a regiment of soldiers. But if I see the nightmare that is Boltu-khon tura even from afar, my heart quakes.” [...] On May 29, 1922 in the village of Basmanda, Kholbuta was drinking and merrymaking with his most loyal associates in a wedding hall, while his thieves were engrossed in a feast and a *buzkashi*⁹⁶ match. When their merriment and feasting was at its peak, the Basmachis received news through their guard that Red soldiers were approaching from the direction of Uroteppa.

⁹⁶ A thrilling Central Asian game played mounted on horses, somewhat related to polo, except that the beheaded carcass of a goat (the *buz*) or sheep is used instead of a ball. For a more detailed description of *buzkashi*, see chapter five.

Kholbuta, who until then had not felt a powerful blow from the Red Army, strolled over to his associates without fear and made a show of bravery, by commanding them all to remain in their seats. They continued their drinking and merrymaking. He also gave orders that the buzhashi should not stop. He himself unhurriedly got on his horse and, with a few select young men, went to meet the Red soldiers. Dust was coming from the direction of Basmanda, and through it, soldiers were visible. They came closer. Before all the others one tall, strong-bodied man [Boltu-khon, naturally] urged on his horse, his dark face gradually becoming visible. Now they could see his fiery eyes. He drew his sword, raised it, dug in his spurs and advanced so quickly that no one had time to react before he was upon them. Being the first to arrive, he threw himself into the thick of the Basmachis alone. Those who were blocking his path, he either slashed with his sword, or killed with a bullet from his pistol. In the middle of the battle from time to time a cry would ring out “Hey there Bobocha (*Hoi Bobocha*)! Don’t kill Kholbuta, let’s catch him alive!”⁹⁷

The finale of this exciting episode is somewhat less impressive, as Boltukhon captures someone else, mistaking him for Kholbuta in the heat of the battle. In this and in several similar accounts of encounters with the Basmachi in *Mardoni Maidon* however, several key topoi of the anti-Basmachi mythology can be seen. The leaders of the struggle are fearless horsemen of great charisma, whose informal leadership style (unlike Kholbuta, his followers address Boltukhon less formally, though still respectfully) does nothing to undermine their natural authority.

On the evidence of *Mardoni Maidon* then, Boltukhon Turaev was among the first Khujandi members of the Communist Party:⁹⁸ the account cites a letter from the uezd Party committee, dated 22 February 1919, which confirms that Boltukhon Turaev is a Party member, and notes that he was recently dispatched to organise and train the members of the primary Party Organisation in Uralkent volost.⁹⁹ Turaev’s early appointments in the service of the Soviet state included: member of the soviet of deputies of Khujand uezd, cavalry scout, commander of an assault company, chair of Nov (Nau) Revkom, and commander of the garrison at Uroteppa.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Rahim Jalil, *Mardoni Maidon*, 70-71.

⁹⁸ According to “Turaev, Boltukhon” in S.A.Abdullaev, *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia* (Dushanbe, 1996), Boltukhon joined the Party in 1918.

⁹⁹ Rahim Jalil (editor), *Mardoni Maidon* (Dushanbe, Irfon: 1967), 73-74.

¹⁰⁰ Rahim Jalil (editor), *Mardoni Maidon* (Dushanbe, Irfon: 1967), 75.

Although he was eventually expelled from the Party – probably in the 1930s – he lived to a respectable age and died in 1962.¹⁰¹

Mansur-khon tura Akramov (1895-1943), son of Eshon Saiid Akram khoja, also served the Bolshevik cause by fighting Basmachi bands, and as chief of police for the city. His descendants keep a copy of their family tree, and a Cyrillic transcription thereof, tracing their ancestry generation by generation back to Muhammad. A self-published memoir written by his descendants in 2006, informs us that, having received an early religious education at home, Mansur-khon lost his father at a young age, in 1912. As was the case for many others, this personal loss ultimately set the stage for greater freedom of movement and self-presentation, and removed some of the obstacles to presenting himself as a friend to the Revolution. Mansur-khon tura “enrolled in a Russian school that had been founded to help the poor.” He greeted the coming of the Revolution “optimistically,” and joined the Komsomol in 1918.¹⁰² He served the Party by taking the lead in combating Basmachi cells close to home – in Khujand district itself (in Yova, Ispisor), and as far afield as Isfara. He later become Khujand’s chief of police and vice chair of the Khujand IspolKom (1928-30). We will hear more of Mansur-khon tura’s later career, and how it was cut short, in chapter four.

Other patricians of Khujand who distinguished themselves in the struggle against the Basmachis were Mu’min Khojaev and Hakim Karim – the latter being the pen name (*takhallus*) by which a scion of a tura Khujandi family who would later gain prominence as a writer was known. Mu’min Khojaev was a member of one of the more than a hundred families in Khujand claiming descent from the Juibori Khojas, descended from a murid or follower of the Makhdum-i

¹⁰¹ Rahim Jalil, *Mardoni Maidon*, 74. See also “Turaev Boltukhon,” in *Entsiklopediia Khudzhand*, 1999.

¹⁰² Noriniso Alimuhammad and Hotami Homid, *Mardi neksirisht* (Nashrieti Ejod, Dushanbe:2006), 4. This volume was published in a print run of 200 and distributed privately to relatives and friends (and at least one grateful researcher).

A'zam called Khoja Muhammad Islam (1493-1563) – we will see more of him in the next chapter. For all the anxiety in Party circles about admitting those with the wrong class background, as evidenced by careful compilation of files on the class backgrounds of members of the Khujand UGorRevKom, divided into workers and “*sluzhashchii*” going back to 1922,¹⁰³ the local Party organisation was in no position to conduct thorough background checks for the time being, or to reject willing hands. And meanwhile, the *asilzodagon* were learning to speak Bolshevik.

First Soviet Schools

*“The revolution won, and all who until that time had been considered literate, became illiterate”*¹⁰⁴

That any experiments in education were conducted at all in the tense and uncertain conditions is remarkable, but yet more striking is the realization that a small number of recognizably Soviet schools, perceptibly different in structure, content and appearance from both old-style and new maktab, had been established in Khujand by the beginning of the 1920s. Further, these schools were staffed, and enthusiastically so, by a portion of the old elite of Khujand, and the city's Islamic notables were to play a crucial role in the forming the character of what would become the Tajik Soviet schooling system. For all the rhetoric of socialism, atheism and class war with which the Soviet educational project was marked, in Khujand, as in other urban centres of Central Asia, Soviet schools would not have got off the ground, nor have assumed their distinctive character, without the contribution of the pre-revolutionary, Islamically-defined elites. This is part of a larger argument to be developed in subsequent chapters about the pivotal role

¹⁰³ LF TsGA RT, F. 370, op.1, d.128.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmadjoni Rahmatzod, Niyat Haiot and A'zamkhon Akbarov, *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (“[Abu Ali ibn] Sino's scalpel in hand”) Khujand, Khuroson: 2006), 22.

played by the Islamic notables of Khujand in the articulation of a Tajik socialist culture in the 1920s and 1930s, slogans of class warfare and proletarian resurgence notwithstanding.

Having once established the extent of the *asilzodagon*'s participation in the project of establishing Soviet schools in Khujand, the question of motivation arises, given that the enmity felt by the Soviet state for old privilege and religiously-derived authority could fairly be expected to have been mutual. In many cases, of course, it was – several high-ranking clerics, Islamic scholars and administrators joined the ranks of those fleeing to Afghanistan or further afield, while others were executed, and thus did not contribute to a Tajik Soviet culture. But what of those who stayed, and willingly or otherwise through in their lot with what would become the Tajik Socialist Soviet Republic?

The participation of the *asilzodagon* in the project of building a Soviet Tajik state and culture should not only be explained in terms of opportunity, although the low rates of functional literacy in the territory of the former khanates of Kokand and Bukhara made it all but impossible for the Bolsheviks to spurn the assistance of the local elites, and they relied on their assistance just as the Tsarist administration had done prior to the Revolution. An explanation in terms of the opportunity cost of not involving local elites in the socialism- and nation-building projects obscures the question of what motivated the elites themselves to participate, and to take up the cause of socialism with such marked enthusiasm in many cases.

One essential mediating factor, as Adeeb Khalid¹⁰⁵ and others have argued, was the Jadid movement. Those among local intellectuals who had been converted to the cause of Jadidism, whose rallying cry included calls for modernisation, education reform and greater rights for women, were often more easily converted to the cause of socialism. Another such mediating

¹⁰⁵ See Adeeb Khalid, *The politics of Muslim cultural reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

factor, as we have seen, was the Russian-native school, which had equipped a cohort of Khujandi notables with the language skills and intellectual curiosity necessary to contemplate engaging with the Bolshevik project.

Nonetheless, the task of establishing universal, compulsory schooling in the native language as directed by Lenin must have seemed a truly daunting one – even without the spectre of famine and armed rebellion looming just beyond the city precincts. The problem of funding was partially addressed by the formation of the *waqf otdel* (Russian: waqf department), which took over the supervision of the city's waqf endowments and redirected the proceeds to fund schools. To the Soviet government, the *waqf otdely* set up in Khujand and elsewhere in Central Asia were a strictly temporary means¹⁰⁶ of appeasing local sentiment by avoiding outright confiscation of Islamic charitable endowments, which instead were consolidated and placed under the supervision of a credible member of the ulama. In Khujand, the waqf department was directed by Mullo Umar Bobojonov, and oversaw a varied portfolio including 82 tanaps (or 41 acres) of orchards, the Shamsiboi bathhouse, 14,000 tanaps (7,000 acres) of pasture, and four caravanserais. The yearly income of 14,950 roubles was eventually used to fund four Soviet schools in Bobokhoja, Sangburon and Puli Chukur mahallas, as well as a public library.¹⁰⁷

As inheritors of the Tsarist education system in Turkestan, the infrastructure available in Khujand was very slim: but a single state-administered school aimed at the local population (the Russian-native school), and another two for the tiny ethnic Russian population. The first experiments in Soviet schooling were conducted in pre-existing schools, and in houses confiscated from – or semi-voluntarily handed over by, members of the so-called “boi class.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ The waqf department would in fact continue to operate until 1930.

¹⁰⁷ A. Mirbabaev, “Otdel vakfa,” in *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia* (Dushanbe, 1999), 576.

¹⁰⁸ See chapter two for a more extensive treatment of the struggle against the boi class (*baistvo*).

The spectrum of educational opportunities available in the revolutionary years in Khujand can be viewed from the vantage point of a single mahalla. Pularkish mahalla, located on the street radiating north from Panjshanbe bazaar, thus connects the trading centre of the town with the river. There were little over two hundred adults counted as living in Pularkish in 1929. The Jahrandoz mosque in Pularkish was larger than most neighbourhood mosques, as it included a two types of bathhouse (*tahoratkhona*, *guslkhona*), and a chillakhona – a secluded room where men could retire to for a specific cycle of prayers and fasting lasting forty days (often in honor of a Sufi saint). The Pocho Boltuboi madrasa, named for the wealthy man who had endowed it in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was next to the mosque, and consisted of seven hujras, or cells, arranged around a small courtyard. There were two teahouses, two water reservoirs (*hauz*) and a mill. Many of the inhabitants were artisans: shoemakers, knife makers, linen-printers, halva-makers, furriers and practitioners of other artisanal crafts soon to be swept away in a frenzy of industrialisation. There were also merchants like Rahmatjon-boibacha, and wealthy landowners, such as Ergash-boibacha, of a khoja lineage, whose large house, with its brightly painted beams and intricate stucco work, would soon be made into a school.

The school in the house of the rich Ergash-boibacha would be attended by several of his neighbours' children, including the sons and nephews of the master shoemaker and sayyid Ashurkhoja. Ashurkhoja owned a large workshop which employed several apprentices, while his wife Bifazilat, who was at least as learned as her husband and read Arabic well, was an *otin* (female teacher of Islamic precepts) who taught children in her home.¹⁰⁹ Russian Bolsheviks

¹⁰⁹ As we will see in subsequent chapters, two of Ashurkhoja's sons, would enjoy successful soviet academic careers, while their daughter would have the misfortune of losing her sayyid husband to the purges. For more on the careers of their sons Dado Ashurovich Radzhabov, historian and director of studies at Tashkent VPSH (Higher Trade Union School) and Soli (Soleh) Ashurkhojaevich Rajabov, a lawyer and member of the Tajik Academy of Sciences see chapter seven.

were apparently frequent guests to their family home after the October Revolution, and they must have played a part in persuading Ashurkhoja to send first his son Dado (born 1906), and later Solih (born 1912), to Soviet schools rather than having them educated at home.¹¹⁰

Ashurkhoja's brother also lived nearby in Pularkish mahalla, and he too sent his sons Zarif (born 1906) and Latif to the newly opened school in the home of Ergash-boibacha. The decision to send their sons down the road to the "Soviet school" would have seemed less of a leap into the unknown also due to the fact that the teacher there was another relative, the young graduate of the Russian-native school and sayyid, Sharifjon Rajabov. In 1920, Soli and his cousin Zarif continued their education in the Behbudi internat, the heir to the Russian-native school.

The Behbudi internat

After the Russian-native school closed its doors, a "*shkola-kommuna*" was established in its place on the same premises. The commune school was a revolutionary type of school then in vogue, founded on the basis of the 1918 decree "Statute of the unified labour school of the RSFSR," on the model of commune-schools in Moscow, Tashkent, and Odessa.¹¹¹ Commune-schools were boarding schools (internats), and as "labour schools" the expectation was that pupils would contribute to the upkeep of the school through farming activities. As the ideal of the commune-school faded, the school in Khujand came to be referred to as the Behbudi internat (and later yet as "School n.1").

In the memories of its founders, the origins of the school were as humble as its pioneers' intentions were noble, and were clearly shaped by the experience of the famine then raging:

¹¹⁰ Ibrohim Rahmatovich Jabborov, "Vklad akademika S.A. Radzhabova v razvitie vysshego obrazovaniia i nauki Tadzhikistana," unpublished dissertation, Tajik National University, Dushanbe:2014.

¹¹¹ Бим-Бад Б.М. Педагогический энциклопедический словарь. — М., 2002. С. 320

“The Firstborn of people’s education of Khujand between 1918 and 1920 literally picked up half dead children – orphans – Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kirgiz and children of other nationalities from the streets, from under trees, from neglected houses, from aryks [water channels(!)]. Weakened and swollen from hunger, these children were brought to the internat.”¹¹²

The bold pioneers of Soviet education in Khujand also went house to house, collecting donations of food items (onions, carrots, peas, potatoes), to cook up and feed their orphans and homeless waifs. When it first opened, the Commune-School had spaces for up to fifty such children whose social provenance would prudently be categorised as “poor dekhkan (peasant)” – these pupils were also expected to till the land part of the day to raise crops for their sustenance. One could surely be forgiven for forecasting poor educational outcomes for these children.

Strikingly, however, early intake for this school resulted in the graduation of two future First Secretaries of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, Bobojon Ghafurov (First Secretary 1946-56; he was also an academician) and Jabbor Rasulov (First Secretary 1961-82), as well as graduates who went on to become academicians of the Tajik Academy of Sciences – physicists, historians and doctors.¹¹³ Clearly, this was no ordinary orphanage-cum-school, and I argue that the social background of the teaching staff – together with their energy and commitment, doubtless – was a determinant factor in its success.

The first teachers and directors of the Behbudi internat – who appear to have overlapped or shared responsibility – were none other than Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi, nephew of the Khan of Kokand, and his cousin Hoji-khon Umarov – both of whom had formerly been pupils of the

¹¹² M.B. Iskhaki and K.M. Iskhaki, *Istoriia zarozhdeniia i stanovleniia natsional'noi shkoly v Severnom Tadzhikistane* (1917-29gg.), Khuroson press, Khujand, Tajikistan 2002. This work, authored by the son of the Behbudi internat’s first director, is based to a significant extent on oral interviews with pioneer Soviet teachers.

¹¹³ Iskhaki and Iskhaki, *Istoriia zarozhdeniia*, 58. The data comes from interviews conducted by the author with former teachers and students of the school. For more on the subsequent careers of the graduates of the Behbudi internat, see chapter seven.

Russian-native school. Hoji-khon Umarov was the direct heir of the shaikh of the main (Friday) mosque and shrine complex in Khujand, the Shaikh Muslihiddin complex. It is hard to imagine any less suitable class background for Soviet teachers, and yet their loyalty to the regime appears never to have been seriously questioned, and they are both notable survivors of the Stalinist purges. Their subsequent careers and protection from serious bodily harm were also greatly facilitated by the close, lifelong bonds they formed with their high-achieving students at the Behbudi internat: Bobojon Ghafurov's wholehearted praise of his former teachers was recorded in print.¹¹⁴



Figure 4: Bashir-khon Ishoqi

Bashir-khon Ishoqi (left) during his teaching days. He wears a European-style collared shirt and tie, a sartorial style that had by then been self-consciously adopted by the progressive intelligentsia, with a local style embroidered skull cap. This is a hand painted photograph, in the private collection of Bashir-khon's son Muboshir-khon, reproduced by permission.

¹¹⁴ Iskhaki, M. B and Iskhaki, K.M., *Istoriia zarozhdeniia i stanovleniia natsional'noi shkoly v Severnogo Tadzhikistane* (1917-1929 gg.). Khujand, Tajikistan: Khuroson press, 2002.

They, along with other Islamic notables who were attracted to the cause of Soviet education, seem to have been drawn to, and found genuine satisfaction in, the possibility of education as a vehicle for profound social change. Tura families placed a high value on learning, an ethos with which the Soviet project of universal, free education seemed to find great resonance. A career as a Soviet teacher, celebrated as an engine of change for her entire community, was attractive to progressively minded Islamic notables in a way that the lifestyle of a humble domullo was not. With the establishment of Soviet schools, the world of the domullo was consigned to the dustheap of history without so much as a backward glance from these highborn Soviet teachers.

Demand for the Behbudi internat grew rapidly – no doubt partly thanks to the upheaval created by the famine and the Basmachi uprising – such that by 1924 there were three hundred pupils, of which 40-50 were boarders. The Behbudi internat was home to Khujand's only brass band, which performed on official city occasions, including the opening of the new school building in the autumn of 1925, which was attended by the chairman of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the Uzbek SSR, Iu. Okhunbabaev. This new school building was built out of unbaked adobe bricks in the traditional "hashar" method, – in other words, with manpower and basic materials donated by the local community. It must have been a sight to behold,¹¹⁵ for the unbaked mud and straw walls were fashioned into the shape of an aeroplane. In the words of the engineer, an aeroplane was chosen "because in the near future, the soviet air fleet will be the best in the world."¹¹⁶ In the mid-1920s, one can imagine no clearer way of making the association between soviet schools and modernity than by building a school in the shape of a

¹¹⁵ (and I will not rest until I have uncovered a photograph of it)

¹¹⁶ *Maktabi Soveti* N.2, 1967, 9-10; cited in Iskhaki and Iskhaki, *Istoriia zarozhdeniia i stanovleniia natsional'noi shkoly*, 105.

plane. This vision of modernity clearly held great appeal for the more progressive Islamic notables of Khujand.

The physical environment and material culture of Soviet schools was central to the process of articulating a distinct identity for the new schools as “factories of Bolsheviks” – sites of progress, enlightenment, gender and class equality. If the old maktab had been dark, dank, airless places where children sat cross-legged on reed mats covering the ground, presided over by stick-wielding obscurantists, the Soviet schools would be the very opposite.

Soviet Schools and Pioneers: new forms of socialisation

In his memoir drafted in the early 1970s, Saidkarim Valizoda (1908-1990), describes his first day in a Soviet school – in the house of a *boi* – as an unforgettable, transformative experience.

It was the summer of 1922. One early morning a tall, well built and suntanned, lively and nimble young stranger, wearing a striped silk coat, new boots on his feet and on his head a four-flowered skullcap, strode into our classroom. Our domullo, Abdurahmon the storyteller, was greatly surprised by the arrival of the unexpected guest, rose from his seat in bewilderment and with exaggerated courtesy extended his hand towards him and introduced himself. We did not know why, but at a signal from the guest the domullo hastened from the room in bewilderment and the two of them went in the room in which he lived.

The sudden visits of the glamorous, enigmatic young man continued for about two months, during which time the students were left guessing as to his identity and aims. Without further explanation, in late August that year, the domullo led his students to the two-story building of fired brick belonging to one Boborahim oqsaqqol [lit. “white beard,” or community elder].

When we came through the door, that same unknown young man met and greeted us pleasantly, and led us to a classroom. [...] From the stranger we understood that here would be a new Soviet school, and that hereafter our lessons would take place in this classroom. The happiness of us children knew no bounds. For the first time, we would

not be sitting on the floor. This classroom was spacious and bright, with a wooden floor and a veneer ceiling. There were rows of desks, and something round was sitting on top of the table. We later understood that this was a globe. Facing us from above the desk, a picture of V.I. Lenin was hanging. From the leader's smile it was clear that he was saying: "Children! Your true education starts from this hour! Study and master knowledge!" [...]

The children who are so delighted by the appearance of their new classroom were by no means underprivileged – the fact that Saidkarim and his friends all use the suffix "khon" in addressing one another indicates that his close friends at least were all from Tura families, the highest ranking among the *asilzodagon*. Even high-born children, however, were accustomed to being relegated to the very bottom of the pecking order within their own families, and to give all due reverence to age and experience – one can imagine therefore that to have such lavish surroundings designated for use by children must have been exhilarating, and understandably made a profound impression. By dispossessing the elderly Boborohim *oqsaqqol*, who lost his house or a portion thereof to the school – in favour of the young, and signalling through physical means the new centrality of youth and the role of education in Soviet society, it cannot have been hard to win over the hearts and minds of many of Khujand's teenagers.

Across Khujand, Soviet schools were consistently opened in the most opulent buildings in the neighbourhood, whether these were donated or expropriated from their "boi" owners.

Our true schooling in the new school, which is one of the outcomes of the October Revolution, began on the 1st of September 1922. On the first day of lessons, Kuli-khon Osimi spoke to us about the superiority of Soviet school, the care of the Party and the state for the rights of workers' children and told many stories about the beloved leader V. I. Lenin. We were sent into raptures by the talk of our new teacher. The picture of V. I. Lenin looked down on us with a smile, congratulating us on the opening of our new school and our true learning.

Our teacher Kulikhon Osimi ended his speech that day with the words of our leader "Learn, learn, learn more! [or: read, read, read more]". Beginning on that day, the words of our leader took deep root in my heart and I lived out this precept thereafter. I studied, I became a teacher and always explained this slogan to my own students (*shogirdon*).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Leninobod branch of the Tajik State Archives (TsGART-LF), manuscript of Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, 21-22. The introduction to the manuscript is dated 1975.

The tone of Valizoda's account is undoubtedly rather lyrical and idealized, but the star-struck idealism of his teenage years seems to ring true, alongside the ideological orthodoxy of his adulthood. Saidkarim Valizoda in fact stayed on at his school to teach immediately following graduation, and was then sent on to Samarkand for teacher training in late 1926, whence he returned to his hometown to begin his Soviet teaching career in earnest in the autumn of 1927. The Soviet teacher who made so great an impression on him, Kuli-khon Osimi, was also, like the Soviet teachers at Behbudi internat, Bashir-khon Ishoqi and Khoji-khon Umarov, a Tura. As Soviet teachers, they had the opportunity to be something no domullo was or wanted to be: agents of social change.

To sum up, although the changeover to soviet schools happened slowly and gradually, with many Khujandis not attending soviet schools even in the 1930s (particularly girls), some early soviet schools were astonishingly successful beginning in the very early 1920s. The slow rate at which soviet schooling became the norm was due in part to a lack of resources to invest in schooling, and in part to resistance from a population unused to the idea of universal, compulsory education. In the attempt to overcome local resistance, great effort was made to distinguish soviet schools from traditional maktab in terms of physical environment, furnishings and teaching style, such that soviet schools would be perceived as superior and modern. Ideally, and in some cases in actual fact, pupils perceived soviet schools as more welcoming, child-centred environments free from the threat of violence. Pupils perceived a change of status on entering soviet schools, even if, due to the scarce availability of new text books and difficulties with teacher training, the content of lessons in soviet schools varied widely, and was often based on jadid or other pre-revolutionary textbooks even until the 1930s.

The soviet teacher would come to occupy an entirely different social position to that of the domullo, such that the class origin and educational level of the former was often – in Khujand and, it seems, other urban areas at least – far superior to that of the latter. Whereas the domullo lived hand to mouth, reliant on the gratitude of parents and practiced a method of rote teaching that allowed small space for personal initiative or investment, the soviet teacher was an agent of social change, a public servant campaigning for the benefit of the mahalla as a whole. Without the wholehearted embrace of the cause of soviet schooling on the part of a portion of the Islamic notables of Khujand, the prognosis for education in what would become Northern Tajikistan would have been far dimmer.

Beyond schools, the other major outreach tool for the soviet regime in its early years were the Communist Party's youth organisations, the Pioneers and Komsomol. Here too, the *asilzodagon* swiftly rose to the leading roles which they so often seem to have assumed as their birth-right. Solih, son of Ashur-khoja of Pularkish mahalla introduced earlier, was chosen to lead the Pioneer group at his school in 1924,¹¹⁸ as was Saidkarim Valizoda:

“In summer 1924 we, a group of school children, were accepted into a Pioneer group. That very same year, the first two-week seminar on pioneer leadership had taken place in Khujand, and I took part as the delegate from our school. Once the two-week seminar had ended, I was appointed head pioneer at our school.”¹¹⁹

Even in this compressed account, the ease and quiet sense of entitlement with which Valizoda assumed this, the first of many leadership opportunities that came to him, is quite striking. Like many others, the strenuous efforts required to reinvent himself as a humble son of the Tajik people seemed to have worked to convince himself, as well as others, to the point that

¹¹⁸ Ibrohim Rahmatovich Jabborov, “Vklad akademika S.A. Radzhabova v razvitie vysshego obrazovaniiai nauki Tadzhikistana,” unpublished dissertation, Tajik National University, Dushanbe:2014.

¹¹⁹ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta* (Some memories of the past), 28.

the possibility of being considered a class enemy, unworthy of leading a troop of socialist Pioneers, is firmly suppressed.

Membership in the Pioneers led to membership in the Komsomol, which busied itself in the first years of Soviet power in the fight against (adult) illiteracy, in propaganda work, and in numerous military training exercises to fight the Basmachis. The struggle against literacy clearly required that Komsomol members be functionally literate themselves, while the propaganda work made use of the creative, dramatic and literary talents of the young enthusiasts. A drama circle was first set up in Masjidi Surkh¹²⁰ (Red Mosque) mahalla – in the “red teahouse” – by two Komsomol activists, Murtazo Bobokhojaev and Urunboi Dadoboev, who met at weekends and in the evening to practice, and performed their amateur productions at holidays, in schools and the red teahouses.

Having set up a small stage and a fabric backdrop, these high-born activists set about lampooning “slackers and spongers, idlers, boxers, semi-literate religious teachers (*domulloho*) and clergy” with their skits. Most of the satirical sketches performed were written by Kuli-khon Osimi, who as well as being Valizoda’s teacher, was also “a masterful musician, an orator and a sparkling wit.” Murtazo Bobokhojaev translated and adapted excerpts from the 1919 Uzbek language drama “Boi and servant” (*Boi ila xizmatchi*) by the Kokandi playwright and activist Hamza Hakimzoda Niyazi (1889-1929).¹²¹ These Komsomol performances clearly fit into the

¹²⁰ The name of the mosque was explained to me as a record of a miracle that had taken place there when Hazrat-i Mullo Buvo, the common ancestor for one tura avlod in Khujand, visited the mosque on the day of Eid-i Qurbon. “*Soni akun yak ruz Idi Kurbon budegi. Hama namozba daromdegi. Namozba daromdegi hamto majid suuuup surkh shudegi, buvokalonomo [Hazrati Mullo Buvo] ya anjomoshom ham surkh shuda braftegi. Hama hairon shudegi ahun badi vai yak bor sup surkh shudegi dia, a hamum: masjidi surkh. maktabi seyyomash. Hozer magazin shudegi.*” (“One day, on Eid-i Qurbon [or: Eid al-Adha], everyone gathered in the mosque, when suddenly the whole mosque was turned bright red, and even our ancestor’s robes had turned bright red. Everyone was amazed when everything turned red, and that’s why it was called the Red Mosque after that. Then it became School N.3. And now it’s a shop”)

¹²¹ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, 28-29.

tradition of Jadid theatrical productions, which were also pronouncedly didactic and moralistic in character, and took aim at the same stock characters – ignorant mullahs, parasites, usurious moneylenders and so on.¹²² In the name of progress and the revolutionary new order, the city's highborn elite was taking easy aim at those they considered their social inferiors.

Beginning in 1926, the city Komsomol committee, working alongside the Commissariat of War, began gathering its members for weekly sessions of military training sessions held in the city stadium. At weekends and after normal working hours, all Komsomol members were required to participate in exercises designed to prepare them for fighting Basmachi cells. These included dividing up into teams of "Reds" and "Whites" and following different cross country routes to the edge of the steppe, where a mock battle took place that saw the Reds – unsurprisingly – crowned as victors.¹²³ These exercises were popular – in Valizoda's memory – and fueled the young men's sense that they were taking part in building something noble and exciting.

In Valizoda's account, the Khujand Komsomol also played a leading role in the Hujum, the 1927 campaign to persuade women to jettison the full body veil – by setting an example to the rest of the population by means of their own womenfolk. Many locals would have married long before aging out of the Komsomol, so they were expected to unveil their wives (on the assumption that this decision was theirs to make), and to do what they could to persuade their mothers and sisters to unveil also. A general meeting of the Komsomol was organized, which their family members were also expected to attend. The policy of having prominent and authoritative members of the local community take the lead in the unveiling campaign was

¹²² Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, 127 and ff.

¹²³ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, manuscript copy archived in LF TsGA RT.

clearly not sufficient to overcome popular resistance to the hujum.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the propaganda and educational work of the Communist youth organizations could be seen as quite in harmony with the *asilzodagon*'s self-image as moral guardians of their communities, committed to enlightenment and learning.

Conclusion: several paths to the one Party

Teaching might be thought of as a natural fit for *asilzodagon* seeking common ground with the new regime, whether or not their own education had included a stint at the Russian-native school, but it was by no means the only career choice of those who threw their lot in with the Bolsheviks. As we have seen, the young generation of Khujand's *asilzodagon* also moved swiftly and with apparent ease into careers in State and Party organisations, including the police and military.

There was a strong generational factor at play during the early years of Soviet power in Central Asia, in that the young – including many scarcely on the cusp of adulthood, were far more likely to be attracted to the Party and Komsomol. This also reflected the Party's own assumptions about the local population, that propaganda was far more likely to be effective on the young. It should also be clear why the Party initially found it easier to address and attract the more literate and highly educated elite from among the native population of Turkestan. There were exceptions to this general rule, as we have seen – some Khujandis of humbler backgrounds were thrown into far closer contact with the Russian colonisers than was usual for the indigenous population, and seem to have developed a revolutionary consciousness in or through their place

¹²⁴ Unlike many other topics in modern Central Asian history, the unveiling campaign has been thoroughly covered by excellent monographs such as Marianne Kamp's *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (University of Washington Press 2006), and Douglas Northrop's *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Cornell University Press, 2004).

of work. This was the path of the Mavlonbekov brothers, who had attended the Russian native school, and were working, like their father, for the Post and Telegraph Office in Khujand at the time of the 1916 uprising. This was the path of Haidar Usmonov, the baker who hosted Bolshevik cells first in his bakery by the coal mine, and then at his home in Razzoq district – and of the others who made contact with revolutionary socialism when they were dispatched to work in factories in the Ukraine.

As I have shown, the first indigenous members of the Communist Party in Khujand shared one or more of the following life experiences: they were former pupils of the Russian-native school (and thus of more or less privileged background), they had participated in the 1916 uprising (participants' social backgrounds varied widely), and/or they had done a stint of factory work far from home. As we will see in the following chapters however, even a system with policies in place designed to discriminate actively on the basis of class background could not, within one or even two generations, compensate for the competitive advantage enjoyed by the *asilzodagon*. The affirmative action policies that would be implemented to advance the careers and educations of those of proletarian background (the *vydvizhentsy*)¹²⁵ relied on free public education (as well as direct promotion “from the bench”) to act as a levelling force, but this would most often prove no match for the social and cultural capital built up over the generations by *asilzodagon*. Many *asilzodagon* themselves, as we have seen, embraced the emancipatory promise of Soviet education, and became educators themselves. While this led to some strikingly good educational environments in otherwise abysmal circumstances, and great advances in combating illiteracy, rarely – barring some fascinating exceptions – did the children of the poor

¹²⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Stalin and the Making of a New Elite, 1928-1939,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Sep., 1979), 377-402

do as well as their own children. It would be unreasonable to expect otherwise, as more contemporary affirmative action policies in very different global contexts have taught us.

Though many *asilzodagon* families, as we will see in the next chapter, were gradually stripped of their wealth, outward markers of status and political influence (with the partial exception of those who joined the Party and climbed its ranks), a commitment to education and enlightenment would remain a central component of their identity.

And what of those *asilzodagon* who did not choose to attend the Russian-native school or early Soviet schools, and were not immediately attracted to the Bolshevik cause? Many did their best to continue with the paths on which their lives had been set prior to the revolution: mosques continued to operate largely unhindered until the late 1920s, shrines were still visited, there was still a need for Islamic judges (*qozi* in Tajik, or *qadi*) to adjudicate in the courts – indeed, the Khujand revolutionary committee supervised the election of new *qozis* in 1922.¹²⁶ Several madrasas likewise continued to function for the time being, and thus to need teaching staff there.

Yusuf-khon Tura, a prominent cleric and Islamic scholar who had studied in Bukhara, Samarkand and Andijan, was among those who sought no accommodation with Soviet power. He sought no formal employment other than as a *mudarris*, and kept his interactions with the soviet state to a minimum, but throughout the upheaval and violence of the 1920s and 1930s, he did not flee into exile as so many other tura households would do. It may partly have been his young and growing family that kept him in Khujand – his wife bore him eighteen children, although only three of them would reach adulthood – but perhaps more importantly, even as the war against religion and religious figures became more deadly by degrees, Yusuf-khon tura believed that he had earned himself solid protection from the very peak of the local power

¹²⁶ LF TsGA RT, F.370, op.1, d.37 “Materialy po sboru pomoshchi dlia golodaiushchikh I po vyboram kaziev” 3 January to 18 November 1922.

structure. At some point in the 1920s, Yusufkhon Tura had earned the good graces of Abdullo Rohimboev, a neighbour of his from the Razzoq *roat*, a graduate of the Russian-native school who had joined the Party in 1919 and served as secretary of the Khujand Uezd Party Organisation from 1919-20. Rahimboev had divorced his wife and regretted it, so he approached Yusufkhon Tura who, as an authority in Islamic law, was encouraged (and possibly pressured) to find a way to re-validate his marriage. This he did, and seems to have been protected by Rahimboev thereafter. According to Islamic law, a marriage can be dissolved if the husband repeats a divorce formula three times (this is supposed to ensure that the man really means it). Once this process – the *se talogha* – is completed, the process is deemed irreversible. The protection afforded was of no little account given that, in the words of Yusufkhon tura's daughter, Rahimboev would come to be seen in Khujand as “a *boi*¹²⁷ as big as Stalin.”

Whether or not they chose to align themselves with the new Soviet regime from the start, the *asilzodagon* could rely on solid support from their well-connected extended families, and on patronage networks that extended vertically as well as horizontally. The social and geographic structure of the mahalla facilitated the weaving and consolidating of vertical networks with their neighbors of more humble, and thus more ideologically sound background, a few of whom became connections worth cultivating when they joined the Party and rose to occupy key positions. Almost all of the characters introduced in this chapter – the *asilzodagon* graduates of the Russian-native school, the protesters dispatched to work in the Ukraine in 1916, the imprisoned member of the ulama – all were born and lived within less than a mile from one another in the narrow streets of Razzoq district, frequenting the same teahouses and bazaars, while many probably gathered for Friday prayers in the central Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque.

¹²⁷ Boi is the Tajik form of *bai*, meaning a rich and powerful person, usually, in pre-revolutionary times, a landowner.

Chapter Two. Class Warfare: the Old Boi Network Challenged (1925-1930)

“To change the world, one has to change the ways of world-making, that is, the vision of the world and the practical operations by which groups are produced and reproduced. Symbolic power, whose form par excellence is the power to make groups (groups that are already established and have to be consecrated or groups that have yet to be constituted such as the Marxian proletariat), rests on two conditions. Firstly [...], symbolic power has to be based on the possession of symbolic capital. The power to impose upon other minds a vision, old or new, of social divisions depends on the social authority acquired in previous struggles. Symbolic capital is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition. In this way, the power of constitution, a power to make a new group, through mobilization, or to make it exist by proxy, by speaking on its behalf as an authorized spokesperson, can be obtained only as the outcome of a long process of institutionalization, at the end of which a representative is instituted, who receives from the group the power to make the group.

Secondly, symbolic efficacy depends on the degree to which the vision proposed is founded in reality. Obviously, the construction of groups cannot be a construction ex nihilo. It has all the more chance of succeeding the more it is founded in reality, that is, as I indicated, in the objective affinities between the agents who have to be brought together. The "theory effect" is all the more powerful the more adequate the theory is. Symbolic power is the power to make things with words. It is only if it is true, that is, adequate to things, that description makes things. [...] We can thus, I hope, better understand what is at stake in the struggle over the existence or non-existence of classes. The struggle over classifications is a fundamental dimension of class struggle. The power to impose and to inculcate a vision of divisions, that is, the power to make visible and explicit social divisions that are implicit, is political power par excellence.”¹

The goal of this chapter is to assess the extent to which the Soviet government was successful in harnessing existing social tensions in the Ferghana Valley, and framing them as class warfare. As Adeeb Khalid has so aptly pointed out, before 1917 there was no language with which to articulate class conflict.² I consider here a series of redistributive policies undertaken in the wake of the Soviet consolidation of power in the 1920s – political disenfranchisement, land

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” in *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 7, No.1 (Spring 1989), 23.

² Adeeb Khalid, “Nationalising the Revolution,” chapter 3 in *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015). See also Marco Buttino, *La rivoluzione capovolta: l'Asia Centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS* (L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003), who points out that there was indeed tension over wealth and allocation of resources, between villages who had better and worse access to water for irrigating their crops for instances, but such conflicts were not conceived of in terms of class.

reform and collectivisation – and assess their success or failure as campaigns in a class war, orchestrated by the Party, designed to pit the working poor against the exploitative rich. How did the active participation of *asilzodagon* Party members, scions of elite families often in possession of sizeable estates, affect the implementation of land reform and other redistributive policies? What effect did the *asilzodagon*'s participation and investment in the class categories adopted by the regime centrally, but tailored locally, have on policies designed to engineer a new de-classed society? As we will see, participation in the Soviet project of significant numbers of young men (and, much more rarely, and later, women) from wealthy and high status backgrounds bound to one another by a thick web of solidarity and patronage, ensured that class enemy categories were manipulated, inconsistently applied, and only infrequently took elite ancestry – rather than current economic condition – into account.

As soon as it felt in a position to do so, the Bolshevik Party moved to fulfil its revolutionary promise to distribute land to those who worked it, and to break the power of the landowning classes once and for all. In Russia, many thousands of peasants had spontaneously moved to take control of the land they tilled in 1917; but in the Ferghana Valley, land reform was a more top-down affair and, as we will see, peasants not infrequently refused to take the land they had been allocated. This chapter explores how the *asilzodagon* of Khujand as a group endured, resisted, and actively participated in successive attempts to sever the links that had bound them – and the pre-revolutionary elite more broadly – to the fertile farmlands of the Ferghana Valley. Responses to the Revolution on the part of the *asilzodagon* had diverged sharply from the start, even before their personal wealth was in the crosshairs; once an ambitious program of land reform was on the cards, reactions ranged from those who zealously took the helm of land reform commissions, others who more or less reluctantly donated their estates for

redistribution to landless peasants, and others still who resorted to all manner of stratagems to retain control of their land.

I consider the regime's attempts to sow class warfare as a means of transforming the rural economy – and thus, achieving the urgent economic goal of growing more cotton. To the extent to which the central Party organisations had a vision or blueprint for how class warfare was to be conducted, such policies were inevitably mediated and implemented at the local level by native Communists and activists, of whom some of the most influential were of old elite, *asilzodagon* background. Given their privileged position within the Party and state bodies as intermediaries between European communists and the mass of the local population, the *asilzodagon* were able to adapt the tools of class warfare for their own purposes. *Lishenie*, the deprivation of voting rights, was a powerful tool that could be used both to shore up alliances and weaken rivals. Well-connected landowners were able to adapt to the threat of expropriation by voluntarily donating their lands, which in many cases allowed them to maintain a closer connection to their former estates than would otherwise have been possible.

The second argument made in this chapter concerns the identification of the “boi-mullo” hybrid as the archetypal class-enemy, which, I argue, ultimately served the interests of the urban *asilzodagon* quite well by obscuring the role played by lineage in determining elite group membership, and focusing instead on more superficial categories like wealth and (current) occupation. Many *asilzodagon* appeared to embrace – indeed, encourage, the characterisation of boi-mullo as the ultimate class enemies, equating the *boi* with the figure of the rich merchant and exploitative (reactionary, unenlightened) landowner, while the mullo (or mullah) in question is ignorant, obscurantist and rapacious. This characterisation, while overlapping conveniently with

the image of the class-enemy Russian priest,³ clearly is the polar opposite of the progressive ulama's own self-image, as bearers of a noble scholarly tradition.

Finally, I suggest that by identifying the battle to increase cotton production in the Ferghana Valley with a battle against the “*baistvo*,”⁴ the stage was set for the boi to disappear from view once cotton “won” in the Ferghana Valley. In other words, once collective farms began to meet or exceed their cotton harvest targets, concern over class enemies – boi saboteurs and wreckers – rapidly receded from propaganda and public consciousness, leaving many previously vulnerable to being unmasked as “bois” free to go about their business. Within the space of a decade, the “boi-mullo” class went from being scapegoated for all that could and did go wrong on newly established Soviet farms, to disappearing from view almost entirely. This latter argument will be developed in the following chapter, in which I show how successful cotton farms in fact became remarkably safe havens for scions of old elite families, harbouring young members of the urban intelligentsia as well as mullahs and former landowners bound together by both old and new patronage networks.

The categories through which class tension was sought – and class struggle nurtured – were developed and enforced by the Bolsheviks with a thoroughness unsurpassed by any previous regime. Full membership in the “great labouring family” of Soviet Russia was reserved for those that could be considered “proletariat,” while “the bourgeois classes” were suspect, and probably deserving of being cast out from society.⁵ These categories – proletariat and bourgeoisie – were European imports, clearly, and appeared at first glance to be ill-adapted to the situation on the ground in Central Asia. In the absence of a recognizable “working class,” the

³ As seen, for example, in the *Bezbozhnik* publications of the 1920s.

⁴ *Baistvo* is the Russian term for the “bai class.”

⁵ Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-36* (Cornell University Press, 2003), 2.

most exploited sector of the population, eligible for membership in the Unions of the Poor (*Ittifoqi kambagalon*) then being formed, was considered to be that covered by the terms *batrak*, *mardikor* (farm hand, hired labourer) and *choriak* (sharecropper). In the opposing camp, it was the *boi* and the *mullo* who featured most prominently.

Another dichotomy of great interest to Muslim Communists however was that between colonisers and colonised: by interpreting the Revolution as a struggle to redress the evils of colonialism, oppressed status could be extended to almost the entire native population (save for a few who had bandied with the Russians to exploit the locals). This gave rise to the theory of “double oppression” at the hands of both the local “feudal lords” – very limited in number – and the Russians, a theory which was perhaps not unsurprisingly popular in *asilzodagon* circles.⁶

Class warfare: the toolkit

The primary tools of class warfare whose implementation and manipulation by the *asilzodagon* I consider here are: punitive taxation and expropriation of property, redistribution of land to the poor, and deprivation of voting rights. It is not my contention that any of these were fully or even predominantly in the hands of old elite Communists at any one time; rather, my aim is to point out that, given the power vacuum in the revolutionary period and the profound ignorance of local social dynamics on the part of most European Communists, local communists could have considerable agency. Some punitive taxation and expropriation of property began in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution: in 1918, the newly-founded Khujand Soviet, backed

⁶ “The Russian colonizers spoke one language with the local *bois* and feudals, and exploited the working people any way they could” Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, 5 [1.9 of manuscript copy]. For a thorough treatment of the national and anti-colonial interpretation of the revolutionary message among Muslim Communists, see Adeeb Khalid, “Nationalising the Revolution,” chapter 3 in *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR* (Cornell University Press, 2015).

by the Russian garrison, arrogated unto itself the right to raise 300,000 roubles from the native “capitalists.”⁷ The old elite could surely see the writing on the wall, and began to organise.

Although the economic priorities set for the region by Moscow would ensure that the cotton-producing regions surrounding Khujand were to be subjected to the most intense scrutiny as a battleground for class warfare, it does not follow that city dwellers were immune. Many – probably a majority – of the major local landowners lived in the town of Khujand itself, commuting seasonally to their rural estates “as if to a dacha”⁸ as kolkhoz chairman Said-khoja Urunkhojaev would put it in the 1960s. Class warfare in the towns affected merchants and the ulama as well as landowners (these three categories also overlapped somewhat, as merchants and ulama also tended to own land).

Before exploring how *asilzodagon* who had thrown themselves behind the Party from its early days responded to the call to wage class warfare, it is worth thinking about how class enemies were *not* being defined. How was the old intelligentsia able to draw so sharp a line between themselves, on the right side of history, and the evil boi-mullo, worthy of any punishment that State and Party should choose to inflict? Were not the *asilzodagon* highly vulnerable themselves to being classed as enemies – as exploitative landowners and landlords, living off unearned income? Indeed, they were. But the “boi and the mullo” that Muslim Communists eventually accepted as legitimate enemies were defined by the actions, by what they possessed and how they acquired wealth, not by their identity, not by their *avlod*. *Avlod* and lineage mattered very much indeed in Khujand, but not – at least not until much later – for the purpose of identifying class enemies. In fact, one could say that the so-called boi-mullo class did

⁷ LF TsGA RT, F.370, op.2, d.30, l.84. See also A. Pulatova, “Meropriiatiia Khudzshanskogo soveta po vytesneniiu iz Khudzhanda i ego okrugimushchego sloia obshchestva v 30-e gody XX veka” in *Nomai donishgoh* (Uchenye zapiski Khudzshanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. Akad. B. Gafurova).

⁸ “kak na dachu,” LFTsGA RT, F.887, op.1, d. 20, l.1.

not look or behave so much like a class, from the perspective of the *asilzodagon*, so much as they looked like a few bad apples, that needed to be thrown away to keep the rest safe and whole.

There certainly was considerable potential overlap between the categories of “boi/mullo” and that of *asilzodagon* – but there were educated, Russian-speaking Muslim communists in Khujand working hard to ensure that the damning labels of “boi” and “mullo” would not be applied to themselves or those in their network. In many memoirs published in the later Soviet and post-Soviet periods, self-righteous indignation at the depravity of the boi and mullo “class” is offered unflinchingly by scions of *asilzodagon* families, who were themselves quite well off, at least until they hurriedly donated their fields and orchards to the state (and often, thereafter also). Here, certain pages of the region’s prerevolutionary history also came in handy to create the image of the compassionate, progressive intellectual (not entirely without private means, truth be told), who had long railed against the money-grabbing merchants and ignorant mullahs who preyed upon the superstitious and vulnerable poor. The progressive-minded *asilzodagon* families of Khujand could cite the poetry of their neighbor (or indeed, relative) Toshkhoja Asiri ibn Eshonkhoja (1864-1916), follower of Ahmad Donish, who in his verses had denounced the greed and obscurantism of merchants and cruel bais several decades before the revolution.⁹ Although many of the *asilzodagon* families are interrelated by marriage, it is remarkable how many people I spoke to between 2009 and 2011 took particular care to specify the degree to which they are related to Toshkhoja Asiri.

There was plenty of resistance to overcome before Muslim Communists could play any part in the conversation about local class structures: initially, as we saw in the previous chapter,

⁹ The standard work on Toshkhoja Asiri, which cemented his Soviet-era reputation as a proto-socialist, was written by Zarif Rajabov (1906-1990), a sayyid whom we met in the previous chapter as a student of one of Khujand’s first Soviet schools. See Zarif Rajabov, *Poet-prosvetitel’ Tadjikskogo naroda Asiri* (Dushanbe, 1974).

Russian colonists organised to limit the influence of the native population in the local soviets as far as possible. In the wake of the reorganizational efforts imposed on the Communist Party of Turkestan in the summer of 1920, a newly “integrated” Party conference assembled in Samarkand to take stock of class structures and dynamics within Turkestani society. Those assembled must have been chafing at the requirement to collaborate with the Muslim population, for they resolved to base future policy decisions upon “the objective condition of Turkestan, namely the lack of a pure proletarian element among the native population of Turkestan, the absence of mass class war, the absence of previous professional movements (*dvizhenie*).”¹⁰ A regime that had seized power in the name of the proletariat was going to have to somehow establish its authority across vast, alien territories characterised by a distinct lack of a proletariat. Class war was not – in the eyes of the European communists gathered in Samarkand in the summer of 1920 – a feature of the local landscape, and would thus need to be imported.

The capitalist/worker dynamic familiar to Russian Bolsheviks was conspicuous by its absence in the Ferghana Valley, where there was no industry worth speaking of, and even such mining as took place (for low grade coal, and some metals), was done on a distressingly “artisanal” level, without the use of machinery.¹¹ In the countryside, large groups of peasants working for a single landowner were likewise exceedingly uncommon. Bolsheviks dispatched to Central Asia thus strained to interpret the reality they found on the ground according to the established categories, but remained nonetheless committed to the notion that class struggle was

¹⁰ RGASPI, F.670, op.1, d.56, l.4. This fond is dedicated to the personal papers of the Old Bolshevik and member of the first, seven member Politbiuro, Grigori Sokol’nikov, dated 12/8/1920-17/2/21 (128 pages). August 1920 was when Sokol’nikov was appointed Head of the Turkkommissia of the Central Committee and chief of the Turkestan Front. See Steven Kotkin, “A Central Asian Arl” in *Stalin: Volume 1: Paradoxes of Power, 1878-1928* (although Kotkin gives the month that Sokol’nikov started work in Turkestan as September, which conflicts with the evidence offered by Sokol’nikov’s Fond in RGASPI).

¹¹ In the words of a SredAzBiuro inspector, reporting on Khujand province in late 1929: “The state of industry in the okrug is very pitiful.” RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.43ob

universal in capitalist, as well as in feudal, pre-capitalist, societies. Therefore then, in the eyes of the Party, class struggle should and could be imported, and society could be reformed, from the ground up.

The same August 1920 party conference in Samarkand quoted above produced a document authored by the “Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan,” concerning the “struggle against colonialism and feudal-patriarchal relationships in Turkestan,” whose findings were as follows:

The native population – the settled native populations of the Turkestan republic (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Taranchis,¹² Dungans and others) – makes a living off the land for the most part. They are to be distinguished from the powerful bois, who make up the greater portion of the holders of merchant capital and in effect have control of peasant lands. In this way, the boi and the middle peasantry together with the reactionary clergy exploit the village poor: the small scale farmers, the sharecroppers (renters for a portion of the harvest), and the hired laborers [*mardikor*].

The mass of the city population consists of artisans and the large class of small traders. [Among artisans,] each workshop has its elder [*starshina*], its businessmen and apprentices, who are unsparingly exploited by the elder. The representatives of the petty and mid bourgeoisie, mainly small and middling merchants, constitute one of the strongest groups among the native population, and one which even displays certain progressive tendencies. It is among them that first a national consciousness awakens, and from among them that the cadres of the native intelligentsia formed.¹³

As the above excerpt makes clear, despite the apparent lack of class consciousness or class-based animosity, European communists found evidence of class-based exploitation – both in rural areas between “bois” and poor peasants, and in the artisan workshops of urban areas between “elders” and “apprentices.” The relatively positive attitude towards the portion of the local population labelled as “petite bourgeoisie,” the “small and middling merchants” (*melkie i srednie torgovtsy*) perceived as a potentially progressive force, and the (not inaccurate)

¹² Taranchi (originally “farmer” in Chagatai) refers to the Muslim sedentary population living in oases around the Tarim Basin in today's Xinjiang – otherwise, Uyghurs – although it can be extended to agrarian populations of the Fergana Valley or other oasis areas of Turkestan. Taranchi was not used as an ethnonym or “nationality” label in Soviet-era censuses.

¹³ RGASPI, F.670, op.1, d.56, l.12.

identification of this group as the basis for the native intelligentsia, are interesting features of this 1920 report, suggestive of an attitude of openness towards the reality on the ground not consistently found in official reports – and frequently hindered by orders from Moscow. Given the ignorance of local social dynamics exhibited each time non-native Communists of Turkestan got together, it is hardly surprising that the agency in defining class enemies enjoyed by indigenous members of the Communist Party was considerable.

Following the drafting of the 1918 Constitution of the Russian republic, the right to vote, and thus to enjoy full membership within the proletarian democracy, had been legally restricted to workers. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, a group including traders, clerics, persons who hired labour for profit or lived off unearned income, were explicitly denied voting rights.¹⁴ Regardless of the “progressive tendencies” they might be nurturing, the petite bourgeoisie who lived off trade would henceforth be vulnerable to political disenfranchisement. The category of those who made use of hired labour included many small-scale and subsistence farmers across the Ferghana Valley, who did not have enough able-bodied workers to maintain the household without making use of farm hands. *Waqf* endowments meanwhile, designated for the upkeep of madrasas, shrines or mosques, represented unearned income for their beneficiaries. As the 1920s went on, and the Soviet regime consolidated its hold on power and expanded the range of services it was able to offer its citizens, the status of those who had been deprived of voting rights, the *lishentsy* (literally “the deprived”) became more burdensome.

A tool against the weak? *Lishenie*

¹⁴ Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts*, 3.

The policies regarding *lishenie*, deprivation of voting rights, surely could become a useful weapon in settling scores and shoring up alliances. The scenarios described most often in the archival documents, however, are not those in which *lishenie* is used to diminish the power of a rival, but in which the disenfranchised are the poor and the voiceless, those without protection. If used to settle scores with a rival, whoever instigated the attack, presumably the end result was nonetheless desirable: one more “boi” excised from the body politic; but it is the instances in which the powerful protect each other at the expense of the weak that seem to excite most concern among Party officials visiting the region.

My analysis of the way in which new Soviet citizens in the Ferghana Valley acquired, negotiated, claimed and rejected class labels is clearly indebted to Sheila Fitzpatrick’s work on “ascribing class,” as well as to those who have built on her work, such as Golfo Alexopoulos. In Russia, the Bolshevik regime used certain biographical facts to ascribe class,¹⁵ which were then interpreted as reliable markers or predictors of an individual’s loyalty to the regime.¹⁶ Although concerted efforts were made by some, and sporadically, to apply the same exacting tests of loyalty to Central Asians, the process of deciphering Central Asian identities was vexed by the unfamiliar context, and officials made frequent recourse to disclaimers and pleas that the “particular circumstances” pertaining to the region be taken into account.

As Alexopoulos points out, policies designed to excise dangerous alien elements from the civic body required extensive participation both on the part of the state and the general public in order to survey, identify and classify individuals who merited disenfranchisement. Those deprived of voting rights were known as *lishentsy* (“the deprived”) in Russian and as *behuquqoni*

¹⁵ Biographical facts used as a means of ascribing class included pre-revolutionary social position and estate (*soslovie*), previous professions and places of employment, service in the Imperial, Red or White Army, trips abroad, past arrests, level of education, and membership in a trade union or political party

¹⁶ Alexopoulos, *Stalin’s Outcasts*, 5.

(“those without rights”) in Tajik, and by the late 1920s, they found themselves facing increasing obstacles – where they were not barred outright – in accessing housing, employment, education, healthcare and ration cards needed to secure food items.¹⁷ Most of those disenfranchised in the decade 1926-36 lost their rights on account of their past or present economic behaviour, rather than social origin or class status – or rather, behaviour was seen as determining class.¹⁸ I find that, when assessing the political loyalty of Central Asians, with an eye to conferring Party membership or simply the full rights of Soviet citizenship, in the 1920s present conduct often bore more weight than past biographical facts or officially registered social status (this would change at the height of the purges of 1936-37).

Alexopoulos finds that in Russia, individuals by and large accepted and perpetuated the official view of “aliens as non-labouring, privileged exploiters and citizens as the suffering, exploited laborers.” This allowed the state to rely on ordinary people to assist in policing the bounds of the citizenry: many non-party members, including trade union representatives, peasant committees and Komsomol members were represented on the local electoral commissions who maintained the lists of the disenfranchised.¹⁹ While I do not find similar levels of support or trust in the categories of alien and citizen in the Ferghana Valley, both Communists and non-Party Central Asians did not hesitate to wield these powerful tools in extending favour and protection to those in their networks, and to deflect the blow elsewhere.

In Central Asia, as in Russia, there is evidence of official paranoia concerning the punishment of *lishenie* being applied incorrectly. In January 1929, the secret police uncovered several instances of people who had wrongfully retained their voting rights rather than being

¹⁷ Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts*, 3-4.

¹⁸ Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts*, 11, 20.

¹⁹ Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts*, 18.

classed as *lishentsy* on the basis of their social origin or profession. A close connection to someone working for the new government was key: the imam Qayum Qary, for example, had never been disenfranchised because his son was the head of police for Fergana district. The head of a district electoral commission in Andijan attracted unfavourable attention when he was found to be encouraging *lishentsy* to submit petitions for their reinstatement to him.²⁰ A formal rehabilitation mechanism which restored voting rights had been in place since 1926, and outcasts were expected to submit formal appeals to local Soviet officials – in this case, the problem was that the official was actively reaching out to *lishentsy*, perhaps hinting that any appeals he received would succeed.

The Leninobod city soviet carefully archived a motley collection of handwritten petitions received from its disenfranchised citizenry, penned with varying degree of confidence in a variety of scripts – in Russian, Uzbek, and in Tajik written in both Latin and Arabic scripts. A typical example follows:

I request with the following that I, Mirshahid Mir-Yakheev, that I labour as a peasant since 1924, I work with my own labour. I am 23 years old and my daddy is an old man. Our own labour was not enough, so of our own accord we gave our land to the kalkhoz [sic]²¹

Reading between the lines, it seems that his man probably fell afoul of the local voting commission on a technicality – by hiring labour to help work his land. He evidently did not have a personal connection to someone who could help him, as his shaky grasp of literacy suggests he might have felt more comfortable seeking accommodation face to face had that been an option. Having failed to get his voting rights restored by any other means, Mirshahid had subsequently realised that giving his land to a collective farm “of his own accord” was the easiest way to

²⁰ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.1811, L.30

²¹ Leninabadskii Filial TsGART, F.82, op.3, d.2, l.1. The file concerns requests received between 22/02/1931 and 17/12/31.

regain the rights and protections of full citizenship that were evidently worth more to him – by 1931 – than his parcel of land, whose harvest he could not have counted on enjoying for long in any case. By 1931, full collectivisation of all agricultural land in the Ferghana Valley was already well underway.

The first conference of the Tajik Communist Party held in June 1930 provided an occasion to reflect on the extent to which the campaign to deprive socially harmful elements of their voting rights had been derailed. The newly appointed First Secretary, the Azeri Mirza Davud Bagir oglu Huseinov noted the sharp rise in the number of *lishentsy*, from 1,37% of the population in 1927-28, to almost 5% the following year, but expressed scepticism that this was warranted. Huseinov's scepticism is in striking contrast to Molotov's opinion – which informed subsequent policy – expressed in January 1927 that a ratio of 5-7% *lishentsy* would, in fact, be desirable. In the hands of Tajik Communists, the quota system had proved counterproductive:

“Many might think we simply detected more bois, mullos, eshons and traders. But it was not only these sorts of people themselves who were deprived of voting rights. No. Middle peasants and even poor peasants were proscribed simply because he was the son of a mulla, or of a merchant, or because his name happens to end in –bai.”²²

Huseinov implies here that being the son of mullo (“servant of a cult,” often considered to be living off unearned income) or of a merchant should *not* be sufficient grounds for disenfranchisement, in direct contrast to the legislation in place since 1926. He was probably aware, therefore, of the wide variations in wealth and power that could exist within the class alien category of “clergy,” between a poor peasant whose father led prayers in the village mosque, and an influential qozi or mufti with Party connections (we will meet one such in these pages).

²² RGASPI, F.17, op.28,d.20, L.44

The conclusions Huseinov drew from this troubling rise in the number of those deprived of voting rights was not that the campaign had been overly zealous and, having eliminated the intended target, was now moving further down the food chain, but rather that those in power were protecting themselves at the expense of the less privileged. In Huseinov's view, the troubling rise in the number of *lishentsy* had come at the expense of middle peasants (*seredniak*), leaving the true class enemies for the most part untouched. Out of eighty-five village soviets inspected, over a third (thirty-two) were considered to be headed by bois, mullahs or merchants, with nine others headed by poor or middle peasants "beholden to the interests of bois."²³

The data on the implausibly high ratios of *lishentsy* was attributed to weaknesses in the justice system and the NKVD. Not only were the numbers of Tajiks in positions of responsibility far too low (in other words, the policy of *korenizatsiia*, or nativisation, had not been implemented with sufficient vigour), but the attitude of the Europeans working here was found to be problematic. "Some Europeans who work here act as if they were working in a colony, and treat the Tajiks as if they were criminals."²⁴ This striking quotation seems to rend the veil formed by constant invocation of the solidarity between workers and friendship of the people rhetoric then gaining ground. In the context of an alleged failure to implement the disenfranchisement policy correctly, the reference to a colonial setting denounces a hierarchical relationship between Europeans and locals, and suggests an overreliance of the former on multilingual, literate intermediaries – due to lack of local knowledge – to process and interpret the local population.

Land and Water reform: the plan

"The authors discuss the basic forms of land and water conflicts that

²³ F.17, op.28,d.20, L.45

²⁴ F.17, op.28,d.20, L.47

took place in Tajikistan, and strain to reveal their class essence’’²⁵

The Land and Water Reform of the mid 1920s was not the first attempt since the revolutions of 1917 to solve “the agrarian question” in what had been Russian Turkestan. A land and water committee had been established in Khujand as early as February 1918, under the leadership of that same Ivanitskii encountered in the previous chapter as the founder of the first Bolshevik party cell in Khujand. The work of this Committee, which seems to have been plagued by inefficiencies of a scale that even the most Party-minded historians strained to overlook, had nonetheless overseen the confiscation or “voluntary” handover of several estates in the immediate vicinity of Khujand. The estates of Sari-Tukae, Chum-Chuk-Aral, and Dasht-i Amin were among those to be nationalised, although details concerning their size and subsequent histories are hard to come by. Rahim Masov cites archival evidence that the estate of Dasht-i Amin consisted of 400 desiatina (1,080 acres) of irrigated land and 600 desiatina (1,620 acres) of rain-fed, and thus less productive, land. This would have made it a very sizeable estate of a similar order of magnitude to lordly estates in Russia, and an apparent outlier in the region as far as we know.²⁶ The proto-collective farms that had replaced large estates in the environs of Khujand do not, however, appear to have survived the Civil War. Thus, on the heels of the national-territorial delimitation process whose first phase concluded in 1924, the Central Asian Bureau determined to make another, more concerted, attempt at agrarian reform.

The ostensible goal of the Land and Water Reform project – in the spirit of Russian revolutionary slogans – was to give control of the land to those who farmed it, decrease the

²⁵ R. Masov, *Istoriografiia sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii sel'skogo khoziaistva i dal'neishego razvitiia kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v Tadzhikistane (1917-1967gg.)* (Donish, Dushanbe:1974), 13.

²⁶ In *Istoriografiia sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii sel'skogo khoziaistva i dal'neishego razvitiia kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v Tadzhikistane (1917-1967gg.)* (Donish, Dushanbe:1974), page 15, Rahim Masov gives his source for these figures as LF TsGA Tajik SSR (now RT) , F. 51, op.1, d.78, l.4.

number of landless peasants and undermine the position of the (putative) exploitative landowning class. In fact, it seems that increasing the acreage devoted to cotton was a goal of at least equal importance.²⁷ My findings suggest that – to the extent that the land and water reform was successful in giving previous landless peasants access to land, the policy yielded unwanted fruit. Redistributing land parcels to previously landless or land-poor peasants appears to have played a part in undermining any further interest in pursuing the Party's class warfare agenda, even while the broader economic policies of the NEP-era appeared to lead to rising levels of income inequality.

In November 1925, it was announced that land and water reform would be carried out in parts of Turkmenistan, and in just three oblasts in Uzbekistan: Tashkent, Ferghana, and Samarkand – which at the time included the city of Khujand and environs.²⁸ The decree “On the nationalisation of land and water” issued by the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the Uzbek SSR on December 2, 1925 did little more than restate earlier decrees, whose implementation had been stymied, and few outcomes reversed, by the Civil War and the bands of “Basmachi” fighters who were particularly active in the foothills ringing the Ferghana Valley.²⁹

Rahim Masov's 1970s historiographical study of the land and water reform process highlights the widely diverging quantitative assessments of the outcomes of the campaign cited by Soviet historians – surely due at least as much to objective difficulties encountered at the time in obtaining accurate data (given the lack of specialists, the continued threat of armed attacks, poor infrastructure and so on), as to any ideological considerations.

²⁷ Benjamin Loring, “Colonizers with Party cards:” Soviet Internal Colonialism in Central Asia, 1917-39, in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 15, Number 1, Winter 2014 (New Series), 77-102. (Article)

²⁸ “Zemel'no-vodnaia reforma v Srednei Azii; Zemlia i voda trudovomu dekhkanstvu (Pis'mo iz Turkmenistana),” *Izvestiia*, Tuesday 17 November 1925, 4.

²⁹ R. Masov, *Istoriografiia sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii sel'skogo khoziaistva* (Donish, Dushanbe:1974), 24.

Table 2 – Divergent reports on the outcome of the Land and Water reform

Outcomes of the Land and Water Reform process in Khujand Uezd: reports differ					
	# of boi households liquidated in Khujand uezd	Total area of land seized from households (in <i>desiatina</i>)	Beneficiary households	Average amount of land received per household (in <i>desiatina</i>)	Amount of land available for distribution
Dzhuravleva	545	194623	51,124	3.8	
Sharipov		5616	2,740	2	
Antonenko			1,872	2.54	
RGASPI F.62, op.2, d. 1059, l.70			1,852	2.8	4683,67
LF TsGA f.51, op.1, d.192, l.22		3,518.89	2,740	2.41	5616,55
The data in the first three rows is derived from Masov's <i>Istoriografiia sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii sel'skogo khoziaistva</i> (Donish, Dushanbe:1974), in which he reports the figures provided by the three Soviet historians Dzhuravleva, Sharipov and Antonenko, listed above. The next two rows compares the data on the results of land reform in Khujand used stored in archives in Moscow (RGASPI) and Khujand (LF TsGA RT) respectively.					

Setting aside the discrepancies in the data cited by Soviet historians, there is also a striking discrepancy in the quantitative results of the Land and Water Reform process in Khujand province cited by reports submitted to Moscow, which are more modest than those preserved locally, in the Khujand branch of the State Archives. For what it is worth, these two sources do agree however that beneficiaries of the reform program held on average 2.8 *desiatina* of land per household. The 1925 census provided baseline data which allowed local Party officials to report to Moscow that the percentage of landless peasants had decreased to 3,39%, while the category of the rich had “disappeared almost completely (0.04%)” – though shifting goal posts would throw that finding into question very shortly.³⁰

The overall figures – the bird’s eye view of the land reform process – looked good therefore, but not good enough to quiet concerns raised by Party officials touring the countryside and questioning those affected by the land reform process. There is a striking lack of success stories from the field, from the designated beneficiaries (or victims) of the Land and Water

³⁰ RGASPI, F. 62, op.2, d. 1059, l.70

Reform; conversely, the reports abound in negative details. Among the “bad moments” officials admitted to were the many instances in which those who had only recently been allocated land were found to have reverted to the status of “*batrak*” almost immediately.³¹ Land reform had been pushed through quickly, and many small-scale farmers seem to have been allotted more land than they had the manpower, the tools or the agricultural inputs to make use of – rather than get into debt, it must have seemed easier and less risky to lease their newly acquired land and continue working on familiar terms. Sometimes, those to whom land had been allocated were found, on closer inspection, to be “not entirely healthy psychologically,” or “old, and entirely incapable of working the land.” In the aftermath of the Land and Water Reform, class relations in the village were not at all such as the Party would have wished.

Reactions to Land and Water reform

“Quite rarely do fights flare up in the soviets, for the poor (*bednota*) vigilantly see to it that the *boi* does not pass into the soviet.”³²

The struggle for land and water reform had a clearly defined enemy: “the *boi* and the *mullo*,” who together were considered to form a single class, in which the two categories often overlapped, or acted in cahoots with one another. In the press, the struggle was presented explicitly in terms of class struggle, one in which the *batrak* class (*batrachestvo*) or, more modestly, “the active portion” of that class, “strains to seize control of the lands which they work.” In this, inevitably, they were opposed by the mullahs, who allegedly threatened that “fires will fall down from the sky and burn up all the *bedniaks*,” and by the “*baistvo*,” or *boi* class.

³¹ RGASPI, F. 62, op.2, d. 1059, l.73

³²“*Bor’ba za zemliu (Pis’mo iz Srednei Azii)*,” in *Izvestiia*, Tuesday 17 November 1925, 4.

In reality, unsurprisingly, the role played by the *boi* in the land and water reform was rather more complex. A. Bogdanov reports on an exquisitely unorthodox situation that developed in Chimkent, Kazakhstan, in which the local land commissioner refused to allocate land to anyone who was unable to get a certificate from a local *boi* certifying that the individual had, indeed, worked as a hired labourer for a certain number of years. This commissioner was quoted by Bogdanov as declaring “A *koshchi* certificate indicating a need for land we regard as illegal; what we require is a certificate from the *bey* [*boi*].”³³ Entrenched social dynamics and customary sources of authority could not easily be unseated.

While my focus in this section is the response to the Land and Water reform of the *asilzodagon* of Khujand, the historical circumstances I have described make it impossible to disaggregate in every case the *asilzodagon* from the partially overlapping “*boi* and *mullo* class.” As defined by the regime, the *baistvo* also included, for example, merchants and entrepreneurs who had made fortunes in cotton in recent decades, and whom *tura* and *khoja* lineages, some of whom may have been living in genteel poverty, looked down upon as social inferiors. Similarly, *asilzodagon* who joined the Communist Party – and thus hoped to elude being labelled as members of the *baistvo* – had very good reason to conceal any loyalty they felt for members of their “class” who were being punitively taxed and disenfranchised. Some patricians of Khujand responded to Land Reform by taking a leading role on the land commissions, some – more or less under pressure – donated their land and property, and some resorted to subterfuge to keep hold of their property; there were also those who combined two or more of these responses. In

³³ A. Bogdanov, “The *Koshchi* Union in Kazakhstan,” originally published in *Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo* in 1929, translated and published in Rudolf Schlesinger, *The Nationalities Problem & Soviet Administration: Selected Readings on the Development of Soviet Nationalities*, first published by Routledge in 1956 (Routledge: 2013), 92.

the pages that follow, we will explore the range of *asilzodagon* responses to state-led attempts at land redistribution.

1. Flight

Old Elites families in urban centres of the Ferghana Valley resorted to a variety of strategies to cope with the increasingly hostile rhetoric, and actions, of the nascent Stalinist regime. Some voted with their feet, and left the Soviet Union, for a life of more or less comfortable exile in eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang), Afghanistan, or the Arabian peninsula. The status of madrasa-trained Islamic notables, in particular, translated well to other areas of the Muslim world, and it seems likely that many of those who chose voluntary exile left to join personal contacts or relatives. For those wishing to leave the Ferghana Valley in the 1920s and 1930s, the easiest and swiftest route out of the country was via Osh, at the eastern end of the Valley, and the Kyrgyz territories to Kashgar.³⁴

The khoja descendants of the Makhdum-i A'zam (Makhdumzodas) had enjoyed a dominant position as members of the Naqshbandi Sufi order in East Turkestan for centuries,³⁵ and several Makhdumzodas of Khujand chose to join their distant relatives in the Altishahr area (now in Xijiang province, China) in the course of the 1920s. But a few kilometres from Kashgar

³⁴ Bayram Balci, "Central Asian Refugees in Saudi Arabia: Religious Evolution and Contributing to the Reislamization of their Motherland," in *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 26, Issue 2 (2007), 14.

³⁵ James Millward, "East Central Asia (Xinjiang), 1300-1800" in Nicola Di Cosmo, Allen J. Frank, Peter B. Golden (editors), *The Cambridge History of Inner Asia: The Chinggisid Age* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 260-276. Millward writes: "These Sufi masters, known as khwajas (khojas), threw themselves into political affairs, advising khans and sultans, marrying into ruling clans, acquiring large land holdings and promoting Islamic rule. One, Khwaja Tajuddin (Taj ad-Din), died (c. 1533) fighting the Ming for Mansur Khan. It was the descendants and disciples of the Naqshbandi master Makhdum-i A'zam ('Great Master', also known as Ahmad Kasani; 1461–1542) who had the most impact on the history of eastern Central Eurasia. Makhdumzada miracleworkers and spiritual advisers entered the Tarim Basin at the start of the seventeenth century, and soon established themselves in the south-west under Muhammad Khan (r. 1592–1609). Ultimately two competing lines of Makhdumzada saints emerged, the Ishaqiyya (also called Qara taghliq 'Black Mountain') and Afaqiyya (Aq taghliq 'White Mountain') and engaged in a bloody rivalry." (page 268)

lies the seventeenth century Afak Khoja mazar complex, which includes the tombs of several dozen Makhdumzodas as well as a madrasa run by the Makhdum-i A'zam's descendants.



Figure 5: Apak Khoja mazar in 1910.

In comparing this building to that of the Shaikh Muslihiddin mazar in Khujand, reproduced in the previous chapter, the commonalities of architectural language and layout will be noted. Image source: <http://www.farwestchina.com/2010/04/pictorial-history-kashgars-apak-hoja-mausoleum.html>

No Soviet Muslims had been officially permitted to perform the Hajj since the mid-1920s,³⁶ but the failure to adequately police Tajikistan's long and mountainous external borders for some years thereafter enabled many Central Asians to make a one-way journey to the holy cities of Islam. Eshon Podshoh-Khoja was a former Mufti of Khujand born in 1860, who was employed for some time as a "Soviet" judge in the People's Court in Khujand, thanks to the protection of his relative Mu'min Khojaev, of whom we will hear more shortly.³⁷ Podshoh-Khoja left the Soviet Union for the Arabian peninsula at some point during the late 1920s or early

³⁶ Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (Columbia University Press, 2000), 172.

³⁷ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.478, l.69ob

1930s. He lived out the remainder of his life in exile, until he died aged ninety-three, in 1953, in Mecca. Some of his family members remained in Khujand when he left, however, including his son Eshoni Saiid Zikrullo Khoja (1916-1974), who trained as a doctor, later becoming Tajikistan's first neurosurgeon.³⁸ Decades later, Zikrullo Khoja was reunited with his elderly father, who recognized his son after questioning him closely about his ancestry (*avlod*).³⁹ For Muslims forced into exile from across the Islamic world, seeking refuge in Saudi Arabia was a highly symbolic as well as a natural choice, allowing them to comply with the religious injunction to fulfil the Hajj before ending their days.⁴⁰

When he interviewed Uzbek refugees and their descendants in Jeddah, Mecca and Medina in 2000 and 2001, Bayram Balci found that they attributed their exile to the highly repressive conditions created under Stalin in the late 1920s and 1930s, rather than to the earlier phases of Russian colonialism or even to the Bolshevik seizure of power. "Migrants belonged" Balci writes "to the regime's most fervent opponents and can be categorised in three distinct groups: rich landowners harshly affected by forced collectivisation; intellectual elites – mostly but not exclusively religious – fighting Soviet anti-religious and ideological propaganda and fleeing political purges; and families and relatives of active combatants involved in armed confrontations against the Soviets."⁴¹

Balci argues that the reputation of al-Bukhari, a widely known and highly respected ninth century collator of the hadiths of the Prophet, contributed to the friendly reception in Saudi

³⁸ Source: Hoji Saiid Abduljalilkhoja, *Az nasabnomai saidzodagoni Movarounnahr (Bahr-ul-ansob) qismi 4-5* (Dushanbe: 2009), 243. The neurosurgeon Saiid Zikrullo Khoja, who in his Russophone professional life was known as Prof. Z.P. Khojaev, also appears in chapter seven.

³⁹ I learned about the belated reunion in conversation with their relative Hoji Vali-khon-tura, in Khujand, 11 July 2011.

⁴⁰ Bayram Balci, "Central Asian Refugees in Saudi Arabia: Religious Evolution and Contributing to the Reislamization of their Motherland," in *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 26, Issue 2 (2007), 14.

⁴¹ Bayram Balci, op. cit, 14.

Arabia of Central Asian refugees who claimed for themselves a Bukhari identity, as many Persian-speaking exiles from the Ferghana Valley would also have done. Another identity successfully adopted by Central Asian exiles in Saudi Arabia was that of *mujahir*, a very positively inflected term for Muslim groups forced into exile by non-Muslim powers, originally applied to the Prophet Muhammad and his early companions, when forced to leave Mecca for the Yathrib oasis.⁴² There is little evidence that any of the Khujandis who left the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s ever returned, but no doubt that many strove to maintain contact with the families they had left behind.

2. Donations of land & property

For those who chose, or were obliged by circumstances, not to flee the Soviet Union, one of the simplest ways to avoid punitive taxation and disenfranchisement as a class alien exploiter was to donate one's property. During the 1920s, the line between requisition and nominally voluntary donation was rather blurred: some handed over their estates to the local Soviet when they found they could not afford the taxes that the Soviet had determined they should pay. Already in March 1918, the Khujand Soviet had moved to nationalise oil presses, and the cotton-cleaning plants belonging to the Alibaev brothers – who were also assessed a special tax of 6,000 roubles. Management of the privately owned irrigation systems was turned over to the Union of the Poor. In September 1918, all equipment and stock contained in Khujand's tanneries was similarly nationalised. In the course of the year, lists of non-working households in the city were drawn up, and submitted to the Land-Reform Commission.⁴³ “Voluntary” donations of land and

⁴² Bayram Balci, op. cit, 16.

⁴³ A. Pulatova, “Meropriiatiia Khudzshandskogo soveta po vytesneniiu iz Khudzhandi i ego okrugi imushchego sloia obshchestva v 30-e gody XX veka” in *Nomai donishgoh (Uchenye zapiski Khudzshandskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. Akad. B. Gafurova)*.

property were one way to avoid being referred to the land-reform commission, and thus avoid a more thorough expropriation. It can readily be imagined how the well-connected, Russian-speaking indigenous Party members exerted themselves to avoid having their own family members, mahalla neighbours, school friends and other close connections placed on the list of non-working households – their tactics will be discussed in the upcoming section on *gruppirovshchina* (a word that can be translated as cliquishness, formation of cliques, or networks of solidarity).

The extent to which voluntary donations were successful in warding off subsequent rounds of punitive taxation or deprivation of voting rights depended to a large extent on familiarity with the new system and personal connections. As we will see later in the chapter, the wealthy Ergash-boibacha, of a khoja lineage, was classed as a kulak and exiled in 1931, despite having, in the words of his grandson “built a school [located, in fact, in a portion of his house] and performed other charitable deeds, but all in vain....”⁴⁴ On the other hand, Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi’s family also owned a lot of land, and several mills, but managed to avoid any negative consequences for himself or his close relatives by giving away his property before being obliged to do so.⁴⁵

To sympathetic local eyes, more or less voluntary property donations were quite sufficient to avert any class-based animosity. In Karaiantak village, a Mullo Salim Raimov had been convicted by the People’s Court (which may have included non-locals) to five months of forced labour and a seventy ruble fine for concealing property liable for taxation, but several months later, an external investigation discovered that the sentence had not been carried out.

⁴⁴ Interview with grandson of Ergash-boibacha, Khujand, July 2011. His grandson did report, in the same interview, that Ergash-boibacha “managed to become wealthy again” after having been exiled to the Caucasus.

⁴⁵ Interview with son of Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi, Khujand, June 2011.

Furthermore, the executive committee for his own district (RIK) insisted on cancelling the Mullo altogether from the list of those liable for punitive taxation (referred to as individual taxes), in recognition of his having voluntarily shared out seventeen tanaps of his planted fields to inhabitants of his own village, and was further known to be supporting a hired worker through his illness.⁴⁶ These few lines suggest a religious figure who was valued and respected by his community, who saw no reason to punish or antagonize him – though it is also possible that fear of religious impiety was a motive for these villagers. In any case, it would seem that many locals understood class enemy status as something fundamentally linked to property and wealth: once income inequality had been ameliorated, there might be no further cause for animosity. The doctrine of class struggle did not, it would seem, necessarily resonate with the people of the Ferghana Valley.

3. Subterfuge

An important strategy that so-called bois deployed to avoid disenfranchisement and confiscations of land and property was to hand over parcels of land to relatives – often ones with connections in the right places. Such attempts were at times successful in the long term, as we know from interviews conducted after the fall of the Soviet Union, but were at other times thwarted by “batraks” whose actions were then promptly attributed by grateful officials to class-based animosity. It was probably easier for urban dwellers, or those who had residences in towns or cities, to conceal their ownership of considerable landholdings from inspections, than it was for those who lived year round in the same rural communities as their hired labourers and sharecroppers, in close proximity to their land. Thus for example, the Khujand city dwellers

⁴⁶ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.91

Abdulla Umar Tadzhiik [Tojik] and Abdughafur Babacha kept hold until at least 1928 – it is not clear how – of their irrigated fields in Yangi-Kurgan village and rented them out to batraks: “they receive unearned income in kind, amounting to eight poods of rice from each tanap of irrigated land.”⁴⁷

In waging their struggle against land reform, the bois were found to resort to underhand means, as reported in a Letter from Central Asia published in *Izvestiia*: “If a boi household consists of 5-6 souls, he will divide his 20-40 desiatina of land between all the members of his family, including the baby lying in a cradle.” Some bois, the article continues darkly “attempt to turn the mood of the batrak class to their own account, and are not squeamish even about cementing friendships with basmachi fighters.”⁴⁸

Just as the wealthy were self-evidently class enemies, so perhaps the whistle-blowers and unmaskers of privilege were self-evidently of *batrak* class. Thus for instance, self-identified batraks in Samgar village (about twenty kilometres from Khujand) came forward to tell the commission that the “boi” Mirzabaev, who lived in the city of Khujand with his family, had managed to avoid losing any of the land that he owned in their village. During the land reform campaign in the winter of 1925-26, this Mirzabaev had given over some of his land to his relative Abdukahar Mirzabaev, who was chairman of the village electoral commission at the time – and thus responsible for identifying those whose wealth or social profile made them ineligible for full citizenship rights. This transaction led to the household of Mirzabaev being registered in the files of the Land Commission as having been “liquidated,” whereas in fact the household continued to be considered to be among the most powerful in the area, and Mirzabaev still kept “three horses, two carts, six oxen and about twenty heads of cattle” in the village. The Mirzabaev

⁴⁷ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.92

⁴⁸“Bor’ba za zemliu (Pis’mo iz Srednei Azii),” in *Izvestiia*, Tuesday 17 November 1925, 4.

household lived in Khujand city, and their land in the village was farmed by sharecroppers.⁴⁹ We do not know how much longer the Mirzabaev household continued to enjoy their land in Samgar.

This same member of the Mirzabaev clan who sat on the higher electoral commission, Abduqahhor Mirzabaev, was also found to have helped conceal the twenty five desiatina of land owned by one “Mirza Fatilla [Fatullah] Shodi Mirzaev.” Abduqahhor Mirzabaev, in cahoots with the two members of the land commission (Karim Berdy Madkarim Sufi and Umar Pastakov) described as “allies of the Mirbabaevs” had concealed details of the ownership of this land, and the fact that it was worked by seven sharecroppers, listed by name in the document.⁵⁰ It seems likely that these sharecroppers were listed as owners of the land in the land commission’s files, quite possibly with their knowledge and consent. Twenty five desiatina, or 67.5 acres, seems too much land to be farmed effectively by only seven people relying on animal power alone: it is likely therefore that not all of this land was irrigated or suitable for sowing, or else that there were more labourers whose cooperation in the scheme went undetected.

In Gulkhana village, during the land reform process, fifteen tanaps of land were confiscated from the household of Yuldash Baba Sultanmuradov, and “given to the batrak Baltabai Mamarajabov, but under pressure from the boi this batrak did not take the land, and continues to this day to work for him as a sharecropper (for one quarter of the harvest). Mamarajabov himself denied this and denies it still, but the whole community and in particular the batraks confirm this situation.”⁵¹ This terse account describes a relatively common occurrence, in which the handover of land parcels sanctioned by the Land Reform commissions did not, in fact, take place. From the perspective of the author of the report, such behaviour on

⁴⁹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.1521, l.14

⁵⁰ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.1521, l.15

⁵¹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.1521, l.14

the part of a batrak can only be explained by pressure on the part of the boi, arrogantly opposing the tide of history, but we can afford to be more sceptical. The batrak may have had felt financial pressure as well as, or instead of, pressure from the boi, or he may have had other reasons to be reluctant to take on greater economic risks – to say nothing of the risk of alienating a potential source of support.

Old-elite local communists were rather successful, on the whole, in navigating the pitfalls of land and water reform, between the Scylla of retaining too much, and thus being unmasked as a class enemy, and the Carybdis of giving away too much, and thus losing all meaningful control over their land. In many cases, of course, they were merely postponing the inevitable, and would pay in the 1930s for their success in the 1920s. It is significant in this regard that the villages closest to Khujand city were those in which the land distribution pattern envisioned by the Party met the greatest obstacles: evidently landowners in more rural districts as yet lacked the savoir faire and connections of their urban counterparts. Of all the villages surveyed by a commission, the very worst – from the point of view of batraks and bois who refused to display the appropriate class dynamic – was the village of Kistakuz,⁵² in the immediate vicinity of Khujand city. This village was noted for its well-developed orchards, but when land redistribution was attempted in the winter of 1925-26, “a very large quantity of land was turned down or refused” by those to whom it had been given.

Another unintended consequence of the campaign to expropriate land (but not, in most cases, farm animals or tools) from the wealthy, was that some of the expropriated landowners turned to other sources of income, none of which met with the Party’s approval. Those who still had work animals and tools hired these out to those who had been given land but not, in many

⁵² In 2002 Kistakuz was renamed Khistevarz.

cases, sufficient resources to work it. Others turned to money-lending, meeting the needs of customers who were evidently not being reached by the official credit lines set up by the Land reform committees. “Surpluses of bread, rice, money allow the bai class to develop a singularly cruel money lending operation. So, for example for a loan of 80 rubles in the course of six months the bai receives 60 rubles for the 40, after two months, 20 rubles; for 5 poods of wheat, after three months 12 poods must be returned, and so on.”⁵³

Taken together, the evidence from the land and water reform process suggests that class enemy status was widely understood to be fundamentally linked to property and wealth, and was therefore something that might easily be overcome through voluntary or involuntary, real or simulated, redistributions of property. Such redistributions would leave the less tangible symptoms of cultural capital and charisma that operated among local communities to a large extent untouched and as yet to be reckoned with.

4. *Gruppirovshchina*, or the old boi network

As has already begun to emerge, the chief tool at the disposal of the *asilzodagon* in negotiating their position vis-à-vis the Party, and their greatest strategic advantage, was their capacity to inherit, build and develop close bonds of solidarity and patronage not only horizontally, with the peer group that shared their avlod, mahalla, school, and place of work, but also vertically, with those above (teachers, elders, supervisors) and below them (pupils, nephews, workplace subordinates and so on). These close ties easily escaped the notice of outsiders, which helps to explain their endurance, although the threat of being exposed by local rivals who felt excluded from the power-sharing arrangements in place could not be underestimated. Patronal

⁵³ F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.41

politics, a system which in Hale’s characterization has deep roots in Eurasia, would go through a phase of tense and sometimes violent upheaval as its practitioners adapted to the demands of a new system.⁵⁴

Russian (or otherwise non-local) Party leaders were very troubled by evidence – plentifully turned up by almost all outside inspectors who visited Khujand and elsewhere in the Valley – of what they termed *gruppirovshchina*, that is to say cliquishness, or the (sinister) propensity to form groups. More specifically, the groups in question were conceived of as elite groups, whose members were tied to one another by familial as well as other ties. In the 1920s, *gruppirovshchina* seems to have been used by Russians to describe specifically Central Asian social dynamics, noted in Uzbek and Kyrgyz party organizations as well as in Tajik ones.⁵⁵ The historian Dzhenish Dzhunushaliev described *gruppirovshchina* in the Kyrgyz context as a manifestation of “old clan-tribal (*rodoplemennaia*) ideology in new circumstances.”⁵⁶ *Gruppirovshchina* was harmful because it threatened to subvert the Party’s stated principles of equality, by prioritizing group loyalties and identities that were opaque to the State over loyalty to the Party and to its members qua members. *Gruppirovshchina* fractured Party loyalty, and extended beyond Party members, to include Khujandis whose attitude to the regime was ambivalent or hostile.

Here I consider how the dynamics of *gruppirovshchina* played out among *asilzodagon* Communists, who thanks to the cultural and social capital amassed by means of both their

⁵⁴ See Henry A. Hale, *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

⁵⁵ In his dissertation on early Soviet Kyrgyzstan, Benjamin Loring describes how beginning in 1925, the Party combated *gruppirovshchina*, which he translates as factionalism, by harshly cracking down on overt political struggles and “staffing its most sensitive positions with loyal cadres from the centre.” Benjamin H. Loring, “Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan: Nation-making, rural development and social change, 1921-32,” Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Brandeis University in 2008, 97.

⁵⁶ Cited in Benjamin H. Loring, “Building Socialism in Kyrgyzstan: Nation-making, rural development and social change, 1921-32” (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis, 2008), 108.

traditional and Russophone education (see chapter one) formed what might irreverently be thought of as an “Old Boi network.”

The following exploration of how a scion of an elite urban family navigated the new political opportunities as well as the social tensions of the 1920s, will focus on the early career of Mu'min (Suleimanovich) Khojaev. He was born in Khujand in 1897 to a family variously described in official biographies as “*sluzhashchii*” or “*seredniak-farmer*.” Government employee, or white collar worker (*sluzhashchii*), is clearly an transplanted term that has little to no meaning in the Central Asian context, as only a tiny minority of locals had been employed by the Tsarist bureaucracy, and those previously employed by the Emir of Bukhara or Khan of Kokand were usually referred to as “functionaries” (*chinovniki*), at such times as they were unable to hide such awkward biographic facts. In the context of Khujand, it seems that *sluzhashchii* was the label used for those at the top of the social pyramid who could not plausibly claim to be some variety of peasant. Mu'min Khojaev was not a peasant, but he was a scion of the Juibori Khojas, related to the chief qozi of Khujand in the early twentieth century, Porso-khoja.⁵⁷ According to his enemy, whom we will meet shortly, Mu'min Khojaev's father was an imam.⁵⁸ Like many khoja families in Khujand, Khojaev grew up bilingual in Uzbek and Tajik/Persian, to which he added fluency in Russian by attending the Russian-native school in Khujand. Like the other privileged former pupils of that school, he was poised to capitalise on the possibilities for advancement offered by the new Soviet regime – so long as he could avoid being unmasked as a class alien.

⁵⁷ I. Gaziev, “Aristokraticheskoe soslovie starogo Khudzhanda,” in *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia* (Khukumat Leninabadskoi Oblasti, 1999), 117.

⁵⁸ RGASPI, F. 62, op.2, d.478. I gratefully acknowledge the generosity of Adeeb Khalid in sharing this file with me.

Mu'min Khojaev's enemies accused him of gross nepotism in promoting and protecting several members of his family circle, and Juibori Khojas more generally; more sympathetic sources report that he formed lasting bonds with several of his fellow pupils from the Russian-native school. Throughout his career, as I learned in interviews, Mu'min Khojaev remained on friendly terms with Abdurahim Khojiboev,⁵⁹ Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi⁶⁰ and Inoyat Qurbonov – all of them from notable families.⁶¹ Inoyat Qurbonov directed the Waqf department in Khujand between 1920 and its final dissolution in 1931 – a very favourable position for someone who had the right connections, as he did. Although Mu'min Khojaev, like Bashir-khon Ishoqi, began his career in teaching (as we saw in the previous chapter), unlike his friend, Khojaev soon moved on to party work, having joined the Communist Party in Khujand in 1918. It seems clear that former pupils of the Russian-native school formed something of an “old boi” network – they rose together, and then, for the most part, fell together in the deadly purges of 1937-38. His former schoolmates were not, however, implicated in the investigations into Khojaev's conduct which took place in the early 1920s, as we shall see.

Khojaev's first administrative position, in the department of education, came to him when he took over from his former teacher at the Russian-native school, Voloshin. Beginning in 1920, Khojaev also served on the party's city-level and provincial committees, and from January 1921 to July 1922 served as first secretary of the Khujand city committee. For a few months beginning in July 1922 he left his native city for a stint as first secretary in Jizzakh⁶² – and it is doubtful that

⁵⁹ For the rise and fall of Abdurahim Hojiboev, see chapter four.

⁶⁰ For the career of Bashirkon Ishoqi, see chapters one and five.

⁶¹ Personal friendships tend not to leave explicit trace in the archival record: I am indebted for this information to private conversations with Baroat (K)Hojibaeva, daughter of Abdurahim Hojiboev, and with Mubashir Ishoqi, son of Bashir-khon Ishoqi (July 2011).

⁶² Jizzakh is an ancient settlement whose old city was almost entirely destroyed when it was conquered by Tsarist forces in 1866; by the 1920s, it had already taken on the aspect of a European colonial town. Jizzakh is about 170 km to the southwest from Khujand by modern roads, and lies between Khujand and Samarkand.

he undertook this position willingly. He was able to return to Khujand the following March, as vice chair of the organisational department. This last was not a promotion relative to his post in Jizzakh, and thus underscores how, in a patronal system of politics, it is preferable by far to remain where one's personal network is strongest, rather than advance through relocation beyond the reach of one's network.

Mu'min Khojaev's conduct in his native Khujand earned him a few inveterate enemies or rivals, which were almost certainly led to his subsequent transfers away first from his hometown, and then from Central Asia as a whole (as we shall see in chapter four). In 1924, one determined and very persistent accuser, Mu'min Negmatov, wrote several letters to the Central Committee of the CP of Turkestan, copied to the secret police headquartered in Samarkand, denouncing Mu'min Khojaev in ungrammatical and convoluted Russian that nonetheless quivers with righteous indignation. This one-sided correspondence sheds light on the workings of patronal politics in Khujand in the 1920s – while the fact that the accuser was obliged to repeat himself several times hints at the considerable difficulties encountered by Party leaders in dealing with *gruppirovshchina*.

A sample of one Mu'min Negmatov's missives follows:

Letter to Samarkand oblast department of GPU, from Hoji Mu'min Negmatov, resident of Khujand and member of the Koshchi Union:

I believe it to be my civic duty to bring the following to the attention of the OGPU, in addition to the materials previously submitted accusing the former secretary of the city committee (gorkom) of the CP of Turkestan Mu'min Khojaev. I report that, during the visit of the investigator from Samarkand GPU for the trial/hearing of investigative affairs, feeling himself in danger (he Mu'min Khojaev) in communication with Masaidov (now secretary of Khujand ugorkom of the CP of Tajikistan) he, Mu'min Khojaev, came to Khujand in order to put pressure on the witnesses for his prosecution, in order that these witnesses speak *for* him (in support of Mu'min Khojaev). At the same time, having come to Khujand himself, he spread rumours alleging that the above-mentioned witnesses came for the trial of his opponents and claiming that those who failed to support Mu'min Khojaev [*“nestoronniki”*] would be placed under guard and isolated. [...] The arrival of

Mu'min Khojaev in Khujand severely affected the ongoing investigation into the accusations against him (Mu'min Khojaev). Twice I submitted requests concerning the temporary removal of Mu'min Khojaev from his position for the sake of correctly conducting the investigation, but what with one thing and other, that didn't work out.⁶³

The author of the letter identifies himself by name, as a citizen of Khujand and as a member of the Koshchi Union (*Ittifoqi Kambagalon* in Tajik). The purpose of the Koshchi Unions, established across Turkestan beginning in 1920, was to “organize the village poor and the village labourers and protect their economic class interests against exploitation by the kulaks, beys [boi/bai], and semi-feudal elements [...] and to draw [them] into the work of Soviet construction.”⁶⁴ The Koshchi Union was intended not to replace, but rather to work alongside state and Party institutions, and to act as a repository of natural allies of the regime: by identifying himself as a member, Negmatov positions himself as a loyal citizen whose testimony should be trusted. Throughout his letter, though he himself was evidently not a member of the Party, he uses “*bezpartiinyi*” as a slur with which to characterize his enemies (but not those willing to support him by testifying against Khojaev).

Although Negmatov does not dwell on Khojaev's family background – noting only that he is the son of an imam – and focuses instead on the illegality of specific actions undertaken, it is possible that class-based animosity plays a part here. At any rate, Negmatov's resentment is palpable: at Khojaev's considerable privilege, political clout and the expectation of impunity which seems to have governed his behavior, plays. *Asilzodagon* Communists were too many at

⁶³ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.99, l.11. The archive preserves a typed version of this letter, which may have been dictated by his author (the syntax suggests impromptu oral composition), or transcribed subsequently, perhaps prior to forwarding on to Moscow.

⁶⁴ A. Bogdanov, “The Koshchi Union in Kazakhstan,” originally published in *Sovetskoe stroitel'stvo* in 1929, translated and published in Rudolf Schlesinger, *The Nationalities Problem & Soviet Administration: Selected Readings on the Development of Soviet Nationalities*, first published by Routledge in 1956 (Routledge: 2013), 90.

the time, it seems, to excite comment, and their occupancy of leadership position was taken for granted.

Negmatov goes on to describe the degree of influence exerted over Khujand by Mu'min Khojaev and his supporters as a “dictatorship.”⁶⁵ In another letter, he emphatically asserts that never has the town and district of Khujand lived through “such difficult times as it did, when MUMINKHOJAEV “reigned” (*votsarilsia*) at the head of the Khujand Party Committee.”⁶⁶ Mu'min Khojaev is described as having “reigned” over Khujand together with his close associate “son of an imam and merchant Sulaiman Khoja TIULLAKHOJAEV⁶⁷ [sic], of white-boned⁶⁸ (*belokostnogo*) ancestry.”⁶⁹ The influence and connections of Mu'min Khojaev were such that, although he was expelled from the Party during a purge conducted by the Oblast level Commission, and referred to the courts, “somehow or other, he remained in the Party.”⁷⁰ After complaints about Khojaev’s behavior had been submitted to the Control Commission in Samarkand, two of Khojaev’s former schoolmates from the Russian-native school, Abdullo Rahimboev and Bobobek Mavlianbekov, who were both a couple of years older than him and rising through the Party ranks, came to Khujand in 1923 to follow up. “Mu'min Khojaev gave them his word that he would stop his dealings [nepotism, perverting the course of justice], but they did not keep him in check.”⁷¹

⁶⁵ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.99, l.11.

⁶⁶ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.478, l.68

⁶⁷ “Tiullakhojaev” is not a plausible last name. In view of the other orthographical errors in the document, such as Muman Nagmatov for Mu'min Negmatov, it seems likely that Tiullakhojaev should read “Turakhojaev” or “Turdikhojaev.”

⁶⁸ White-boned, or *belokostnogo*, translates ok-suyak, which as may be remembered is a way of referring to the patricians, notables or *asilzodagon* of Khujand, as opposed to the “black-boned ones,” or commoners.

⁶⁹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.478, l.68

⁷⁰ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.478, l.68ob

⁷¹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.478, l.69

In Negmatov's account, Mu'min Khojaev stands accused of having surrounded himself by close relatives, whom he appointed to positions in Party and state bodies sprinkled across the district of Khujand and adjoining districts (four other Khojas related to Mu'min Khojaev are mentioned by name, with their positions). His brother, Ismoil Khojaev, was chair of the land court (*zemel'nii sud*), "a position he used to abuse many citizens in court." Mu'min Khojaev also ensured that his cousin Eshon Podshoh-Khoja Saidali Khojaev⁷² was appointed *qozi* to the People's Court in Khujand: Podshoh-Khoja was then 49, and had served for many years as mufti and imam "and obviously he did not depart from his old habits and traditions, and 'judged' with the protection and blessing of Mu'min Khojaev."⁷³ At some point in the following decade, the Mufti Eshon Podshoh-Khoja felt the climate in his hometown had become so hostile that he fled the Soviet Union for the Arabian Peninsula – eventually, Mu'min Khojaev's protection became a liability.

According to Negmatov, on returning to Khujand from Samarkand, Khojaev was able to instigate "a personnel shuffle among the responsible workers" to remove Podchamirov, the vice State Prosecutor for Khujand uezd. It was Podchamirov, reportedly, who had initially "brought to light his (Mu'min Khojaev's) crimes and those of his brother Ismoil Khojaev."

Among the specific accusations levelled against Khojaev in the two successive letters to be found in the Central Party Archives, Negmatov mentions his unauthorized use of 170 tanaps of land (approximately 70 hectares), and water appropriated from the inhabitants of Unji, a rural district bordering Khujand. In another letter, Negmatov alludes to corruption in a contract for fifty thousand pounds of dried apricots concluded by one Kurbanov, chairman of the local "Unified Consumer Society" (EPO), who is alleged to be a protégé of Khojaev, and one who

⁷² Misspelled in the document as "Patsha Khoja"

⁷³ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.478, l.69ob

works only “for the sake of his own pocket and the pockets of his old blood-drinking “bourgeois”⁷⁴ exploiters.”⁷⁵ This Kurbanov also purchased several parcels of land in and near Khujand which he registered in his father’s name rather than his own (presumably in order to avoid taxes or confiscation), and had hitherto managed to avoid retribution thanks to Masaidov, who was allegedly serving as Khojaev’s deputy in his patronage network since Khojaev had been transferred to Samarkand.

We do not have Mu’min Khojaev’s response to these allegations, which might well have included counter-allegations of nepotism and corruption aimed at his rivals. But the overall picture created by this denunciation letter seems plausible: we see patronal networks jostling to seize control of the new avenues for career advancement, personal enrichment and political influence, and charismatic individuals seeking to apply Soviet redistributive policies in such a way as to favor and protect their own patronage network and harm their competitors.

There were surely many letters of denunciation sent to the local secret police in Central Asia, as Sheila Fitzpatrick and others have documented was the case in Russia. This one, however, is unusual in having been forwarded on to Tashkent (and thus preserved in the Central Party archives in Moscow), presumably on account of Khojaev’s relative prominence among the few native members of the Communist Party of Turkestan. There it can easily be accessed today, unlike those that may or may not yet be preserved in the archives of the various heirs of the Soviet-era OGPU in Central Asia, which are entirely closed to researchers. The file containing Negmatov’s letters contains no trace of follow up or response from the authorities concerning this investigation, and over the next few years, Khojaev’s career continued to flourish, although

⁷⁴ In italics in original

⁷⁵ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.99, l.12.

the next stages took place outside of his native Khujand. In spite of his pains, Negmatov saw little harm come to his nemesis in this particular round.

Beginning in 1924, Khojaev was based in Samarkand, then the administrative centre for Tajik language and culture-related programming. Khojaev worked first in the agitprop department as editor of the *Zerafshon* provincial newspaper, and then as secretary of the Samarkand oblast committee. He was the third Khujandi to hold that post, previously occupied by those two former schoolmates of his who had previously tried to rein him in: Abdullo Rahimboev (1920), and Ahmadbek Mavlianbekov (1922-1923). The “old boi” network was not large, but closely knit, and those with illustrious pedigrees, cultural capital and patronage networks were able by and large to navigate the storms of the 1920s with fair, if not always resounding, success.



Figure 6: Mu'min Khojaev and friends in Moscow, 1927.

A group photograph taken in Moscow in 1927 portrays Uzbek and Tajik delegates to the Fifteenth Party Congress. Two of them are Khujandis, both graduates of the Russian-native school: Muhammadjon Madalievich Masaidov (1901-1939) on the far left, and Mu'min Khojaev (1898-1943): he leans forward slightly, cigarette in hand, arms resting lightly on two of his companions, Ibragimov and Rutbaev (the figure standing just behind Mu'min Khojaev is Sher-Zhukhimedov). In 1927, Mu'min Khojaev had just been appointed People's Commissar for Education in the Uzbek SSR, his most prestigious appointment to date. Source: [RGAKFD, B-1808 b/w](#) (photographer unknown)

Effects of Land Reform: the aftermath

Such sweeping changes to the power dynamics in the fertile and densely populated Ferghana Valley as the Land and Water Reform could not have taken place absent significant local support, including from those who, in terms of social origin, wealth and status, would most accurately be characterised as the regime's class enemies. Russian and European Communist party members were simply too few, and lacked the knowledge of the local situation (and often the language skills necessary to acquire that knowledge) to implement such divisive and intrusive policies unaided. They needed local people to staff soviets in every village and town neighbourhood, to participate in meetings, and – crucially – to supply the data and evidence necessary to determine which households were to be dispossessed of their lands, and which individuals were to incur special taxes.

There was fierce resistance to the Land and Water Reforms, as there was to collectivisation, but when the details of that resistance are weighed up, they shed light on the scale of support the Party must have enjoyed among the local population in order for these projects, ultimately, to succeed to the extent that they did. The interwar period had a profound and irreversible impact on social dynamics in the Ferghana Valley. Acknowledging the scale of these changes does not, however, fully address the question of whether the attempt to graft a Marxist-Leninist conception of class struggle was successful. On this point, the sources paint a complex picture: an intricate dance between practical exigencies, political expediency, the quest for a better life and the desire to be left alone. The appeal of the rhetoric of class warfare, of a new social contract, had to be balanced against a sense that the new regime did not have an accurate picture of local social dynamics, that the group identities that had shaped social interactions for centuries were still relevant and meaningful. Indeed, one receives the impression

that the new regime had effectively bolstered, rather than diminished, the prestige and influence of a portion of the old elite.

For every villager apparently prepared to cooperate with the authorities, who denounced a neighbour for owning too much land and employing sharecroppers, there seemed to be another villager who refused to accept land from his former landlord, or who conspired to protect the identity and holdings of the local “boi” or mullo. Many such instances were described in the reports submitted by the investigators sporadically sent to the region by the Central Asian Biuro (*SredAzBiuro*) based in Tashkent.

There is little evidence in reports submitted from the Ferghana Valley, aside from some clearly performative statements made by rural activists to be discussed further below, that the idea of peasant interests being fundamentally opposed to those of the “clergy,” the merchants and the landowners gained much traction in rural areas in the course of the 1920s. Following the Land and Water reform, several rounds of punitive tax collection and scattered campaigns of property confiscations, by the late 1920s it seemed as though the “mass of the people” had yet to achieve proper class consciousness, and the opinion that the boi class had now paid their dues was widespread, even among Communist Party members. In summarizing the attitude prevailing in the okrug as a whole in late 1928, a confidential report sent to *SredAzBiuro* in Tashkent concluded that “the basic attitude that characterizes [state and Party] village organisations is... that *they do not see class* in the village: village communists believe that there are no bois in the village”⁷⁶ [emphasis added]. Some of those identified as bois may have fled, but evidence from later year suggests that large scale out-migration from the Ferghana Valley of the legally disenfranchised had not yet begun in 1928. The village communists who believed that “there are

⁷⁶ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, l.50

no bois in the village” therefore did so in many cases because did not consider those whose property had been redistributed to be bois any longer.

The lack of class tension in the village was still considered a serious problem in the late 1920s, and it would be addressed, definitively, by all out collectivisation. Collectivisation would vanquish the [class] enemies of cotton at last.

Portrait of a class enemy: the boi-mullo

The exploitative landowner, the exploitative capitalist: these were Soviet categories in search of content, categories that were superficially nativized by the adoption of the purportedly local term “Bai/boi/bey.” The difficulty of capturing Central Asian social dynamics through essentially European categories was compounded by a certain sloppiness in categorisation, which was a product of the high speed and sense of urgency with which Soviet policies were often rolled out across vast territories.

Although complicated by the distinct lack of a local proletariat in whose name to seize power, there was never much doubt as to who should be cast in the role of class enemy. In Central Asia, those parts went to the “boi,” the overfed, exploitative merchant and/or landowner in his greasy khalat (tunic), and the mullo, who preyed on the superstitious with a similar disregard for hygiene. The boi was a sharply gendered category with definite physical attributes: he could be recognised by his big belly, just as reliably as idlers, parasites and old elites in Russia, who were invariably portrayed as obese.⁷⁷

In considering the boi and the mullo through the eyes of the Soviet state, which has left us many thousands of pages of detailed reports on the progress of the class war waged against

⁷⁷ Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts*, 17.

them, it is hard to discern any overlap between these devious, cartoonish villains and the previous chapter's noble allies of the revolution. What do the cultivated, progressive educators who embraced the Party and founded Soviet schools in the Ferghana Valley towns have to do with the usurious merchants and exploitative landowners who seemed to threaten the success of the Soviet project at every turn? Once certain rhetorical flourishes are set aside, the connections could be very close indeed, as the case of Mu'min Khojaev illustrates. The *asilzodagon* – the hereditary intelligentsia of the previous chapter – did not overlap altogether with the reviled boi class, but nor were they quite distinct.



Figure 7: *Mushfiqi* cover illustration

An obese boi and a bearded and turbaned mullo fall headlong into oblivion (or perhaps, onto the dustheap of history) as the cheery collective farm workers stride purposefully across the field, showing off their gleaming new metal plough and tractor. Cover of the satirical magazine *Mushfiqi*, produced in Samarkand beginning in 1926, as a supplement to the Tajik-language daily *Ovoz-i Tojik*. Although the image is undated, this looks as though it may be the first edition following the changeover to the new Latin script, in 1930.

Once the boi had been named as the class enemy, the boi needed to be identified.

Identification of a boi depended almost entirely on wealth, and specifically land holdings: a rich

boi is a tautology, and there is no other kind. A boi who gave away all his land could, it would seem, cease to be a boi – and in this respect therefore, might fare better than those who also had religious titles, such as mullo, eshon, qozi, mudarris and so forth. Attempts to conceal “social origin,” ranging from downplaying the amount of land owned by one’s parents to embracing a “poor batrak” background was so common as to be considered the norm, and although the threat of exposure remained very real, such metamorphoses *could* be successful in the long term. While it is not possible in every case to rebut the personal narratives constructed for official purposes by the new Central Asian elite point by point, there is plenty of evidence to establish that concealing one’s social origin, and providing misleading information for the purposes of avoiding class enemy classification, was widespread.

Given the very real possibility of concealing one’s class enemy status by means of either divesting oneself of property or appearing to do so, it is no wonder that the endurance of class alien *modes of behaviour* and social interaction became a concern. Over the course of the 1920s, the Party became increasingly preoccupied by the problem of *zasorennost*, or clogging of state and Party organs by social alien elements. A number of Party purges took place, designed to increase the proportion of workers or those from “good” social backgrounds. Greatly to the alarm of Party officials, however, it was found that in spite of successive attempts to instil good class consciousness (of the type that manifested in in good class behaviour), to many – probably most – of the local population, the class war was a phony war, a senseless endeavour.⁷⁸

Indeed, I argue that the Land and Water Reform, to the extent that it was successful in palliating the conditions and reducing the numbers of landless peasants in the Ferghana Valley,

⁷⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick has described the war between kulaks and bedniaks fomented by the state in Russia in the 1920s as a phony class war. See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 41.

failed to achieve the regime's broader goals. Further interest in class warfare – and in ferreting out class aliens to be disenfranchised – appears to have been somewhat dampened by the trauma of the reform's implementation even among the regime's most natural allies in the Koshchi Union. Land reform also failed to advance the Soviet Union's cotton independence agenda, and thus can be seen as a failure from the regime's perspective, or rather a dead end in policy terms – to be overcome only by full-on, forced collectivisation, coupled with an oppressive dekulakisation campaign.

***Zasorennost'* of the body politic**

Top secret reports sent by the Khujand party cell to their superiors in the aftermath of the Land and Water Reform process – in the years between 1926 and late 1929 – opined that the boi class still wielded “a considerable influence over local soviets.”⁷⁹ The land reform process had failed to crush the class enemies of the regime, but the local population apparently failed to take this problem to heart.

The imagery used to describe the baleful influence believed to be wielded by socially alien elements on the putatively healthy body of society was decidedly medical and biological: reports speak of “unhealthy attitudes,” “the ulcer of Kanibadam” (referring to persistently interfering and influential elites).⁸⁰ In report after alarmed report submitted by party delegates reporting back to SredAzbiuro in Tashkent (and often copied to Moscow), village councils and local party cells were found to be clogged by the boi class (*baistvo*), and the yet more sinister boi-mulla hybrid. This clearly pejorative term was often used in official soviet discourse during the 1920s to denote the overlap in the Venn Diagram of the perceived natural enemies of the

⁷⁹ RGASPI, F. 62, op. 2, d. 1059, l.5

⁸⁰ F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.50ob

regime: the wealthy, and the pious. Boi-mulla, often rendered as one word, is used for those perceived to have grown wealthy through wielding their religious influence, or practiced visible piety to justify their wealth: in local terms, this might describe the administrators of waqf endowments, the guardians of popular shrines, leading figures at prominent mosques and madrasa complexes. Needless to say, use of the term was politically motivated, and described perceived enemies of the regime, rather than a precise social or economic category.

In May 1927, for example, “socially alien elements” were found to have infiltrated local soviets in Kanibadam, Isfara, Khujand and Nau districts.⁸¹ The discovery of “boi-mullo” serving on several village soviets had prompted reviews of these soviets and of the work that they had conducted. In other villages, soviet members stood accused of accommodating the demands of bois or of sharing “secrets” with them. Over the reporting period, powerful groupings had formed in some localities to advance local interests, or rather, in the eyes of the Party, to promote factionalism.

Some types of institution were, often for obvious reasons, particularly liable to be “clogged” by socially alien elements: one such area was education, as we saw in the first chapter, and another was the legal and criminal justice system. Traditional Islamic elites had staffed the native justice system during the Tsarist period just as they had under the Emirs and Khans: it would take time to establish a system of Soviet law courts, and when it came to training a new cohort of legal professionals, it was clearly more straightforward to recruit people who were already literate, preferably in Russian. Already in 1921, the justice department in Samarkand had begun to enroll students in crash courses to train court employees, but concerns continued to be

⁸¹ “Top secret” report submitted in May 1927 by the Khujand district committee of the Uzbek Communist Party to their superiors in Tashkent covering the previous six months (from November 1926), RGASPI F.62, op.2, d.1059, l.4

expressed that the Muslim courts (*mus-sudy*) which were suffered to continue in operation for want of a substitute, had difficulty reporting their decisions to the state and party authorities, because their employees were not literate in Russian (just as their European counterparts rarely spoke local languages).⁸² Even in late 1929 – five years after Mu'min Khojaev was accused of allowing his Mufti relative to work in the Soviet justice system – the “bai class” allegedly controlled not only the Party and Soviet institutions in Khujand district, and in the outlying districts of Konibodom, Isfara, and Nau, but also crucial provincial level institutions, including the Court and Procuracy.⁸³ A justice system in the clutches of hostile boi forces was the explanation for “acquittal of bois by the judicial organs for anti-Soviet actions and terror committed against the poor, while verdicts of ‘guilty’ are handed down to the poor and batrak classes on trumped up charges of slander against bois.”⁸⁴

In late 1929, SredAzBiuro inspector Kniazhin filed a detailed report on his assessment of the work conducted over the past year by the Khujand district party organisation. Overall, it is fair to say that he was not impressed. The problem of cadres, as so often, was daunting. Most Party members and state employees in positions of responsibility throughout the district were native born Khujandis, city dwellers, as those from the villages were generally found to be “poorly prepared for leadership roles.” It is fair to infer that many of these urban Khujandis who were “prepared for leadership roles” had elite backgrounds and were accustomed to exercising authority and power. The Central Asian Biuro had encountered “extraordinary difficulties” in attempting to conduct a purge of the Khujand party organisation and promote new cadres,

⁸² RGASPI, F.61, op.1, d.50, l.179

⁸³ F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.31

⁸⁴ F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.31

mostly, it seems, due to trouble in obtaining accurate information on the backgrounds and qualifications of those being investigated.⁸⁵

One Party member purged in 1929 was Rahmat Babaev, born in 1895 and formally classed as a “Tajik peasant,” whose “partstazh” had begun in May 1927, when he was working for the city department of people’s education (GorONO) in Khujand. The degree of literacy that such a position implied in itself, of course, argued against the likelihood of his being of peasant background, but it was only two years later that he was officially unmasked as having concealed his social origin on entering the party. Contrary to previous assertions, it was revealed during the 1929 purge that Rahmat Babaev “comes from the family of a powerful Tura, a steward in Khujand district, where his father owned a lot of land and exploited his workers.” He was found to have links with alien elements, to have protected class enemies and promoted them within the department of education. Given that the record of his having been purged from the party in 1929 is preserved in a document relating to a subsequent party purge conducted in October 1935, it seems that he had been able to re-enter the Party once more prior to being “unmasked” for a second time.⁸⁶

In Khujand district, *gruppirovshchina*, or the old boi network, was still going strong:

In spite of the overall successes, both economic and political, achieved by the Party in the district, distortions in the class line gave the private-capitalist element the opportunity not only to counter measures taken by soviet power successfully, but even to assume the offensive. The immediate result: the failure to expose boi households to individual taxation, the reduction of taxes levied on boi households together with over-taxation of resource-poor and middle farmer households, the distortion of the class line in agricultural credit, a striking failure to tax merchants, the lack of pressure on boi-merchants to pay taxes, the strangulation of the middle peasants (*sredniaks*) through liquidation of assets and carrying out the stockpiling of [silk] cocoons and work obligations; the growth of money lenders’ capital, intensifying exploitation of

⁸⁵ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, l.28

⁸⁶ RGASPI, F.17, d.28, op.121, l.109

sharecroppers (chor-iak – working for one quarter of the harvest), hired labourers and the poor, and concurrently the strengthened position of private traders on the market.⁸⁷

According to the summary above, then: wealthy households are successfully avoiding punitive taxation, the power of merchants and private traders is increasing, and the tax burden is falling disproportionately on the poor – and all this as a result of “distortions in the class line.” These distortions, presumably, point to a failure to take the Party rhetoric on class struggle seriously – or perhaps suggest that those who do take class struggle seriously, are overwhelmed by the relative weakness of the Party. If we choose for a moment to accept the above as a fair picture of the social dynamics and economic relations in Khujand in late 1929, we can then consider whether the trends described can be described as a deviation from party directives, or the unintended consequences of the shift in party policy during the NEP.

These trends, though clearly not what the Party had in mind, are consistent with the reported effects of the policies of the NEP as implemented elsewhere. Are the prosperous merchants and boi-merchants alluded to above in some sense NEPmen, then, who owe their wealth to recent soviet policies? Or do these figures belong to the old, pre-revolutionary elite, who have still not been dislodged from their positions of power? There is some evidence that points to the latter view, indicating that the members of the traditional, Islamic patricians – such as Mu'min Khojaev, as we saw earlier, were among those protecting the merchants, and benefiting financially from that protection.

In the summer of 1929, Khujand and the surrounding territory was formally ceded by the Uzbek SSR to the Tajik ASSR, which at the same time rose to the status of a full republic, becoming the Tajik SSR. With a stroke of the pen, Khujand thus went from being a relatively

⁸⁷ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, l.31

minor urban centre within the Uzbek SSR, to being the major urban and industrial centre of the Tajik SSR, which rose to the status of a full republic at the same time. Henceforth, Khujand would be subordinated not to Tashkent, a bustling metropolis only 160 kilometres away over mostly flat terrain, but to Stalinobod, as yet a dusty village-cum-building site, separated from Khujand by the Zerafshan mountain range and almost twice the distance. Not only was there no road suitable for motor vehicles connecting Khujand to Stalinobod, but snow blocked off the mountain passes to all traffic for several months of the year. The easiest way to travel between the capital and the main city was through Uzbekistan. This change of orientation would have significant consequences for Khujand, and 1929 marks the beginning of a new phase of ascendancy for the city. For a while, the change also meant significantly slackened supervision from above: “The transfer of Khujand from the Uzbek to the Tajik SSR meant that for a time, neither the CC of the Uzbek CP, nor the Tajik Obkom, was paying much attention to the area.”⁸⁸

In the Ferghana Valley, as in other cotton growing regions of Central Asia, the question of class struggle was linked to that of Central Asia’s key asset – cotton – and the ambition to emancipate the Soviet Union and its textile industry from the burden of importing raw cotton from capitalist countries. If emancipating the Soviet textile industry from capitalist imports was a worthy socialist goal, then any dissenting opinions against establishing an effective cotton monoculture across all viable terrain in Central Asia could henceforth be perceived as anti-socialist, class-enemy wrecking. If one loses sight, however, of the lofty goal of emancipating the “people’s” textile industry, there is an inescapable irony in characterising the alleged attachment of the “boi class” to growing food crops for immediate local consumption (wheat,

⁸⁸ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.52

rice) as exploitative, and the farmers' ingrained habit of prioritising food security over cash crops as symptomatic of their ongoing exploitation.

Cotton and the bai class were portrayed – in the press just as in top secret reports – as locked into a bizarre zero-sum game, in which a gain for one side inevitably means a loss for the other. “To isolate the influence of the boi” party officials advocated “enforc[ing] by all means necessary the expansion of cotton production at the expense of grain crops.”⁸⁹ It was taken for granted that expanding cotton would hurt the boi class, and often repeated that “the principal sowers of cotton in the region are poor-mid income households.”⁹⁰ When many agronomists were found to consider rice a more profitable crop for farmers than cotton, this view was promptly attributed to the corrupting influence of the bois. “The Bai element, infused into the collective farm, conducts a desperate opposition against the expansion of cotton.”⁹¹

In top secret police reports just as in the press, the boi class was consistently presented as the enemy of cotton – never mind that the mercantile class in the Ferghana Valley had prospered thanks to cotton during the colonial period.⁹² And in the Ferghana Valley, of course, cotton was a bad enemy to have. Whatever the genesis of the trope of the boi as enemy of cotton, it became for many Soviet officials a mental category that no amount of actual evidence could dislodge altogether – except, as it turned out, a bountiful cotton harvest.

“The political significance of one boi household in Karakchikum⁹³ is interesting and obscure to me. This household announced that it would allot all its own lands to cotton, and challenged all the remaining powerful households in the district to emulate them. There is no analysis of this phenomenon in the district party organisations. I requested that the district party organization investigate this occurrence because I fear in this case the emergence of some new method of the kulak, with the goal of adapting to the

⁸⁹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.34

⁹⁰ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.46ob

⁹¹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.40

⁹² Need source. See Brower, perhaps

⁹³ A village some 30 km to the east of Khujand, in the Ferghana Valley, now (but not then) on the shores of the Kairakkum reservoir.

conditions existing in the village in order to save themselves from the pressure of class struggle.”⁹⁴

The disarmingly frank author of this report on the 1929 autumn sowing campaign in the districts surrounding Khujand lays bare a central problem in the definition of the struggle for cotton as an act of class war against the boi. Is a prosperous landowner who declares his support for cotton therefore not a class enemy? Rather than question the dogma that the boi is by unassailable Marxist logic the enemy of cotton, better to assume that this declared support for cotton is but a new subterfuge through which class enemies attempt to wriggle out of the battle waged against them by means of cotton cultivation.

The same rather wide-eyed official also visited a meeting held in a village (named in the report as “Mabfari”) to discuss a report authored by the district agronomist on the cotton program. The visitor observed the social extraction of those present and participating in the debate, and noted that “the peasantry remained silent.” She noted the interventions of thirteen people, all of whom were activists or local officials. No one present spoke out against the cotton plan, although a couple of speakers criticised its implementation, and several opined that the norm for cotton should be raised, if anything. Three speakers railed against the agronomist in question, complaining that he did little or nothing to help those who have no experience growing cotton (“all he does is go hunting”).⁹⁵ This agronomist appears to be an outsider, one Kuvshnikov, whom perhaps those present hoped to displace.

These villagers, whoever they are, give every indication of having learned to “speak Bolshevik.”⁹⁶ one Abdullaev going so far as to opine, for example, that “If on the good lands

⁹⁴ F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.212

⁹⁵ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.215

⁹⁶ The phrase is Steven Kotkin’s.

wheat is sown, it must be ploughed over again and sown with cotton, as wheat is necessary to the ESHON and the KULAK,⁹⁷ they go against cotton and plant wheat.” It is not clear, however, whether he is expressing a general principle to demonstrate his loyalty, or whether he may have a more specific axe to grind. If he has a class enemy in mind, he does not name anyone. A later speaker adds a further, generalising platitude devoid of specific targets: “For the boi, wheat plays the part of the moneylending capital with which he enslaves the poor. We must increase cotton sowing with all our strength.”⁹⁸ It seems clear that these pronouncements are little more than ritualised expressions of loyalty intended to curry favour with the outsiders in the audience. It is notable, however, that much of the support expressed for cotton consists either of empty slogans, or is made conditional on adequate support on the part of the state – “if the state (*vlast*) will help the famers, they will plant 100% of their land with cotton,” declares the teacher. Personal criticism, meanwhile, is reserved for state officials, whereas the bois and kulaks appear as nebulous, disembodied figures whose presence seems to be invoked pro forma. Here, class antagonism appears to be little more than a performance for the benefit of Party visitors.

It seems possible, indeed, that the ideological drive to bind up the definition of boi too closely with opposition to cotton may have pushed the category of boi into a premature obsolescence, making it potentially harder to determine and diagnose ways in which old patterns of privilege and patronage continued unabated. In fact, as I will argue in the next chapter, one site in which forms of privilege and patronage network persisted and proved hard to eradicate were precisely successful cotton collective farms. Collective farms that fulfilled – or could make a convincing show of fulfilling – their cotton harvest quotas, could provide surprisingly safe berths for old elite types fleeing persecution in urban areas.

⁹⁷ These words were capitalized in the original report, which rendered eshon as ishan.

⁹⁸ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.216

The decisive battle: *for* cotton, *against* the bai

“The Bai element, infused into the collective farm, conducts a desperate opposition against the expansion of cotton”⁹⁹

Sheila Fitzpatrick has argued that in Russia, the primary goal of collectivization, from the perspective of the government, was to seize control of the grain harvest, and to prevent the peasants from hoarding grain.¹⁰⁰ In the Ferghana Valley meanwhile, the primary economic prize expected of collectivization was cotton. It had become quite clear in the course of the 1920s that, given the choice, many small-scale farmers of the Ferghana Valley would grow food crops – wheat and rice mainly – rather than cotton. The Land and water reform only amplified this tendency, and thus was found to have done nothing to assist Soviet aspirations to cotton independence. It seemed unlikely, therefore, that the Soviet Union would be able to achieve the goal of cotton independence in the absence of pervasive state force.

Ten years after the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviet Union’s cotton textile industry continued to depend heavily on imported cotton, which represented about 40% of the total supply. A Central Committee resolution of May 1929 identified domestic production of raw cotton as the main bottleneck affecting the textile industry during the five-year plan, and thus planned to increase cotton production over 2.5 times (from 718,000 tons in 1927/8 to 1,907,000 tons in 1932/33). To achieve this wildly optimistic goal, the plan was to double the sown area, *and* increase the overall yield by a third.¹⁰¹ In fact, between 1928 and 1930 cotton production would increase only by means of a 60% increase in the sown area, while overall yields declined

⁹⁹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.40

¹⁰⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford University Press, 1994).

¹⁰¹ R. W. Davies and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia vol 5: The Years of Hunger: Soviet Agriculture, 1931-1933*, 292.

by 20% or more. From 1931, the total sown area sown with cotton continued to rise, albeit more slowly, while yields still failed to increase. The quality of the raw quality collected was also significantly lower, which compounded the problems caused to the textile industry by the sharp decline in cotton imports: between 1928/9 and 1933, the output of Soviet cotton textiles declined slightly in quantity and steeply in quality.¹⁰²

There was something of a symbiotic relationship between the availability of cotton and grain, in that demand for each could be used to drive up supply of the other. The cotton textile industry, which would come to rely increasingly on domestic cotton, saw two thirds of its produce sold to the rural population (who purchased cotton goods with cash generated by the sale of their crops). Meanwhile, it would prove hard to drive up cotton production in Central Asia without significant imports of grain, which was a major consideration behind the construction of the TurkSib railway line, completed in spring 1930.¹⁰³

Collectivisation would be the means both to achieve cotton independence and to rout the boi class at last, though in 1929, the prospects for mass popular support in defeating class enemies appeared as doubtful as mass support for a cotton monoculture in the Ferghana Valley. Greatly to the consternation of officials, in the wake of the implementation of the land reform project – and on the eve of the drive for full on collectivisation, class animosity seemed virtually non-existent. The mood in the many Tajik and Uzbek village Party cells surrounding Khujand audited in late 1929 was one of “peaceful coexistence alongside the bois,” in which the necessity of class struggle was met with scepticism or outright denial.¹⁰⁴ Though limited in scope, the

¹⁰² Davies and Wheatcroft, *Soviet Agriculture: 1931-1933*, 293. Available online at http://archive.org/stream/YearsOfHunger/DaviesWheatcroft--YearsOfHunger_djvu.txt

¹⁰³ Davies and Wheatcroft, *Soviet Agriculture: 1931-1933*, 294-6. On the construction of TurkSib, see also Matthew Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism* (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.32

Land and Water Reform appeared to have slacked what local interest in class warfare there had been, even among those the Party regarded as their natural allies. Such a situation could not be tolerated by the party leadership, as was made clear by Stalin's call in December 1929 to move towards the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class."¹⁰⁵

Stalin's battle cry against the kulak prompted a wave of forceful collectivisation, in which Komsomol and communist activists descended on villages across the Soviet Union and terrorised villagers by offering a stark choice between enrolling in the collective farm, or being deported as a kulak. The elimination of the kulak as a class thus went hand in hand as a policy goal with collectivisation – and rural communities experienced these processes simultaneously. Just as forced collectivisation was carried out by local officials in an attempt to fulfil or to exceed a quota, however nebulously formulated, so quotas of kulaks to be expropriated and exiled were set by the centre and extended to each region and province.

This first phase of intensive collectivisation lasted until March 1930, when a new sign was received from on high in the form of Stalin's "Dizzy with Success" speech, critiquing what he perceived as the excesses of the previous two months, which had indeed been bacchanalian and traumatic.¹⁰⁶ There already were, on paper at least, several dozen collective farms in the Ferghana Valley in 1929, and for a while it was most unclear how the products of the new phase of collectivisation should differ in structure or organisation. Whatever shape these new entities might take, however, the foundation of the collective farms formed in the winter of 1929-30 was

¹⁰⁵ Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 48. There exists a vast scholarly literature on collectivization, though the relatively little space accorded to discussion of these policies as they unfolded in Turkestan/Central Asia (excepting Kazakhstan) is striking, even in volumes ostensibly devoted to the Soviet Union as a whole. To some extent, this bias reflects that of the archives themselves, as edited volumes of archival documents make clear; see for example *The War Against the Peasantry, 1927-1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside*, edited by Lynne Viola, V.P. Danilov, N.A. Ivnitskii, and Denis Kozlov.

¹⁰⁶ My account of the phases in the collectivization campaign is based on chapter 2, "Collectivisation" in Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 48-79.

marked by a new emphasis on dekulakisation – on stripping supposedly rich farmers of their property and – at least in Russia – violent actions against churches and religious figures.

Before the start of the collectivisation campaign, as of autumn 1929, according to records of the Central Asian Biuro no less than seventy-nine collective farms had already been formed under the purview of the Khujand party organisation. This figure included both *kolkhozy* formed “spontaneously,” and those formed wholly through seizures of *waqf* lands and of lands held by “non-working households.”¹⁰⁷ If their numbers could be thought of as encouraging, their performance was less so: on average, the yield of these newly collectivised farms was reportedly 40% less than the average yield on farms worked by individual households. The explanation for this poor performance was as predictable as it was unconvincing: these fledgling collective farms were “clogged up with boi elements,” who were busily “worming their way into collective farms in order to shield their individual farms from taxation and to enjoy the collective farms’ advantages. Many factors speak to the bold exploitation of collective farmers by these boi elements. The collective farmers, among whom the bois have appeared, undergo exploitation.”¹⁰⁸ These early, “voluntary” collective farms in the Ferghana Valley tended to be as economically weak as they were elsewhere in Soviet Union: in mid-1928, the average kolkhoz comprised “a mere twelve households,” and they were “marginal social and economic entities.”¹⁰⁹ Marginal though these farming communities may have been, it was the boi who was blamed for their failure to shine, and it was almost a foregone conclusion that all-out (*sploshnaia*) collectivisation would be cast as an all-out battle against the boi.

¹⁰⁷ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.39ob

¹⁰⁸ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, L.40

¹⁰⁹ Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 40.

In February 1930, Pravda published an article by the Tashkent-based head of the Central Asian Bureau, Zelenskii¹¹⁰ “For Cotton Independence in the Union,”¹¹¹ which cast the boi, and his vicious struggle against cotton, as the principal obstacle to this lofty goal. Evidence presented by Zelenskii includes the claim that most of the irrigated land *not* sown with cotton belonged to boi households (and this several years after the Land and Water reform). This suggests the degree to which enmity to cotton has become constitutive of the category of the word “bai” by 1930: those who have the gall to stand openly in opposition to cotton cultivation (or cotton monoculture, in fact), must surely be class enemies – they are the boi.

Once all-out collectivisation campaign gathered speed, the category of “boi” began to be used interchangeably with that of kulak – or rather, bois, among others, became liable to be categorised as kulaks and punished accordingly. Those labelled as kulaks became special settlers, who were loaded onto special trains and dispatched to as yet non-existent special settlements designed to serve as “self-sufficient penal colonies,” located primarily in the frozen north and Far East of the Soviet Union. For many regions of the Soviet Union, particularly the primary grain-growing regions, this process began in February 1930. The former kulaks travelled on numbered echelons with their households, including many infants, unaccompanied minors and the elderly, covering vast distances in terrible conditions. They were allowed to bring a limited amount of cash (500 roubles) and supplies with them, but given the violence and plunder which frequently accompanied dekulakisation, this was not usually possible. Conditions at the transit points and final destinations for special settlers were often as bad as on the special trains, and the

¹¹⁰ Isaak A. Zelenskii, first secretary of SredAzBiuro, based in Tashkent.

¹¹¹ Pravda, 11 February 1940, page 4 (accessed online 02/27/15 at <http://dlib.eastview.com/search/simple/doc?art=4&id=21690887>).

mortality rates among special settlers were catastrophically high: “tens of thousands of people died and equal numbers simply ran away.”¹¹²

Even from the perspective of the upper echelons of the Party, the initial phase of dekulakisation and special settlement was not a success in class warfare terms, despite injunctions to follow “a strict class line” in all cases.¹¹³ As Yagoda, deputy chairman of the OGPU, reported to Stalin in a top secret report dated 7 March, 1930: “The most serious and widespread type of distortion is the assignment of middle peasants, poor peasants, and even landless laborers and workers [...] to the category of persons to be dekulakised and exiled. These cases are occurring almost everywhere to one degree or other.”¹¹⁴ On the one hand, non-kulaks were being wrongly sent into exile, while on the other, “true” kulaks were being treated in a “conciliatory” manner, Yagoda continued, as evidenced by “refusals to participate in the confiscation of kulaks’ property. One can also see overtly kulak-oriented attitudes on the part of village soviet officials, protection of kulaks, assistance to them in joining collective farms, advance warnings of the confiscation of property, the concealment of kulak property, etc.”¹¹⁵ Such was the executive summary of the attitudes (or “distortions”) that the secret police deemed typical “for almost all the areas of the Union.”

As an area designated for wholesale collectivisation, Khujand district was theoretically bound by OGPU orders of early 1930 to exile kulaks of category two, along with their families,

¹¹² Viola, Danilov, Ivnitskii, and Kozlov, *The War Against the Peasantry, 1927-1930: The Tragedy of the Soviet Countryside* (Yale University, 2005), 275.

¹¹³ From a report by the OGPU operations group on the results of the work to exile category 2 kulaks, 6 May 1930. TsA FSB RF, F.2, op.8, d.329, ll.1-28, translated and published in Viola et al., *The War Against the Peasantry*, 290.

¹¹⁴ Letter from G.G. Yagoda to I.V. Stalin with an appended OGPU report on excesses in the conduct of collectivization and dekulakization, 7 March 1930. TsA FSB RF, F.2, op.8, d.40, ll.6-17, translated and published in Viola et al., *The War Against the Peasantry*, 280. The edited translation of the document contains the sections of the report on the Ukraine, Central Black Earth region and North Caucasus only.

¹¹⁵ As above, letter from Yagoda to Stalin, dated 7 March 1930. TsA FSB RF, F.2, op.8, d.40, ll.6-17, translated and published in Viola, Danilov, Ivnitskii, and Kozlov, *The War Against the Peasantry*, 280.

but there is no evidence that anything was done in this regard prior to the autumn of 1931. Indeed, the quota for category 2 kulaks to be exiled from Central Asia as a whole established in May 1930 is surprisingly low: the secret police had planned for the exile of a total of four hundred families from Central Asia, or two thousand individuals, but had apparently only actually exiled 80 families (or 281 individuals), out of a total of 66,445 families (342,545 individuals) sent into exile across the Soviet Union – 0.1% of the total. In the original report, the table listing the planned and actual exiles by place of origins is followed by a note stipulating that “people will no longer be exiled from Central Asia, in view of the decrease in the percentage of collectivisation.”¹¹⁶ No further explanation is offered. Indeed, in Lynne Viola’s edited volume of archival documents on collectivisation, Central Asia is more frequently cited as a destination for kulaks fleeing dekulakisation and forced exile than it is as a site of dekulakisation.

The relatively low target and actual number of exiles are particularly striking when one considers that the target for collectivisation in cotton-growing regions was hardly less ambitious than had been set in many grain-growing regions: The target for 1931 was to collectivise 50% of households in the cotton-growing regions. In fact, by the end of the year, “76% of households were [registered as having been] collectivised in Uzbekistan and 64% in Central Asia as a whole.”¹¹⁷ Taken in combination with the reports regarding large numbers of people identified as kulaks fleeing their homes to hide out in Central Asia, it seems logical to conclude that in 1930, in many localities across Central Asia, Soviet officials still lacked the power – or the local support – necessary to execute mass forced deportations in the face of strong local opposition.

¹¹⁶ From a report by the OGPU operations groups on the results of the work to exile category 2 kulaks. TsA FSB RF, F.2, op.8, d.329, ll.1-28, translated and published in Viola, Danilov, Ivinskii, and Kozlov, *The War Against the Peasantry*, 294.

¹¹⁷ Davies and Wheatcroft, *Soviet Agriculture: 1931-1933*, 293.

From Khujand, a special train transporting an echelon of the dekulakised was eventually dispatched only on October 1, 1931. This echelon included 75 households from the city of Khujand and 65 from the [adjacent] village of Qistaquz.¹¹⁸ A couple of weeks after the train's departure, the Khujand City Soviet decided to establish a dairy farm in Shurkul, by gathering together all the cattle confiscated from the newly dispatched kulaks.¹¹⁹ The post-Soviet encyclopedia article containing the sole accessible treatment of this episode claims that "some local authorities exceeded their authority in adding names of personal enemies to the lists, without authorization." Mirhaidar Sanginov, described by Sharipov as "an active fighter for Soviet power and one of Khujand's first militiamen, who had gained several victories over Basmachi bands," was among those he considered to have been unjustly dekulakised. Mir-Haidar Sanginov, who in 1923 had been chief of police for Razzoq district, was among those apparently prepared to testify against Mu'min Khojaev (and substantiate claims made by Negmatov):¹²⁰ it is therefore possible that allies of Khojaev saw to it that he was sent into exile.

Among others exiled in 1931, some, like Gafuri Pufak, Ergash-boibacha and Sharifi-kok, are described as rich bois (and therefore presumably more deserving of punishment, in the eyes of the Soviet-trained author), while others were members of the ulama, including Alimkhon-makhsum Khojaev, Abdukaiyum-makhsum Kaharov, and Mulla Yakub. Unlike the majority of dekulakised special settlers, this particular echelon was dispatched westwards, to the North Caucasus. Khujandis in exile found themselves living alongside other Central Asians in Nikolo-

¹¹⁸ Kh. A. Sharipov, "Eshelon Raskulachennykh" ("Special train for the dekulakised"), in S.A. Abdullaev et al (editor), *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia* (Encyclopedia of Khujand), Khukumat Leninabadskoi Oblasti: 1999, 904-5.

¹¹⁹ See LF TsGA RT, F. 82. op. 4, d. 19, l.174, as cited in A. Pulatova, "Meropriiatiia Khudzshanskogo soveta po vytesneniiu iz Khudzhandi i ego okrugimushchego sloia obshchestva v 30-e gody XX veka" in *Nomai donishgoh* (*Uchenye zapiski Khudzhandskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. Akad. B. Gafurova*).

¹²⁰ RGASPI, F.62, op. 2, d. 478, l.68

Aleksandrovskoe, in the Stavropol region (south western Russia).¹²¹ A “national school” was established there, in which the children of the exiled were taught in their native tongue by Khujandi scholars including Ya. Kayumov and A. Khojaev. By the time the survivors of this forced exile, and some of their children, returned to Khujand in the years following the Second World War and the death of Stalin, they would find a social landscape in which it was once again becoming possible to claim elite descent in the public, or at least locally public, sphere. By that time, the struggle against the *boi* was over, and cotton had won.

In June 1930, the Tajik Communist Party held its first conference, in which the progress achieved by collectivisation was debated – once again in the familiar terms of boosting cotton production and waging class war. The freshly appointed First Secretary, the Azeri Mirza Davud Bagir oglu Huseinov,¹²² used his new platform to launch into a diatribe against Tajik villages, denounced as “the most backward of the whole USSR, where the influence of *bois*, *eshons* and *kulaks* is still strong.”¹²³ In the Alma-Aty region of Kazakhstan meanwhile, even in 1932, when *kolkhozes* failed to produce the requisite amount of grain, local party activists felt it expedient to blame the “the kulak and *bai* element,” and set out to cleanse the offending *kolkhozes*

¹²¹ Kh. A. Sharipov, “Eshelon Raskulachennykh” (“Special train for the dekulakised”), in *Khudzhand* (Encyclopedia of Khujand), 904-5.

¹²² The background and career of Huseinov (Guseinov in Russian-language sources) suggests similarities between the trajectories of old elites in different parts of the USSR. Mirza Davud Bagir oglu Huseinov was born in Baku in 1894 into a family of Islamic notables (“*sviashchennosluzhitel*”) and studied in an Imperial high school (*realnoe uchilishche*) in Baku. He studied in Moscow between 1913 and 1917 and joined the Bolshevik party in 1918. Beginning in 1921, he occupied the posts of people’s commissar of finance and people’s commissar for foreign affairs in the ZSFSR (transcaucasian socialist soviet republic). His wife, Tamara Khoiskaia, was the daughter of Fatali-Khan Khoiskii (also Khoyski), prime minister of the short lived Azerbaijani Democratic republic, the first democratic and secular republic in the Muslim world, and a scion of a noble family. Khoiski managed to move his family to Tblisi shortly before the Red Army invaded Baku in 1920, and he was assassinated shortly afterwards. Mirza Davud was arrested in 1937, while living in Moscow with his wife Tamara. While living in the capital they had made friends with Molotov’s family, who warned them of the impending arrest. His crime was precisely his marriage to a daughter of an enemy of the people, and for this crime he was shot, while his wife was imprisoned, and sent into exile in Central Asia. [Source: <http://novosti.az/exclusive/20080522/42309593.html>]

¹²³ RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d. 20.

accordingly: six collective farms had their boards dissolved.¹²⁴ The influence of the *boi* class could be blamed as a matter of course for almost every set back in establishing collective farms, though this strategy tailed off sharply in the early 1930s, as *kolkhozes* seemed to gain in staying power, and the first successful cotton harvests were reported.

In stark contrast to the oddly tentative nature of the Land and Water Reform, the collectivisation campaign was one that could admit no defeat. The totalizing frenzy of the battle for cotton had reached a new high by December 1930, when a Party official dispatched from Tashkent strode into a meeting of teachers in Khujand and addressed them as follows:

There is a state monopoly on cotton: this means it is a crime to keep for yourself even a single cotton bud. Whoever keeps buds of cotton, whether to process it into thread, mattresses, cushions, robes or pillows.... commits a crime against the state. [...] This is a class struggle you are engaged in against *bois*, *kulaks*, *eshons*: teachers who do not wage this class struggle cannot work in soviet schools.¹²⁵

The rhetoric was clear: no obstacles or half measures would be tolerated, and nothing would stand in the way of the state imperative to grow cotton. Cotton cultivation had become the central imperative defining the identity of Khujand and the region surrounding it. Nothing else – not its fledgling industrial or mining concerns, and still less the centuries of learning and cultural production associated with the region, would matter in the absence of a good cotton harvest – defined against constantly climbing target figures.

Conversely, as I will argue in the following chapter, once collective farms capable of meeting and exceeding their cotton quotas were up and running, these farms would become strikingly privileged sites of cultural production, able to attract – and shelter – considerable talents drawn, or fleeing, from urban centres. Here was the other side of the coin: the pre-

¹²⁴ GARF, F. 5446, op.27, d. 13, l. 209 (sent from Tatdykkurgan, Alma-Ata region, dated November 11, 1932) cited in *The Years of Hunger*, 180.

¹²⁵ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.2415, l.12

eminence and paramount importance of cotton as a crop could bring great rewards, and secure successful *kolkhoz* chairmen considerable agency and independence with which to build extensive patronage networks and even to act, when they felt inclined, as patrons of the arts.

Chapter Three. The Culture of Cotton Farms (1930s-1960s)

“The Bolshevik Party freed us *dekhans* [farmers] from centuries of *boi* oppression, and showed us the bright path to happiness” – says com. Bobokalonov [Chairman of the Stalin kolkhoz, Leninobod district]¹

The previous chapter discussed the vast upheaval in land relations in which a part of the old elite willingly participated – while many others fled, or resorted to subterfuge and concealment to survive. We have seen how presenting the battle for cotton as a battle against the *boi* paved the way for a time in which successful cotton harvests (a victory for cotton!) could also quite logically be interpreted as heralding the final defeat of the *boi*. Indeed, after an initial phase of blaming pretty much everything that went wrong on collective farms on *boi*-mullo spoilers and wreckers, the *boi* and the *mullo* disappear almost completely as scapegoats. On the cotton farms of Khujand district, this transition took place relatively early: after the first five-year plan, with the advent of the first “millionaire collective farms,” class warfare appeared to have wound down. Portions of the old elite however, were and remained a significant presence on Tajik cotton farms.

In this chapter, therefore, we explore the *asilzodagon* presence on collective farms in the immediate environs of Khujand (renamed Leninabad/Leninobod in 1936, following a petition to Stalin led by kolkhoz chairman Jura Bobokalonov) from the early days of collectivisation, through to more peaceful times in the post-Stalin era.² *Asilzodagon* participation in kolkhoz life can be divided into two broad categories: those who joined the kolkhoz as full-time, regular members (some of whom were members of the *ulama*, who continued their religious activities,

¹ A. Pavlovich, “Vseobshchee uvazhenie, glubokoe doverie,” *Izvestiia*, Thursday 2 March 1950, 3.

² The war years are not covered in this chapter, as they form the subject of chapter 6.

for the most part in secret), and those who were employed by successful kolkhozes as cultural workers – journalists, artists, musicians and so forth. The latter group did not generally make a life-long commitment to kolkhoz life – indeed, many famous writers and artists preferred to visit collective farms only briefly, but nonetheless the relationship between cultural production by the intelligentsia and collective farming is an interesting and under-studied area. My focus is on the relationship between the phenomenon of millionaire collective farms, patronal politics, and the socialist version of court culture that was able to develop on successful cotton farms, in which many *asilzodagon* flourished, and many old traditions were protected and maintained.



Figure 8: “Strengthen Worker Discipline On Collective Farms”

In this Uzbek-language propaganda poster from 1933, upstanding kolkhoz members (in red, of course) confront those who undermine work discipline and detract from the farm’s successes (in black). The men on the right are portrayed as lazy and dishonest – slouching, smoking, and pilfering kolkhoz property – but they are not class enemies. The threat to the kolkhoz is no longer represented as coming primarily from the *boi* or the *mullo*. SOURCE: Mardjani Foundation, or the State Central Museum of the Contemporary History of Russia (SCMCHR). See also:

<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67527>

Although many *asilzodagon* were compelled to participate in collective farming when they were punitively resettled in arid steppe areas to the north and torrid valleys to the south of the country, some seem to have participated willingly or made a virtue of necessity – if only in hindsight. While it is also true that the more Sovietised *asilzodagon*, born in the early decades of the twentieth century, who had a choice in the matter, preferred more prestigious or intellectual pursuits, there is a distinct late-Soviet (and post-Soviet) pride in the achievements of specifically *asilzodagon* contributions to collective farming. Although the bulk of this chapter will be devoted to exploring cultural production on cotton farms, and the socio-economic mechanisms that allowed it to flourish, evidence of the large-scale participation of scions of *asilzodagon* families as kolkhoz members can be briefly offered.

A post-Soviet volume akin to a festschrift, published to mark the 70th anniversary of the noble Khujandi physician Akbarov,³ celebrates the contribution of the *asilzodagon* to kolkhoz construction, particularly in one of the new frontiers of cotton farming, the Vakhsh valley:

The revolution was victorious, and all who had been literate until that time became illiterate. Scholars of Islam were henceforth of no use to the state. In these new times, a new knowledge must be found and implemented. Akbarkhon together with his father became a member of a kolkhoz. At that time collective and state farms (Soviet enterprises) did not have machinery and all the field work had to be done by hand. Although he was young, he was able to meet all his obligations well. In the district of Khujand and in the villages surrounding the city, the kolkhoz system and a different economic system came into being. The central leadership saw in the appearance of the farmers of Khujand hardworking and skillful men, and in the 1930s, thousands of these high-born (*asilzodagon*) and work-ready people, were mobilized for the settlement of the Vakhsh valley.⁴

³ This volume is also cited in chapter 2, in the section on *asilzodagon* upbringing and adab.

⁴ Ahmadjoni Rahmatzod, Niiyat Hayot, A'zamkhon Akbarov *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (The scalpel of [Abu Ali ibn] Sino in hand), Khuroson, Khujand: 2006, 21.

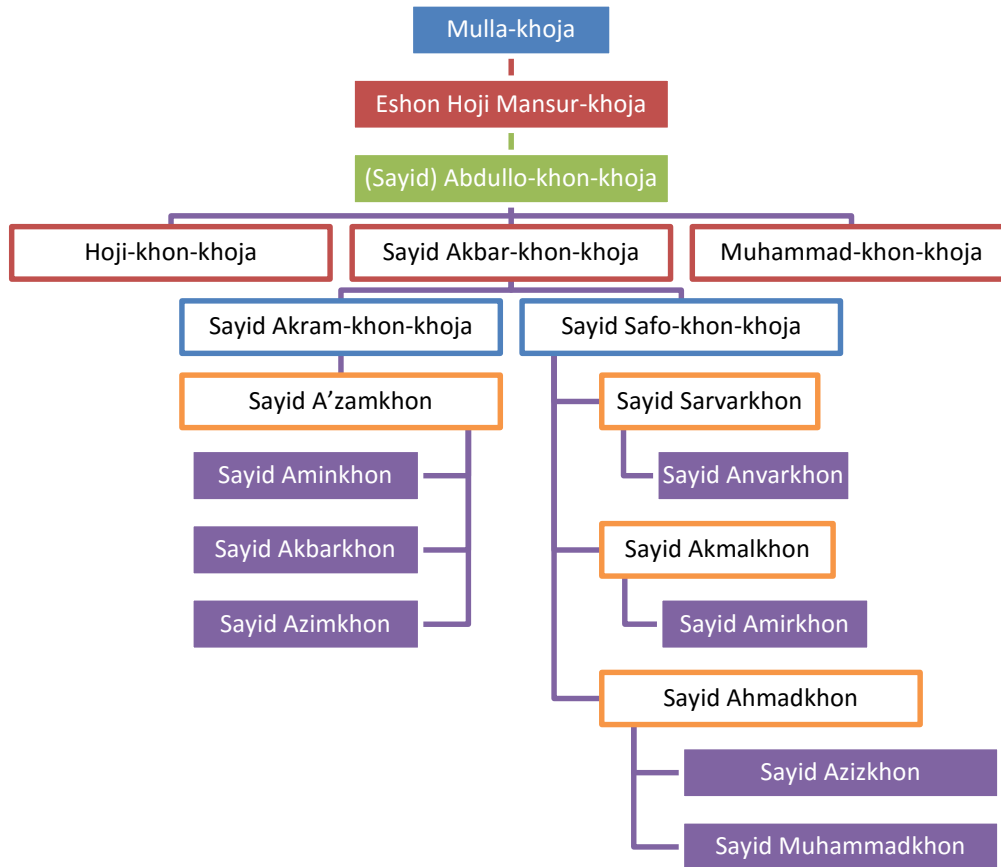


Figure 9: Family tree of the Khujandi doctor Akram-khon Akbarov.

This family tree was constructed on the basis of material in *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (Khurason: Khujand, 2006). Traditional family trees rarely provide any details of matrilineal descent, and sometimes fail (as in this case) to include women at all.

The mobilization to which this author so lyrically refers was not an entirely voluntary one, as set quotas of families to be resettled were established by local state bodies. The view that the *asilzodagon* were picked out for their work ethic, rather than punitively selected, is an eccentric one, albeit in line with this memoir's leitmotif of the hardworking aristocrat. Be that as it may, it is noteworthy that *asilzodagon* are particularly singled out here as participants in the collectivization drive of the 1930s. Both the doctor's father, Akbar-khon, and the grandfather,

Abdullo-khon, were sent to the Vakhsh Valley in 1938, having previously taken part in opening up new land for rice cultivation on the shores of the Syr Darya river by Yova village.

Several elite families in Khujand today proudly cherish the memories of their family members who stepped up to play their part in the collectivization drive of the First Five Year plan. Say[y]id Abdullo-khon khoja was allegedly “among the first, who gave their support to this system (the Soviet state) designed to benefit the common people. This man occupied himself in cultivating rice in the virgin lands on the shores of the Syr river, by the village of Yova [subsequently subsumed into the urban area of Khujand].”⁵ The family is proud of their forbears’ support of collectivization, but the written account is vague about the details of this arrangement – as we are invited to think of the rice growing activities as a pro-Soviet activity, this may have been one of the proto-collective farms we encountered in the previous chapter, formed on estates more or less willingly relinquished by their former owners.

Another “boi” who succeeded in making the transition from wealthy landlord to probably less wealthy, but safe, kolkhoznik – with the added benefits of remaining close to home and patronage network – was Zokirboi Mahkamzoda. He was a wealthy landowner from a traditionally learned family (“*oilai ziyoi*”) living in Khujand, Qushmasjid mahalla. But when collectivisation began, he managed to join the Kaganovich kolkhoz formed on his former lands in Yova – and both his son Abdushukur Zokirzoda (1902-1983) and his daughter-in-law Tukhtaniso likewise joined. His son Abdushukur became a brigade leader, while Tukhtaniso’s main focus was raising her seven children. In 1952 Abdushukur and Tukhtaniso married their son Abdurashid to the daughter of a local makhsun – belonging to a collective farm clearly need not preclude a prestigious marriage alliance.⁶ It was also not the case that life on the kolkhoz was

⁵ *Teghi Sinoi ba dast*, 21.

⁶ *Chehrahoi notakror*, 74.

necessarily one of unremitting physical drudgery as, particularly on kolkhozes so close to the town, there were many other opportunities to make a living. A 1940 report found that in several districts of Leninobod, “many kolkhozniks take little part in kolkhoz work.” The Kaganovich kolkhoz was singled out as an example: “49.2% of members have not worked a single day for the kolkhoz over the last year.”⁷ There are many reports, in particular, of kolkhoz members with ancestral ties to kolkhoz lands being accorded preferential treatment: for some, kolkhoz membership represented a privilege (a hereditary one, at that) with few obligations.

A Mullo Hojiboi, who was prosperous enough to have performed the pilgrimage to Arabia’s holy cities at the turn of the century, is likewise honoured by his descendants for his trail-blazing activities in support of collectivization. He seems to have been someone who was cautiously receptive to Russian culture, having consulted with his *avlod* (relatives) before sending his bookish young son Abdurahim (Hojiboev) to the Russian-native school. His own great love, in his granddaughter’s account, was gardening and raising fruit trees, and so it seemed natural in some way that he should wish to support opening up new lands for cultivation when collectivization began.

“When they began to form kolkhozes, our father – foreman (*sarkor*) Mullo Hojiboi – taking with him his third born son, went with the others to work from dawn to dusk on the right bank of the Syr Darya, in the place called Sumchak. Now there is a sovkhos there. But then there was a dry, waterless steppe, which they were only just beginning to prepare for cultivation. [...] After two or three years flowers bloomed in the desert fields of Sumchak, and the kolkhozes grew stronger and wealthier.”⁸

As we saw in the previous chapter, the Party at times faced an uphill struggle in persuading the native population that the *boi* did not belong on the kolkhoz. A 1929 report

⁷ RGANI, F.6, op.6, d.606, l.99. Report “concerning the fulfilment of the 27/5/1940 SovNarKom resolution of the USSR and the CC of CP(b) on measures to defend kolkhoz state land from being commercialized (*razbazarivanie*) in the Tajik SSR 14/10/1940.”

⁸ B. A. Khodzhibaeva [Hojiboeva], *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 13.

submitted to Tashkent on the eve of the push for all-out collectivisation admitted that “even in the party organization, there is no clear policy governing the possibility of admitting bois to collective farms. In several districts, party organizations are altogether in favour of welcoming bois into agricultural unions. In answer to the question, why bois are not removed from kolkhozy, Morozov [head of the local land commission] replies “Well, tell me, where are the firm guidelines from our leaders barring bois from kolkhozes?” This even after the November plenum of the CC.”⁹ There were many, it seems, who resisted the idea that those who owed their prosperity to their success as farmers – and there were several *asilzodagon* lineages who took great pride in their talents as horticulturalists – should be excluded from collective farms.

As we have seen, cotton independence and class warfare were the twinned impulses behind collectivisation in the Ferghana Valley. However, despite the rhetoric – and reality – of class warfare as a means of achieving collectivisation and restructuring Central Asian society, some of those very socialist collective farms became havens both for old elites and for traditional cultural forms. Kolkhozes initially built on a foundational act of antagonism to old privilege, ultimately proved to have been remarkably successful in absorbing and accommodating pre-revolutionary patronage networks, cultural practices and religious sensibilities.

Some old elite intellectuals of Khujand were able to mobilize their cultural capital to contribute to the project to create a new, socialist national Tajik culture in a new, socialist space: the collective cotton farm. I argue that despite the clear risks attached to an old elite identity under Bolshevik rule – culminating in the senseless violence unleashed on the world of Tajik arts and culture during the Stalinist purges – the contribution to the articulation of a socialist Tajik culture made by the aristocratic families of Khujand was determinant. I attribute this to a

⁹ RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d. 1834, l.40

complex set of factors, including most obviously the cultural capital they inherited from their parents, the sincerity – in many cases – of their conversion to socialism, their willingness to experiment with the canon & cultural heritage, and other contingent factors to be discussed. The theme of cultural production and patronage networks on cotton farms in this chapter is complemented by chapter five, which focuses on cultural production by the traditional elite in the Tajik capital.

Talented though some individuals may have been, the success of old elites in shaping socialist culture owes much to alliances forged beyond their own narrow social circle, alliances which in turn hint at the endurance of pre-revolutionary patronage networks. We will consider here the biographies of two men in particular, Pulod Bobokalonov and Said Khoja Urunkhojaev, two kings of kolkhoz construction in the Tajik Ferghana Valley – farmers, but also patrons on a grand scale, and not only of the arts. Their official biographies cast them both as textbook beneficiaries of Soviet affirmative action policies, singled out for promotion by dint of their humble background and hard work. Once they reached positions of power, however, not only did they make no effort to distance themselves through rhetoric or symbolism from old privilege, but on the contrary they actively pursued connections with old elite families while also, arguably, cultivating a persona not unlike that of a pre-revolutionary grandee.

In this chapter, the lives of these two men will be placed in the context of the phenomenon of millionaire collective farms, which, whether it was mirage or reality, accorded the leadership of such farms particular privileges, and relatively lavish budgets with which to build a version of the Soviet good life – a cultured (*kul'turnyi*) life. The sine qua non for a millionaire collective farm in the Tajik Ferghana Valley was a bountiful cotton harvest, but in the early 1930s, no such thing could be taken for granted. In fact, the head of the SredAzBiuro,

Baumann, was obliged to announce the failure of the 1931 cotton campaign, when the republics of Central Asia harvested 65,000 metric tons below target. In 1934, when cotton deliveries from Tajikistan fell short again by 12,000 metric tons, the European heads of the responsible cotton organisations were put on trial and executed along with their deputies. Between mid-1935 and early 1937, about 200 people were arrested and executed in Tajikistan alone for disrupting the plan, negligent attitudes and similar offences (a good share of those executed were European officials, which may be significant). The cotton collectivisation campaign turned into a messy civil war that claimed thousands of victims on both sides.

In an article focused on the experience of European state and party officials in Tajikistan, Kassymbekova and Teichmann sum up Tajikistan's encounter with collectivisation in the following dire terms:

Certain failure was on the horizon. Tajikistan – with over 90 % of its landmass covered with high mountain ranges – would never be celebrated for grain or cotton production.¹⁰

There were many failures on the road to collectivisation, but overall failure was not an option. Further, I would argue that – throughout the Soviet period – Tajikistan, was in fact scarcely celebrated for anything *other* than cotton. Not only was cotton the preeminent crop of the Tajik SSR, but cotton was also the prime means by which Tajik SSR's value and place within the Soviet Union was conceptualised, even measured. This is the message hammered out over several decades of reporting on the Tajik SSR in the All-Union press, in which the Tajik SSR is predominantly mentioned in the context of the cotton sowing or cotton harvest campaigns, and in announcements regarding the extent to which Tajikistan has (again) exceeded its cotton production targets. Quite rarely is cotton omitted from any article that mentions Leninobod,

¹⁰ Botakoz Kassymbekova and Christian Teichmann, "The Red Man's Burden: Soviet European officials in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s," in Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum (editors), *Helpless Imperialists: Imperial Fear, Failure and Radicalization*, 163-186.

which was indeed one of Tajikistan's main cotton-producing centres, but also its industrial heartland center and second city.

Although the insights yielded by Kassymbekova and Teichmann's meticulous archival work, both in the Central and Tajik archives, are invaluable, their article – focusing as it does on the experience of European workers in Tajikistan does not tell the full story (nor, of course, does it claim to). Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the same year that the SredAzBiuro chairman, Baumann, was obliged to admit that the cotton campaign of 1931 had failed to meet its overall target, smaller scale success stories were uncovered, celebrated, and duly amplified in the All-Union press. The collectivisation of cotton was eventually achieved in the Tajik SSR, and it did not endure through violence alone.

Long before the profound upheavals engendered by collectivisation began to die down, some collective farms appeared to pull ahead of the others and to start gaining victories in the battle for cotton: such farms soon became known as “millionaire kolkhozes.” The explanation I offer for their relative success does not run counter to Teichmann and Kassymbekova's analysis, and in fact chimes with their observations about the sufferings of European coloniasts in Central Asia: those who were able to make collectivised cotton work, were local people who had deep ties to the land and people, and belonged as much to the old system as to that they were bringing into being.

Pulod Bobokalonov (1899-1959)

Pulod Bobokalonov was born in 1899 in Pakhtakashon (“Cotton transport”) mahalla, in the Razzoq district of Khujand. His father died when Pulod was only five, and his mother raised him until he began to earn his own living in 1916. Beginning in 1916, he worked as a hired labourer (*batrak*), first for one Abdullo-boi-bacha (where “*boi bacha*” means “son of a rich

man”), and then between 1921 and 1925 for a Mullo Turaboi.¹¹ There is no reason to doubt that Bobokalonov did indeed grow up in poverty, deprived of the opportunities for study and leisure enjoyed by his more fortunate neighbours in Razzoq quarter encountered in the first chapter, such as Saidkarim Valizoda, Mu’min Khojaev or the other graduates of the Russian-native school. Valizoda emphasizes the hardships endured by batraks and sharecroppers (*chor’iakkoron*), naming Pulod Bobokalonov among those of his neighbours who laboured under extremely exploitative conditions for paltry wages or a small share of the harvest.¹²

In 1926, Pulod Bobokalonov first benefitted from the land and water reform, receiving 1,5 tanaps of land which he proceeded to cultivate. In April 1927 he began to win a series of elections: first as the *mirob* for the Khoja Guliston canal, and a few months later as the Head of the Committee of the Poor for Khujand district, a post he occupied until 1931. He joined the Party in 1929, just as the campaign for all-out (*sploshnaia*) collectivisation was getting underway. That same year was also elected as chair of the “committee to unmask kulak households of Khujand city,” a position he continued to occupy until 1932 – would that more were known of his activities in that capacity. Thus far, Pulod Bobokalonov seems to have played the part assigned to him – the upwardly mobile, class-conscious proletarian – with consistency, even fervour. In 1931, he received an award in recognition of his zeal in mobilizing and gathering funds for the purchase of an airplane named “Tajikistan.”¹³ Here was someone who

¹¹ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (literally “Unrepeatable Faces”, or more loosely, “personalities never to be seen again”), Khujand (2010), 34. In this volume, a biographical dictionary divided into several chapters, the entry on Bobokalonov is in the first section, entitled “Heroes” (*Qahramonon*), which profiles eleven men and five women, apparently ordered in order of prominence or heroism (beginning with Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev). The second, much longer, section is devoted to “Working-class people” and is organized alphabetically. This section includes members of the *ulama* and other *asilzodagon* whose claim to working class status is obscure. The third chapter, “The Heirs of [Abu Ali ibn] Sino” is devoted to Soviet-trained doctors, while the fourth profiles “Friends [of the author].” It is an intriguing and idiosyncratic volume.

¹² Saidkarim Valizoda, manuscript copy of *Yode az guzoshta*, l.11/p.6.

¹³ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (literally “unrepeatable Faces”, or more loosely, personalities never to be seen again), Khujand (2010), 34.

took his role in the Soviet vanguard seriously, and seemed to be playing his part to overturn and rebuild the social order anew.

Official sources inform us that Bobokalonov exerted himself in literacy classes, too, over several years, though there is little sign that his education progressed much further. He seems to have found his true calling during the collectivization campaign, of which he became one of the first and most energetic local leaders. He is credited with founding the Komintern, Qizil Qahramon (Red Hero, in Uzbek) and Frunze collective farms, and also took part in setting up the Stalin and Bolshevik kolkhozy. Upon its founding in June 1931, he became the Chairman of the Komintern Kolkhoz, a position he held until 1933. That year he was honoured by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Tajik SSR for the size of the cotton harvest at the Komintern kolkhoz – a sure sign that he was on the up. Indeed, in 1933 he was elected Vice Chair of the Tajik Presidium (TsIK, or Central Executive Committee), a post he occupied until November 1937. In November 1937, he was elected deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR for Leninobod province, and also appointed People's Commissar for Agriculture in the Tajik SSR. Devotion to the cause of collectivized farming had yielded political recognition. Until the time of Stalin's death he combined his duties as deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and as chairman of the Stalin collective farm (1941 to 1953). Eventually, he fell from favour, and was denounced by the First Secretary of Leninobod oblast, Khalik Ibragimov, in the press in 1956. After many years at the helm of the Stalin kolkhoz, Ibragimov alleged, all that power had gone to Pulod Bobokalonov's head and made him conceited. "He gave the kolkhoz less and less of his attention, busying himself with his own concerns, and specifically with building and furnishing a magnificent [private] residence. As one might expect, the farm's performance began to

decline.”¹⁴ Ibragimov accuses the Party organisations at the district and oblast level of having colluded in his lacklustre performance, and of turning a blind eye, until finally Bobokalonov was found to be engaging in fraud, and dismissed from his post. There was a further twist to come, however, as Khalik Ibragimov was himself caught up in a cotton fraud scandal, and summarily dismissed (along with the then First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party, the Khujandi Tursunboi Uljaboev) in 1961. His dismissal cleared the path for renaming the Stalin kolkhoz in the former chairman’s, and it was thereafter known as the Pulod Bobokalonov kolkhoz.

Such are the broad outlines of his life, key moments of which will be reviewed in greater detail in the course of this chapter.

Said-Khoja Urunkhojaev (1901-1967)

The career of Said Khoja Urunkhojaev was in many respects similar to that of Pulod Bobokalonov, though more brilliant. He was born in Shaikh Burhon, a village on the outskirts of Khujand noted for its artisans, in 1901, in what was officially described as a “poor peasant family” – in the canonical Soviet manner.¹⁵ His name presents something of a puzzle, suggestive of elite family connections: the honorific suffix *khoja* – which in principle may only be used by *khoja* dynasties – is repeated twice. Furthermore, although there is an Arabic name meaning ‘happy’ usually transliterated as Said (or Saeed), that name is rarely encountered in Central Asia, whereas Say(y)id, an honorific prefix denoting descent from the Prophet, is used by many *asilzodagon* families in Khujand:¹⁶ the orthographic distinction has been elided in the course of

¹⁴ Khalid Ibragimov (secretary of Leninobod ObKom), *Povyshat’ trebovatel’nost’ kadram*, Pravda, 14 August 1956, 2.

¹⁵ RGASPI, F. 17, op.28,d.121,L.56. This document reports on a Party purge conducted in July 1935, as a result of which Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev was admitted to full membership of the Party despite having lost his party card and being issued with a stern reprimand. On Urunkhojaev’s professed social origin, see also, Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoi notakror*, 31.

¹⁶ Compare the family tree of Say[y]id Akbar-khon khoja given earlier

the multiple waves of transliteration involved in 20th century Tajik history.¹⁷ Whatever his background, he could certainly have altered his name, as many others did, but chose not to, which I consider no accident. For all those identified with certainty as asilzoda in this work there is a shajara, which is lacking in Urunkhojaev's case, but my sense is that he would have commanded ridicule, rather than respect, if he had no right to claim the associations made by his name. And Said-Khoja Urunkhojaev was one who commanded a great deal of respect.

The biographical dictionary *Chehrahoy notakror* (2011) features a description of Said Khoja's life and achievements, which opens the volume's section on "Heroes."¹⁸ The account of his early life combines educational aspirations and humiliations born of economic hardship: as a youth, Said Khoja enrolled as a student in the Shaikh Muslihiddin madrasa, which was the most prominent and prestigious in the city, attached to the main mosque (*masjid-e jomeh*, or Friday mosque), "but difficult living conditions did not allow him to continue his studies."¹⁹ Between 1915 and 1919, he worked as a sharecropper for the bai Mirzobarotboi, thus acquiring life experience among the oppressed, which would later counterbalance the madrasa education to which he had once aspired. When the Bolshevik revolution came to Khujand, Urunkhojaev was among the founders of the first Committee of the Poor (*Kumitai Kambaghalon*), the precursor to the Union of the Poor (*Ittifoqi Kambaghalon*). Between 1919 and 1928, Said-khoja Urunkhojaev was the chair of the Committee of the Poor for Shaikh-Burhon, his native community. He led the local Union of the Poor, a cotton cooperative, and was appointed to direct a cotton-cleaning plant

¹⁷ I have no source for this other than several years of my own empirical observations of Khujandi naming practices between the 19th century and the present. In 21st century Khujand, anyone daring to use the suffix –khon or –tura without having the ancestral claim to such a title exposes oneself to certain ridicule. There is a range of gendered honorific suffixes that may be used to address a "commoner" respectfully (when the addressee is older than the speaker, for instance), including –ako, –apa, –khanum, –usto, but "–khon," "–khoja" "–posho" and "–mirzo" refer exclusively to certain lineages.

¹⁸ See footnote 1, above.

¹⁹ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror*, 31.

in 1931-32. Alongside these relatively peaceful activities, he was also an active participant in many skirmishes with locally-based Basmachis bands.²⁰

Urunkhojaev was elected chair of the Stalin kolkhoz (later to become Bobokalonov's flagship project), and worked there 1932-34, and then chaired the Voroshilov kolkhoz (1934-37). In 1935 he was awarded the Order of Lenin and took part in the second All-Union Congress of Shock-worker Collective Farm Workers.²¹ In a commemorative booklet published in 1964, Urunkhojaev noted his pride in having contributed, on that occasion, to the proposal formulated on household plots. This is one of the only moments in which he inserts himself into the narrative at all.²²

In a 1936 article in *Izvestiia*, Soren Shadunts, then First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party, bombastically describes the inspiring journey of the Tajik people from feudalism to socialist nationhood in a few short years. He namechecks both of Tajikistan's kings of cotton: Pulod Bobokalonov – whom we overhear marvelling that even in Moscow and Leningrad, people have heard of the Tajiks, and the much-honoured Urunkhojaev. Urunkhojaev is presented as emblematic of the capacity of the whole Tajik nation for rapid advancement, for *vydvizhenie*:

“Every day brings us new facts that prove the growth of the national pride and human qualities of the Tajik people. To be a citizen of the Tajik republic today – means to be cultured, to be a stakhanovite. In spring of this year the swelling waters of the Syr-Darya threatened to flood Leninobod and ruin the crops. A huge dam needed to be built as soon as possible. In theory, it was calculated that it would take no less than 1-2 years to build such a dam. The award-winning Urunkhojaev organized 25 thousand people and built the dam in seven days, saving the city and the cotton fields.”²³

²⁰ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoi notakror*, 31.

²¹ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoi notakror* (literally “Unrepeatable Faces”, or more loosely, “Personalities Never To Be Seen Again”), Khujand (2010), 31.

²² LFTsGA RT, 1.7.

²³ S. Shadunts, “Put' tadzhikskogo naroda,” *Izvestiia*, Sunday 1 November 1936, 3.

For many years, it seemed as though the Soviet press could not sing Urunkhojaev's praises highly enough – and the dam-building incident would not be the last to display his astonishing capacity for mobilising vast armies of unpaid volunteers. He survived the purges somehow, as we will see, and continued his long career at the helm of a series of increasingly large and prosperous collective farms in the immediate environs of his native Khujand/Leninobod, and indeed of the very hamlet in which he was born. He chaired the Gorkii kolkhoz in 1941-42, and then returned to chair that same Voroshilov kolkhoz where he had worked prior to the purges. Thereafter, he seems to have simultaneously chaired both the Voroshilov and the adjacent Moscow kolkhoz between 1943 and his death in 1967. The Moscow kolkhoz was renamed the Urunkhojaev kolkhoz following his death in 1967.



Figure 10: “Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev, Twice Hero of Socialist Labour”

This bust was erected in the grounds of the palace Urunkhojaev had built on the Moscow kolkhoz, subsequently renamed in his honour. The inscription reads “Two times hero of Socialist Labour, Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev,” and the medals conferred with that honour are portrayed pinned to his trademark striped cotton-silk mix khalat.

As these brief biographical overviews have established, the careers of Pulod Bobokalonov and Said-Khoja Urunkhojaev bore little resemblance to those of the *asilzodagon* profiled in previous chapters. Said-Khoja Urunkhojaev may or may not have had *asilzodagon* ancestry, and Pulod Bobokalonov surely did not: his background seems to have been precisely of the kind that the Communist Party sought to attract as allies. It took many years of hard physical labour before they each took the leadership of a succession of successful, prize-winning

collective farms, and it is their behaviour once they reached those positions that interests me here. While they themselves represented a new, Soviet elite, risen up from the formerly downtrodden labouring masses, once they were in a position to exercise power, they did so in familiar ways.

Rehearsing the canonical history of collectivisation

The Khujand branch of the Tajik State Archives preserves a Russian-language, typewritten draft for a 1964 commemorative booklet by Urunkhojaev – ghost-written, presumably – in which he looks back on turbulent recent history of his native soil, and his own glorious career at the helm of the Moscow kolkhoz. This is a valuable source for a micro-level history of the area, although given the nature of the genre – a victory celebration for collectivisation – its limitations are also clear. Considering that the draft is entitled “Memories of Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev,” the prose is strikingly impersonal, and contains almost no biographical information at all – not even the formulaic touches like his humble social origins or early struggles. While the thrust of the narrative is the standard contrast between the cruel exploitation and deprivation of the pre-revolutionary period and the glorious present, the account nonetheless provides some insight into how a staunch local Communist, who spent almost his entire career within a couple of miles of his birthplace, understood the changes in social dynamics that had occurred during his lifetime.

The headquarters of the Moscow kolkhoz centred on the village of Unji, whose long history as a farming community Urunkhojaev emphasizes: the whole village was once given over to orchards and vineyards.

“The peasants had long grown cotton, grain, but these fruits, grown with the sweat of their brow, soon fell from the calloused hands of the peasants into the hands of the boi and the clergy. The village of Unji until the revolution was the residence of powerful boi: Juraboi Makhkamov, Kurban Badalov, Hoshirboi Hasanboi, boi Isamatdin-khon,

Komiljan and others. The bois lived in the city of Khujand, [where they] had their shops and mills, and came here in summer, as if to a dacha. Out of three hundred acres of irrigated land, only 75 belonged to peasants.”²⁴

Urunkhojaev goes on to denounce the unequal power relations that pertained in the pre-revolutionary village, such that water from the laboriously maintained canals always went to the boi’s fields first, “because the mirob²⁵ had received a rich gift from the boi.” This was the inequitable situation that the “water” part of the Land and Water Reform intended to address, largely by digging fresh canals and overhauling the mirob system. When the poor peasant’s (*bedniak*) crops failed, he could work as sharecropper for the boi – if he still had his own plough (*omach*) and draft animal, otherwise, he could only hope for work as a “mardikor,” a hired laborer.

“This shameless robbery also took other forms. Quite often the bai organized “hashar”, when the majority of peasants either watered the fields, or picked fruit. “Hashar” – this was nothing but covert exploitation of the peasants, work, for which the bai did not pay the peasant one single kopeck.”²⁶

Hashar, a form of collective, ostensibly voluntary labour with a long history in parts of Central Asia, is firmly relegated in Urunkhojaev’s account to one among many tools of oppression at the boi’s disposal. During the Soviet period, the word hashar seems to have undergone an interesting evolution in official discourse, from being considered effectively akin to Russian pre-revolutionary *barshchina* (labor obligations), to eventually assuming in many instances a far more positive interpretation, as the local equivalent of a *subbotnik* (officially voluntary community service).²⁷

²⁴ LFTsGA RT, F.887, op.1, d. 20,l.1.

²⁵ The mirob was the functionary (subject to election, under Tsarist rule) responsible for allocating water from the irrigation channels and supervising their maintenance.

²⁶ LFTsGA RT, l.2.

²⁷ Christilla Marteau d’Autry, “Vyjdem vse, kak odin! ‘Allons-y tous comme un seul homme!’ Ethnographie d’un hashar national dans un quartier de Samarkand, Ouzbékistan,” *Cahiers d’Asie Centrale: La définition des identités*, 19-20 (2011), 279-301.

In this account, the first land parcels requisitioned from bais and the clergy were given over to the poor peasants of Unji in 1923, and “Soviet power taught the peasants how best to work the new Soviet land. [...] After the land and water reform of 1924-25, poor and landless peasants received land plots taken from the bais, and they began to manage the irrigation channels themselves.”²⁸ In July 1925, Unji peasants formed an agricultural credit association (*kreditnoe sel'skokhoziaistvennoe tovarishchestvo*), each of whom cultivated cotton on their plots and handed over their whole harvest to the state, as agreed. Through the credit association, the state disbursed draft animals and machinery. A shop opened in Unji, where members of the association could buy textiles, cotton oil and other industrial goods with the proceeds from the cotton sold to the state at a fixed rate, or with an advance on their future harvest. While the agricultural credit association was in existence – prior to collectivisation – the amount of land sown to cotton in the Unji area allegedly doubled, while yields rose to 12 centners per hectare.²⁹

As Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev's reminiscences continue:

“This credit association was, however, only a limited form of collective organization, and once again the party showed the peasants the way forward. Collectivization in Khujand district began in 1930,³⁰ and in the Unji village the Moscow kolkhoz, which brought together thirteen estates (*dvor*), was founded by poor peasants Fazylboi Karobaev, Sanginboi Ochilov, Abduvahid Sidikov and others. They chose the activist Tukhtaboi Usmanov as their chairman.”

Perhaps we are to believe that for all these poor peasants, the “-boi” suffix in their name is ironic, or intended to be auspicious – or possibly, this may be an example of successful “infiltration” of class enemy bois into the kolkhoz. Whereas in the world of Soviet propaganda of

²⁸ LFTsGA RT, I.2.

²⁹ LFTsGA RT, I.3.

³⁰ Here, Urunkhojaev is evidently remembering the second, more energetic, forced collectivization drive of 1930-31. As mentioned in the previous chapter, SredAzbiuro had received a report in 1929 in which the Khujand CP claimed to have 79 “kolkhozes” under its purview already.

the late 1920s to early 1930s, bois were constantly trying to worm their way into collective farms in order to lay waste and sow discord, in actual fact many *asilzodagon* were punitively resettled on new collective farms in previously arid areas, where they played their part to make the desert bloom with white cotton. The absorption of “class enemies” into the fabric of Tajik collective farms was far more seamless than the anti-boi/mullo paranoia with which collectivisation began suggested.

“In early 1931, another collective farm was founded in the adjacent village of Ok-Arik, with fifteen members and a stable inherited from the local bai (but not a single carriage or cart). In the early days, the kolkhozniks faced many troubles. The Moscow kolkhoz purchased eight horses with a government grant, but soon found it had no means to feed them, so a caravan of donkeys had to be sent to the distant village of Upper Dal’ian, where fodder and grain were procured. The young kolkhozniks had no experience of collective farming, and planned poorly. Kulaks and their supporters threw obstacles in the kolkhoz’s path, as they tried to undermine it from within.”

It will come as no surprise by now that class enemies “incited the kolkhozniks to eschew cotton and sow grain instead, while others instigated the felling of the apricot orchards.” The latter is another seemingly irrational move, unless fuel had become catastrophically scarce, or this was a form of protest, or act of resistance. Others attacked more directly, by “attempting to wear out the work animals, to kill them off, so as to wreck the ploughing and sowing.”³¹

“The kolkhoz members unmasked the machinations of the enemies. They threw the former bois out of the kolkhoz, and local government supported the request of the toiling peasantry, dekulakised them and expelled them beyond the confines of our villages. In 1931 in Khujand district, collectivization won. Thirty six collective farms were founded, the state provided seed grants, and the Khujand MTS began operations. In the first kolkhoz harvest, both in Unji and Ok-Arik, the yield was as high as 18 centners of raw cotton per hectare. We had never seen such a harvest, and those who still hesitated now rushed to join the kolkhoz – including the middle peasants (*seredniak*).”³²

³¹ LFTsGA RT, I.4.

³² LFTsGA RT, I.4-5.

In 1933, the Moscow kolkhoz had 211 hectares of sown crops, of which just under half (103 ha) were sown with cotton. “And what a joy it is to know now” – Urunkhojaev adds, writing in 1964 – “that the goal facing each individual kolkhoznik on every kolkhoz – cotton independence – is now a reality. Our country is freed from the necessity of buying cotton abroad. She can now sell cotton to other countries.”³³ The price paid by the ordinary people of the Tajik and Uzbek republics to fulfil the All-Union imperative of cotton independence was very high. But there was pride, too, for some, in having finally achieved this goal, and there were those in the Central Asian republics that did very well for themselves when the ever-inflating targets for cotton were met, or appeared to have been met.

Millionaire Kolkhozes

My task in this section is to establish the peculiar status of “millionaire” cotton farms within the system of Soviet agriculture as a whole, and to show how their success in meeting set targets led to reaping considerable financial rewards, which in turn translated for their leaders into considerable agency, political influence, and the ability to join the game of patronal politics as equals. My interest, ultimately, is in how some collective farms – and in particular, some collective farm chairmen – were able to act as patrons of the arts on a scale, at times, to rival and surpass the republican-level Narkompros, which otherwise held the purse-strings of institutional cultural production.

The Tajikistan pavilion at the 1939 Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow greeted visitors with a (necessarily) short history of the millionaire kolkhoz phenomenon. The claim was made that the term “millionaire kolkhoz” was actually applied to a collective farm in Tajikistan before

³³ LFTsGA RT, 1.7.

anywhere else in the Union in 1931, and that the country already counted 44 such preternaturally successful enterprises eight years later.³⁴ Not for the first time, the 1939 exhibition singled out the Voroshilov kolkhoz as the country's leading collective farm, with a stated yearly income of 5.4 million rubles. I argue here that millionaire kolkhozes – those whose annual income exceeded, sometimes by a wide margin, one million rubles, would come to play a key role not only in the Tajik economy, but also in forming a Tajik national and cultural identity.

In 1939, *Izvestiia* reported:

On the basis of the development of high quality cotton in Khujand, millionaire-kolkhozes have developed, with a yearly income over a million rubles. These include the Bolshevik, the Shadunts, Komintern, Socialism kolkhozes, among others. These kolkhozes have been equipped with beautiful buildings, clubs, pretty teahouses, crèches.³⁵

The advantages enjoyed by millionaire collective farms touted here are primarily cultural ones: the implication is that successful collective farmers are able to enjoy more comfortable, aesthetically pleasing surroundings and better cultural facilities.

Millionaire collective farms were far from being the norm – in fact, the system seemed designed to ensure that they would remain the exception. The same small handful of cotton-producing farms in Leninobod district – within easy reach of the town – were constantly feted, showered with new awards, and held up as examples by the All-Union press. In 1949, Bobokalonov's Stalin kolkhoz reached an annual income of over 13 million rubles, but the following year it broke new records for cotton yields and grossed 17 million rubles.³⁶ If there was one thing newspaper-readers from far-flung regions of the USSR had learned about the Tajik SSR by means of constant repetition, it was surely that its citizens grew a lot of cotton – and that doing so paid.

³⁴ "Vchera na sel'skokhoziaistvennoi vystavke," in *Izvestiia*, 16 August 1939, 1.

³⁵ B. Maksumov, "Khodzha-Bakirgan," in *Izvestiia*, 3 September 1935, 3.

³⁶ A. Pavlovich, "Vseobshchee uvazhenie, glubokoe doverie," *Izvestiia*, Thursday 2 March 1950, 3.

Stark differences between collective farms were not limited to total income, but also trickled down to extreme inequalities in pay scale between members of different farms. The norm was for individual kolkhozniks to be very poorly compensated for their work: in 1937, members of three quarters of the total number of collective farms in the Soviet Union were entitled to receive less than 5kg of grain per work day – often much less, perhaps 100g of grain per work day, if that.³⁷ There were some remarkable exceptions, however: in that same year, 1937, workers on 5,700 collective farms (2% of the total) received more than 10kg per work day, while the happy few members of the pinnacle 126 kolkhozes received more than 20kg of grain per work day.³⁸ In 1950, the base pay for workers – excluding potentially lavish performance bonuses – on Bobokalonov’s Stalin kolkhoz was 22 rubles a day and 5 kg of wheat, as well as “many fruits and other farm produce.”

The leadership of successful kolkhozes were rewarded for being able to fulfil the set plan, and rewarded further for surpassing the output norms.³⁹ “Wealthy kolkhozes are like small islands in an ocean of needy ones” as the hero of the novel *Razdum’ie*, published in *Znaniia* in 1958, learned.⁴⁰ On the Voroshilov kolkhoz in 1941, the family of the “stakhanovite-kolkhoznik” and Party member Khamraev was reported to have received the fabulous sum of 26,000 roubles in cash as payment for his work days that year.⁴¹ Sheila Fitzpatrick has proposed that the purpose of permitting the fortunes of some collective farms to rise so far above the rest was to serve as an

³⁷ The figure of 100g of grain per day is cited by Samuel Kucherov on the basis of frequent references in Soviet novels of kolkhoz life published in the 1950s – see “The Future of the Soviet Collective Farm,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr., 1960), 197.

³⁸ The figures of 180,000 kolkhozes out of a total of 240,000 are based on publications by the Soviet economist Osad’ko, cited by Samuel Kucherov in “The Future of the Soviet Collective Farm,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr., 1960), 188.

³⁹ A. Sarasmo in Katalin Miklossy, Melanie Ilic (eds), *Competition in Socialist Society*, 54.

⁴⁰ Kucherov, “The Future of the Soviet Collective Farm,” *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Apr., 1960), 192.

⁴¹ LF TsGA, F.51, op.7, d.32, l.1, quoted in *Iz istorii kolkhoznogo stroitel’sstva v Tadzhikskoi SSR*, p.128 and ff.

aspirational model for other less fortunate kolkhozniks elsewhere, to nourish the illusion that one day, all kolkhozes could enjoy the status of millionaire kolkhozes. Fitzpatrick calls these millionaire kolkhozes the Potemkin village kolkhozes – “a preview of the coming attractions of socialism.”⁴²

There were, of course, a number of factors contributing to a farm’s economic success – fertility of the soil, value of the crops grown, climactic factors – that were completely beyond the members’ control, and which no amount of hard work could overcome. The millionaire kolkhozes in Leninobod oblast were concentrated in the fertile plain region of the Ferghana Valley – several of them a stone’s throw from the city of Khujand/Leninobod itself. When the process of merging kolkhozes together began in 1949-51, this was an attempt to palliate the wealth gap between collective farms – but in the fertile, cotton-producing Ferghana Valley, the giant farms thus produced only left the farms in more arid and hilly areas of Leninobod oblast even further behind.

A millionaire kolkhoz gained and obtained this privileged status by virtue of being able to hit certain targets. It is not my concern here to dig beyond the officially published figures for cotton quotas and harvests: in terms of a collective farm’s ability to maintain the prestige and spending power of a millionaire kolkhoz, the officially reported figures – not the reality – are what matters. There is no doubt that, even to a non-economist, the officially reported figures are frequently more than a little doubtful: the jump in total income from all Tajik kolkhozes from 124,5 million rubles in 1935 to 274,6 million rubles only one year later,⁴³ for example, would seem to warrant a certain scepticism. But further investigation would go beyond the scope of this

⁴² Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Stalin’s Peasants*, 262.

⁴³ NarkomZem report to the III plenum of the CC of the CP of Tajikistan on progress on collectivisation in the republic, 1 January 1938, TsGA RT, f.288, op.2, d.325, ll.41-42 cited in *Iz istorii kolkhoznogo stroitel’sтва v Tadzhikskoi SSR* (Irfon: Dushanbe, 1985), 31.

work. In economic terms, millionaire kolkhozes may have been mirage or reality – but the lifestyle they supported really was richer, more comfortable, and offered greater opportunities for both professional advancement and – for some – artistic expression.

In the same January 1938 report to the Central Committee of the Tajik Communist Party, the number of millionaire kolkhozes was reported to have risen from 6 in 1935 to 24 in 1936 and 28 in 1937. By 1938, there were said to be 18 millionaire kolkhozes in Leninobod district alone.⁴⁴ In these kolkhozes, a standard work day in 1936 was compensated at an average rate of just under 22 rubles, or more than four times more than the republican average of 5 rubles 18 per workday.⁴⁵ In 1939, kolkhozniks from the now 26 millionaire collective farms in the Leninabad district paraded triumphantly through the streets of the town to celebrate May Day.

Under Urunkhojaev's leadership, the Moscow kolkhoz soon established itself as a millionaire kolkhoz, and Urunkhojaev's reputation rose. He was conferred the Hero of Socialist Labour award in 1948, and again in 1957. He was also sent as a delegate to the XX, XXI, XXII and XIII All Union Party Congresses.⁴⁶ During the course of the 1940s, the Moscow kolkhoz expanded several times, following mergers with neighbouring kolkhozes, eventually reaching a total size of 41,200 hectares (up from the original 211 ha), and a total membership of 3,574 households.

Culture Flowering on Cotton Farms

⁴⁴ *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, 14 August 1938, page 2, cited in *Iz istorii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v Tadzhikskoi SSR* (Irfon: Dushanbe, 1985), 43.

⁴⁵ TsGA Tajik SSR, F.20, op.2, d.2188, l.20-21, cited in *Iz istorii kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva v Tadzhikskoi SSR* (Irfon: Dushanbe, 1985), 47.

⁴⁶ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (literally “Unrepeatable Faces”, or more loosely, “Personalities Never To Be Seen Again”), Khujand (2010), 31.

The Komintern cotton kolkhoz, located at a short distance from the city of Khujand, might seem an unlikely venue of cultural production, even in conditions of budding socialism. But the Komintern kolkhoz, beginning in 1932, consistently fulfilled and even exceeded its cotton quotas under the energetic leadership of its chairman Pulod Bobokalonov, and was thus able to support a particularly ambitious cultural program. The Komintern kolkhoz was also able to provide a safe haven in which a group of artists and intellectuals of unfavourable class origins and “questionable” artistic tastes (in the eyes of the regime) were able to find their artistic voice and emerge onto the national stage in the post-war period – not coincidentally after the worst of the Stalinist attacks on the arts had subsided.

A cotton farm turns out to have been an excellent place for some of the *asilzodagon* intelligentsia not only to lie low in ideologically impeccable surroundings, but also to develop artistically and find their voice in the nascent ecosystem of Tajik socialist culture. One young intellectual of elite background who found a supportive environment for creative expression on the cotton farm of Pulod Bobokalonov was Hoji Sodiq. It was through his initiative that shashmaqam, the music of the Central Asian courts of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand found a stable home on the newly collectivised farm. That music – shashmaqam – became a central and cherished feature in the cultural lives of kolkhozy across the Ferghana Valley and beyond.

Shashmaqom on the cotton farm

Shashmaqom, which literally means six maqoms or modes, is a refined, intimate and introspective form of court music associated with the urban centres of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Kokand, where it was transmitted orally from master to pupil through lengthy apprenticeships. The relationship between master (*ustod*) and pupil (*shogird*) was a close and long-lasting one, with parallels to that between Sufi elders and disciples. Shashmaqom involves setting classical

Turkic and Persian poetry (often in the Sufi tradition) to the music of instruments such as the rubob, doira, tanbur and chang.

The continued existence and development of shashmaqom as an intimate form of court music performed by two or three musicians had been thrown into question by the Bolshevik revolution. From the perspective of an increasingly intrusive Party, there were problems with both the music and the texts associated with shashmaqom. Many of the texts were religious, and many were suffused with an air of gentle melancholy and pessimism, which was likewise expressed by the musical accompaniment.⁴⁷ Even apart from its courtly associations and small scale, distinctly lacking in bombast, the cultural hybridity and bilingualism of shashmaqom rendered it an awkward fit for the cookie cutter national cultures envisioned by the soviet form of nationalism.⁴⁸ In 1927, the prominent Jadid intellectual Abdurauf Fitrat published a study of Uzbek classical music, in which he made a bid to claim shashmaqom for Uzbek national culture – downplaying the genre’s long history of bilingualism. The Soviet ethnomusicologist Victor Uspenskii ran into trouble when he tried to publish his research on shashmaqom in the Ferghana Valley. As he wrote privately in 1934 to his friend and collaborator, “when the text was handed over for translation, it appeared that there were such strong overtones of Sufism in the texts that of course they could not be published.”⁴⁹ Later in the 1930s, Fitrat’s having championed shashmaqom – albeit in a guise stripped of its Persian elements – did not do the genre any favours. By then, Fitrat’s own loyalty to the regime had been called into question, and he was executed in 1938, after a long period of crushing isolation. It was not clear whether or to what

⁴⁷ See Alexander Djumaev, “Power Structures, Culture Policy, and Traditional Music in Soviet Central Asia” in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 25, *Musical Processes in Asia and Oceania* (1993), 43-50.

⁴⁸ Eventually, two artificially distinct forms of “Uzbek shashmaqam” and Tajik shashmaqam” were developed.

⁴⁹ See Alexander Djumaev, “Power Structures, Culture Policy, and Traditional Music in Soviet Central Asia” in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 25, *Musical Processes in Asia and Oceania* (1993), 45.

extent the cultural institutions of the Tajik SSR would be prepared to accommodate shashmaqom.

As state and Party institutions increased their control over many aspects of society in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, cultural production too became increasingly institutionalised. In the cultural domain, NarKomPros held the purse strings, and the People's Commissar of Enlightenment reported only to the Chair of SovNarKom and the Central Committee. However – musical ensembles, theatre groups and photography circles on kolkhozes were supported directly by the kolkhoz budget, and had no oversight from NarKomPros. In the cultural life of a kolkhoz, it was the tastes of the kolkhoz leadership that carried most weight – and our hero chairmen, it seems, had a taste for shashmaqom.

Shashmaqom was eventually incorporated into the canon of permissible traditional music in both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, although officially, each country codified a separate set of canonical texts, each monolingual in the respective national language. In the cotton kolkhozes of Leninobod district, however, many shashmaqom performers continued to maintain bilingual repertoires, setting to music verses by Bedil, Kamoli Khujandi and Navo'i. It is my contention here, as we shall see, that transplanting shashmaqom to the radically different cultural milieu of the collective farm, a labour of love undertaken by Hoji Sodiq and his cohort, contributed to extending the life of the genre under Soviet conditions. Once (formerly) court music found performers and an appreciative audience on that most quintessentially Soviet institution, the collective farm – its immediate survival was no longer in jeopardy.

The paternal grandparents and forebears of Hoji Sodiq (1913-1990) lived in the khanate of Kokand, where they were a prominent family in the city and the court, as indicated by their honorific title “Mirzo,” a contraction of “emir zoda,” which means “descended from the Emir.”

In those days, as Hoji Sodiq's youngest son recalled when interviewed in 2011, wealthy girls like his grandmother "had little to do all day besides sit around braiding their hair – the style indicated forty braids per head – and applying usma" (a plant-derived cosmetic for the eyebrows). This characterization, of course, owes much to official Soviet discourse on lifestyle and gender norms in pre-revolutionary times, but the basic point is taken: his forbears were wealthy. At some point Mirzo Sodiq, future father of Hoji Sodiq, moved to Konibodom, another Ferghana Valley town about seventy kilometres away. He had a bakery there, which prospered, and he married and raised a family in Konibodom. One of his sons was named Hoji Sodiq – not because he had performed (or would ever perform) the Hajj, but because he was born on the day of Eid-i Qurbon – October 25, 1913.⁵⁰

When Hoji Sodiq was only twelve years old, in around 1925, he lost his father, and determined to set out on foot to seek his fortune in Khujand, which was then undergoing more intense revolutionary upheaval relative to the safe backwater of Konibodom. He walked to Khujand, and, once this journey was completed, a new life began for the boy, one in which he rarely mentioned his father. Hoji Sodiq successfully concealed his family background from Bolshevik officialdom – a background which would otherwise have cast him in bad odour. To present himself as the son of a baker – which must have satisfied the Russians, who soon admitted him to the ranks of the Komsomol – was as truthful as it was misleading.⁵¹ His parents were, or had been, prosperous members of the local intelligentsia, who had ensured that he had learned to read and write Persian as well as Uzbek fluently at a young age. By arriving alone, on

⁵⁰ The biographical information on Hoji Sodiq (1913-1990) is based on a combination of material published in Soviet times, a post-Soviet Encyclopedia of Khujand, and an extended interview with his son Munavvar Sodiqov conducted in Khujand in 2011. His son turned out to be a keen amateur historian, who gave a spirited account of the history of his family and of his city, speaking fluently and with evident enjoyment for several hours.

⁵¹ Several of the most eminent families in Khujand owned bakeries, which appears to have been a trade not incompatible with high status.

foot, in the city as an adolescent, he was able to reap the benefits of his privileged upbringing, without the concomitant liability of an august lineage – although, as we shall see, that too proved not without its benefits.

Despite having joined the Komsomol, Hoji Sodiq was not drawn in by the fervour for all-out collectivisation then raging. Instead, between 1931 and 1934 Hoji Sodiq was enrolled in the Khujand music school, where he studied the classical Turko-Persian musical tradition of shashmaqom. For some of that time, he also worked in the Pushkin theatre playing the Chang (an ancient instrument, also known as the Iranian harp). The master Sodir-khon Hofez (1847-1932), who was himself a pupil of Buzurg-khon tura (note the suffixes), taught at the music school attended by Hoji Sodiq until his death in 1932. Sodirkhon Hofez was famed for his musical settings of verses by Omar Khayyam, Hafez, Jami, Navo’i, Bedil (thus, both Turkic and Persian poetry), as well as more recent and local additions to the canon such as the work of the reform-minded Khujandi Toshkhoja Asiri ibn Eshonkhoja (1864-1916).

In 1933 the life of Hoji Sodiq, a young musician and aspiring journalist barely out of his teens, took an unexpected and fortuitous turn when Pulat Bobokalonov offered him a position as secretary of the board on the Komintern collective farm, of which Bobokalonov was chairman. Pulat Bobokalonov, a tireless champion of collectivisation in Northern Tajikistan credited with establishing no less than twelve collective farms, appears also to have had a particular regard for the arts. On the kolkhoz, Hoji Sodiq was soon dubbed the “kolkhoz linchpin”⁵² on account of his tireless editorial work, as well as his more broadly cultural activities.

The Komintern kolkhoz, founded by Bobokalonov in 1931, had swiftly distinguished itself as one of the largest and most productive kolkhozes in Tajikistan. The cotton harvest of

⁵² T. Dadabaev, “Он был талантлив во всём,” *Sogdiiskaiia Pravda*, 14 May 2013.

1932-33, which averaged 25 centners per hectare, broke previous Tajik records and attracted the benevolent attention of the authorities in the frenzied atmosphere of the Second Five Year Plan. After three impressive years at the helm of the Komintern kolkhoz 1931-34, Bobokalonov was promoted to the position of vice chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Tajik SSR (1934-37), and received the order of Lenin the following year, having taken part in the first all-Union congress of collective farm workers in Moscow (1935).⁵³

Pulod Bobokalonov was sympathetic to cultural matters and quite open to harnessing the political and economic capital yielded by his impressive cotton yields to promote literacy and patronize the arts. In this regard, it may well be indicative of parental interest and encouragement in this sphere that his son Karim, who in his youth before the war also worked on the Komintern kolkhoz, later went on to hold several academic positions and eventually becoming a long-serving vice minister for education in the Tajik SSR, a position he held from 1966 to 1985.

During his tenure as kolkhoz chairman, Pulat Bobokalonov used his position to give ideologically impeccable employment to several intellectuals from old elite families, who responded by throwing themselves heart and soul into the project to form a new culture, rendering the Komintern cotton farm a *prima facie* unlikely cultural mecca, visited by Sadriddin Aini and Lohuti. The work of old elite intellectuals on a cotton farm captures something essential about the modes through which Tajik cultural agents adapted and reinvented themselves in accordance with the socialist ideology embraced sincerely by many, at least for a time.

As head of the culture section, Hoji Sodiq also oversaw the creation of a photography group led by one Aminov, but his greatest achievement was the founding of a kolkhoz music ensemble.⁵⁴ The Komintern kolkhoz was perhaps the first kolkhoz in the Ferghana Valley to

⁵³ The announcement of Pulat Bobokalonov's Lenin Prize was published in *Pravda* on December 26, 1935.

⁵⁴ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, manuscript copy preserved in LF TsGA, p.46 / l.51.

have its own music ensemble, but it became so popular that within a few years, no millionaire kolkhoz in the vicinity was without its own. Hoji Sodiq was able to invite his former schoolmate Urunboi Dadaboev (1906-1984), a shashmaqam musician who had graduated, as he had, from the Sadirkhon Hofez School, to lead the Komintern folk music ensemble. By coming to the Komintern kolkhoz, Urunboi was able both to remain within the shashmaqom tradition and to receive official accolades for doing so: he was declared “National Hofez of the Tajik SSR” in 1956. Unlike Hoji Sodiq, Urunboi Dadaboev remained an employee of the kolkhoz for many years, serving as head of the House of Culture and conductor of the “folk” orchestra. Dadaboev also set to music several poems of the Khujandi poets Muhiddin Aminzoda, Roziia Ozod (mother of First Secretary of the Tajik CP Bobojon Ghafurov), and Dehoti.⁵⁵

Together, Hoji Sodiq and Urunboi Dadoboev also started a kolkhoz theatre group in 1937, and brought Tohir Tojiboev on board as artistic director. The kolkhoz theatre was a great success, whose shows travelled around northern Tajikistan, and Tohir Tojiboev too went on to greater things, and was eventually awarded the People's Artist of the Tajik SSR award in 1964.

Many actors and musical performers who would go on to enjoy long careers as Soviet artists had their debut in the kolkhoz theatre group with Tojiboev, including the actress Bashoratkhon Tojibaeva and the shashmaqom performer Boimuhammad Niyozov, who “refined and improved their skills⁵⁶ in that place, until they reached the level of respected artists and Hofiz.”⁵⁷ While ideological debates rumbled on at the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment, over whether and how shashmaqom might be considered an appropriate genre for socialist

⁵⁵ M.Kholmatov, “Urunboi Dadabaev” in *Khudzhand: Entsiklopedia* (Khujand, 1999), 259-60.

⁵⁶ A loose translation of the far more poetic “обүтөб ёфта”

⁵⁷ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, manuscript copy preserved in LF TsGA, p.47 / l.52. Boimuhammad Niyozov, born in 1927 and honoured with the title of National Artist of Tajikistan in 1994, is still going strong in 2013, as testified by a dozen or more recent recordings uploaded to youtube.

consumption, shashmaqom was finding appreciative new audiences on the millionaire cotton farms ringing the city of Leninobod.

There is some evidence that, elsewhere in Central Asia, collective farm audiences – and their chairmen – also played an important role in preserving from total oblivion the oral epics, or *doston*. Bola bakhshi, a Khivan performer of *doston* born in 1892, supported himself between the 1930s and 1960s by travelling from one kolkhoz to another. He was officially employed by a theatre, but more than half the theatre's income came from Bola bakshi's earnings for performances at kolkhozes. "We'd move to a kolkhoz for an evening and the directors of the kolkhoz would force us to stay a second evening. They'd pay another 1,500 rubles and force us to stay. I did twenty-five or thirty concerts a month. They took us from kolkhoz to kolkhoz in a camel-drawn cart."⁵⁸ For many traditionally trained artists and performers who could not find a place within the official range of Soviet cultural institutions, collective farms were a lifeline – and it was the kolkhoz musical ensembles who trained a new generation of shashmaqom artists, who perform in Tajikistan today.

⁵⁸ Interview with Bola Bakhshi taken by the author, in Theodore Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia* (Indiana University Press, 1999), 175.



Figure 11: A Soviet-era shashmaqom ensemble.

No further details known. Note the size of the group, which includes considerably more performers than traditional shashmaqom performances of the pre-revolutionary period.

Writing on the cotton farm

The other love Hoji Sodiq discovered in his days as a music student, which was to have an even greater impact on his future, was journalism, for which he had a considerable flair – he began publishing in the official newspaper of the district administration while still in his teens.

The pivotal role played by the Komintern kolkhoz in nurturing the fledgling socialist Tajik culture is suggested by the educator Saidkarim Valizoda (1908-1990) in his memoir.⁵⁹ As a member of the komsomol, nec non a scion of a prominent Khujandi family of scholars, Saidkarim was himself invited to work on the Komintern kolkhoz in the autumn of 1933, as part of the struggle to eliminate illiteracy and establish a cultural section there. By the autumn of 1933, many *asilzodagon* Communists were coming under increasing pressure, and lived with the

⁵⁹ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, Irfon publishing house, Dushanbe (1975). I consulted a manuscript copy held in State Archives of Tajikistan (Leninobod branch), or TsGART-LF

constant threat of being exposed as class enemies (the next two chapters will deal with the Purges of the 1930s in detail). Thus, the invitation to relocate to the Komintern kolkhoz, though no great distance from Leninobod itself, may well have appeared to Valizoda as a welcome opportunity to leave the town. Valizoda found the kolkhoz under the leadership of the Bobokalonov brothers (first Pulod, and then – once he was promoted to Stalinobod – his older brother Jura), a rewarding place to work.

Following Valizoda's arrival on the kolkhoz, and with the assistance of "literate rural youths," literacy courses were organised in every kolkhoz brigade, leading to a reported 82% overall literacy rate among the farm workers, male and female, in little over a year (early 1934 to March 1935). Once word of this unusually literate collective farm got about, the local party and komsomol organisations set themselves the loftier goal of organising a cultural section.⁶⁰

The newly created cultural section was headed by Hoji Sodiq. This "energetic and modest young man" oversaw the creation of three increasingly ambitious newspapers in the years he spent at Komintern, beginning with the wall newspaper "Light of the Kolkhoz," "Ilichovka," aimed at the top tier of workers, and, from 1936, "Ghalaba" ("Victory") newspaper, with a print run of 2,000, distributed to all readers in the district's collective farms. The latter newspaper was displayed at an All-Union exhibition, where Hoji Sodiq as its editor was rewarded with a silver medal and 500 *som* in cash.⁶¹

In the course of the 1930s, the kolkhoz also built up a large library, with as many as ten thousand books, and built a large auditorium with its own broadcasting centre, in which were delivered many avowedly scintillating ("*shavqovar*") lectures on Marxism-Leninism.

⁶⁰ S. Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, manuscript page 45.

⁶¹ S. Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, manuscript page 46.

In his memoir, Valizoda quotes from Hoji Sodiq's own account of the Komintern chapter of his life: "We were honoured many times by visits from the most respected writers and poets of the republic, who came with a wish to learn and share the experience of this kolkhoz – the biggest, most prosperous and most culturally active. The masters of poetry and prose Sadriddin Aini and Abulqosim Lohuti, the writers Jalol Ikromi, Hakim Karim, Sotim Ulughzoda, Rahim Jalil, Muhiddin Aminzoda and others came several times to our kolkhoz; they penned works about our master cotton pickers, about the cultural life and the everyday life of the collective farmers. Master Abulqosim Lohuti bestowed his poem "Toj and Bairak" upon the kolkhoz, whose hero is the master cotton farmer Orifjon Shokirov."⁶²

Writers and musicians who came to Komintern seem to have found a strikingly safe and productive environment – given the prevailing winds of the 1930s – in which to develop their artistic careers. By the time they left the farm, Hoji Sodiq was on his way to becoming an acclaimed writer and editor, while Urunboi Dadoboev and Boimuhammad Niyozov were able to devote their careers to shashmaqom, and a good group of actors spent a life on stage portraying Leili va Majnun and the other touchstones of the Tajik Soviet canon. By forming and directing a "kolkhoz orchestra of national instruments," Urunboi Dadoboev created roots for the courtly shashmaqam in the quintessentially Soviet milieu of the collective farm that would outlast the Soviet period.

Ruptures

Although I am arguing here that kolkhozes could provide a supportive environment for artistic expression, in which artists and intellectuals were relatively sheltered from state & Party

⁶² Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, manuscript page 48.

interference, it is not of course the case that collective farms escaped the violence of the Stalinist Purges. Although they did ultimately survive, both of the chairmen heroes of this chapter were affected by the purges of the 1930s, in large part because their extraordinary success had opened doors beyond their farms. On 21 March 1938, *Pravda* published a very unfavourable report on progress in the Tajik cotton sowing campaign, and singled out Bobokalonov for blame specifically. The agricultural sector was allegedly having trouble recovering from sabotage at the hands of “Trotskyite-Bukharinite bandits,” who had confessed in their recent show trial to have deliberately forced lucerne (also known as alfalfa) out of Central Asia precisely because it was known to be the best crop to rotate with cotton.

“Last year several places concealed the extent of cotton sown from the state. In the Komintern kolkhoz in Leninobod district, for example, only half of all the fields sown with cotton were under contract. Tajik Sovnarkom and the Central Committee of the Tajik Communist Party both failed to bring those guilty of anti-state activity to account. And even more serious – the People’s Commissar for Agriculture in Tajikistan, Pulod Bobokalonov tries to cover up for those who conceal cotton sowing. The chairman of the Komintern kolkhoz, Leninobod district, was the brother of the People’s Commissar – Jura Bobokalonov. Pulat Bobokalonov used his official position to slow down in any way possible the investigation into his brother’s criminal activities.”⁶³

Once again, the Party’s anxiety over nepotism and “gruppirovshchina” in Central Asia was on display. As the use of the past tense here makes clear, Pulod’s brother Jura had been removed from the Komintern kolkhoz (and indeed, arrested) by the time the article was published in March 1938 – so whatever tactics Pulod may have employed to shield his brother were not entirely successful. Both brothers survived the purges, however, and went on to lead more and increasingly successful kolkhozes into the post-war period. The novelist Ikromi (see chapter five) recalled meeting Pulod’s brother Jura, or “Bobokalonov kaloni” (the elder) in the NKVD jail in Stalinobod, in 1937. Ikromi described him as “a simple farmer and a good person,”

⁶³ V. Verkhovskii, “Iuzhnie raiony nakanune massovogo seva: pervye dni polevykh rabot,” in *Pravda*, 21 March 1938, 3.

and observes that Bobokalonov “often cursed his younger brother Pulod, who had been promoted [...] just at the time of his brother’s arrest” [which presumably, in Ikromi’s view and in that of his brother, Pulod had done too little to prevent].⁶⁴ In fact, Pulod himself was also briefly, arrested, according to a post-Soviet biographical entry in the hagiographic mode. “On the basis of a malicious anonymous information letter he was detained in Moscow and sent to the investigation prison [secret police prison?] in Stalinobod. Following a serious investigation he was cleared and released.”⁶⁵ Even this murky episode did not mark the end of Bobokalonov’s foray into politics.

In the meantime, a little more than a year after the completion of his Herculean dam project, the same frantic vortex of arrests, convictions and executions took its toll on Urunkhojaev too. He was repressed between September 1937 and May 1940 (and kept in solitary confinement, subject to frequent interrogations, according to one recent account),⁶⁶ until finally being rehabilitated and promptly returned to agricultural work.

While, as we will see in chapter five, the arts and cultural institutions under the purview of NarKomPros were systematically purged to devastating effect, and the leadership of kolkhozes – whose targets and yields were under intense scrutiny, was caught up in the general neurosis about Trotskyite-bukharinist deviationists, saboteurs and wreckers, the cultural organisations embedded within collective farms seem to have escaped largely unscathed.

The years of the Second World War were a second important rupture, of a very different kind – chapter 6 of this dissertation is devoted to exploring the unusual set of circumstances brought about by the war on Tajikistan’s home front. Some cotton farms, however appeared to

⁶⁴ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*.

⁶⁵ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (literally “Unrepeatable Faces”, or more loosely, “Personalities Never To Be Seen Again”), Khujand (2010), 35.

⁶⁶ Bakhtiyor Valiev, Tainy dvortsa “Arbob,” *Asia-Plus*, 18 April 2011, accessed 25.04.2015. URL: <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/tainy-dvortsa-arbob>

bounce back with remarkable alacrity from the severe shortages of manpower and technical inputs caused by the war – one such success story was reported from the Stalin kolkhoz, where Pulod Bobokalonov received a prize of over a million rubles for over-fulfilling the plan; his brigade leaders Bobojonov and Ashurov were also rewarded for achieving a yield of 30-40 centners of cotton per hectare.⁶⁷

Cotton farms in the post-war period⁶⁸

Once the most severe rationing and shortages caused by the Second World War receded, the golden age for cotton farms in the Ferghana Valley began. Even before Khrushchev's new emphasis on increasing the supply of consumer goods and increased investment in agriculture, millionaire kolkhozes were able to make life significantly more pleasant for their workers. The largesse that the leaders of successful enterprises were able to distribute to their employees was accorded ample space in the All-Union press. On the front page of Pravda for 9 January, 1950, an article heralded the increased purchasing power of the workers in the Tajik SSR, once again by using the example of the Voroshilov kolkhoz, headed by Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev.

“Richly live the kolkhozniks of the Voroshilov artel, in Leninobod district. The kolkhoz chairman, Hero of Socialist Labour Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev built himself a house with many rooms. He has rich carpets, elegant furniture, two radio sets, and a gramophone in his apartment. There is electricity and a telephone in his home. Not long ago, Urunkhojaev was awarded a “Pobeda” (“Victory”) automobile for his own private use. All the kolkhozniks live in comfortable, well-built apartments. There are now bicycles, sewing machines and radio sets in almost every home. Some of the collective farm workers have motorbikes and automobiles. In 1949 several families were able to spend up to 15-20 thousand roubles on purchases. [...] To satisfy the increased spending power of the collective farmers, over the past year around sixty new shops and booths have opened.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Tadzhikskaja SSR vypolnila plan zagotovok khlopka*, *Izvestia*, 14 December 1945, 1.

⁶⁸ It is a source of considerable regret that I have not yet been able to incorporate in this chapter the insights to be derived from a recently published volume, fruit of a collaborative international research project “Allah's Kolkhozes Allah's Kolkhozes. Migration, De-Stalinisation, Privatisation and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm (1950s–2000s),”

⁶⁹ “Rost pokupatel'noi sposobnosti trudiashchikhsia,” *Pravda*, 9 January 1950, page 1.

Considering the theme of the article is the increased spending power of workers in the socialist paradise, the opening description of the chairman's own lavish living quarters is quite striking. The workers may have been able to purchase a bicycle for "almost every home," but the chairman has an automobile "for his own private use."



Figure 12: Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev chairs a meeting.

Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev, then chairman of the "K.E. Voroshilov" kolkhoz, conducts a meeting with the farm management. Dated September 1949. SOURCE: Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov, ed.khr. 200228 ch/b.

It is a little hard to pin down which kolkhozes Urunkhojaev was chairman of, particularly in the postwar period. The official volume of reminiscences which he authored in the 1960s celebrated his successes at the head of the Moscow kolkhoz – which was the farm renamed in his honour after his death in 1967.⁷⁰ However, in January 1950 *Pravda* described Urunkhojaev as chairman of the Voroshilov kolkhoz⁷¹ (itself a recent product of the consolidation of the Molotov

⁷⁰ *Khudzhand: entsiklopedia*, 1999, 764-765.

⁷¹ Rost pokupatel'noi sposobnosti trudaishchikhsia, *Pravda*, 9 January 1950, 1.

and Zhdanov kolkhozes),⁷² and again in the ukaz of 17 January 1957 awarding him his second Hammer & Sickle gold medal.⁷³ On March 19 1958, *Izvestiia* notes yet another award being given to Urunkhojaev in his capacity as chairman of the Moscow kolkhoz in Leninobod district. Then, there is photographic evidence attesting to a visit paid by Voroshilov himself in 1958 to a kolkhoz of which Urunkhojaev was then chairman, described as the strongest in Tajikistan and named as the Moscow kolkhoz. One might assume that these two powerful kolkhozes had merged under the Moscow title, before Voroshilov was able to visit the kolkhoz named in his honour.



Figure 13: Voroshilov visits the Moscow kolkhoz.

“The ‘Moscow’ kolkhoz: K. E. Voroshilov receives a floral offering on occasion of his visit to the strongest kolkhoz in the Tajik republic, the ‘Moscow’ kolkhoz in Leninobod district.” The beaming figure of Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev can be seen standing behind and between Voroshilov and the girl in Tajik national dress. Photo taken by V. Vybornov, dated May 1958. Source: Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov, [0-248368 Ch/B](#)

⁷² Bakhtiyor Valiev, Tainy dvortsa “Arbob,” *Asia-Plus*, 18 April 2011, accessed 25.04.2015. URL: <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/tainy-dvortsa-arbob>

⁷³ *Pravda*, 18 January 1957, 3.

However, an article from the early 1960s describes the “present day Voroshilov kolkhoz” as being formed on the basis of the village of Shaikh-burhon, birthplace of its chairman Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev. Other archival photographs meanwhile continue to associate Urunkhojaev with the Moscow kolkhoz in 1960, 1961 and beyond.⁷⁴

The confusion over names does seem to be related to the various stages of kolkhoz mergers and consolidation: one article from the early 1960s describes the “present day Voroshilov kolkhoz,” as being formed out of smaller kolkhozy based on the villages of Unji, Ok-Arik, Kuliangir, Shaikh-burhon and Dashtak.⁷⁵ Urunkhojaev appears to simultaneously chaired the Voroshilov and Moscow kolkhozes, which were contiguous, and may eventually have merged.

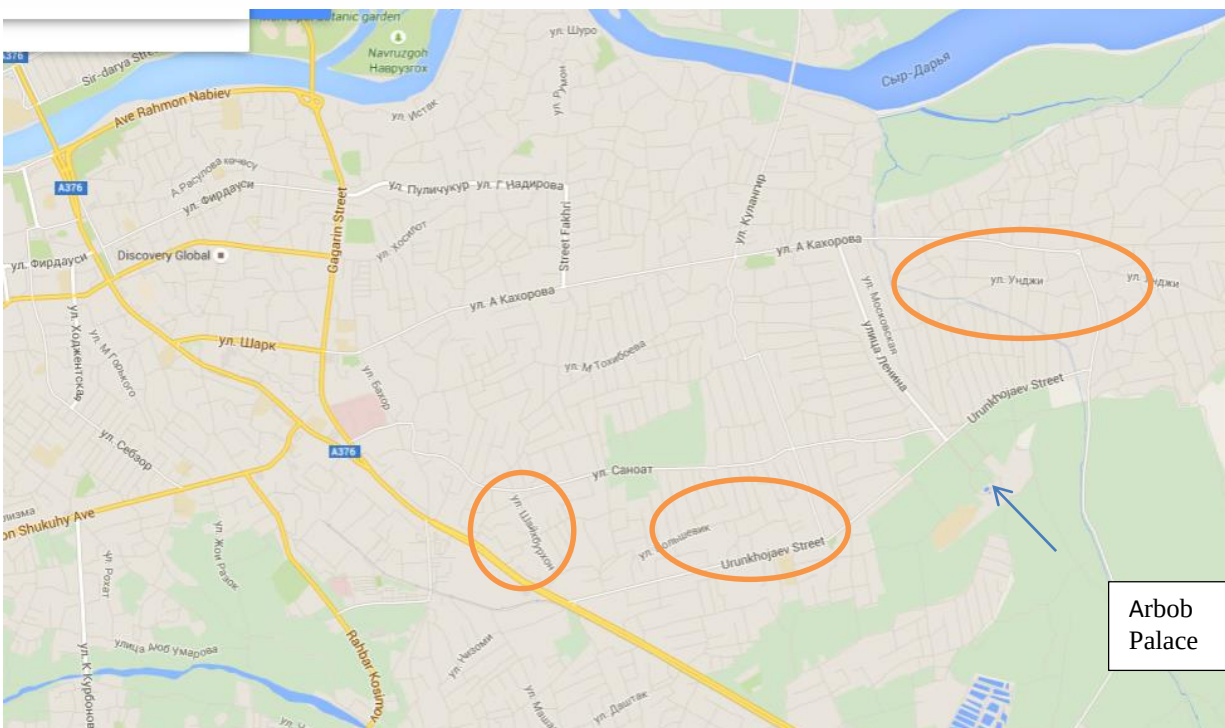


Figure 14: Location of the Arbob Palace.

⁷⁴ See for example “Twice Hero of Socialist Labor Urunkhojaev inspects the quality of the tilling in the cotton fields, Moscow kolkhoz, Leninabad district,” dated 1960. Source: Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov, [1-57149 ch/b](#).

⁷⁵ Ia. Formenko, *Dvoretz na kholme*, Ogonek N.51, December 1957, p.19-23. Filed in LF TsGA RT, F.887,op.1,d.20.

In the contemporary map of Khujand above, I have drawn an arrow pointing to the site of the Arbob palace, and highlighted modern streets named Shaikh-Burhon, Unji, and Urunkhojaev.

There is something in the confusion as to the nature and extent of Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev's responsibilities that seems in keeping with his larger than life persona and fabled energy. However the names and borders of individual collective farms changed over the years, it is surely not an insignificant part of the story that throughout his career, Urunkhojaev remained rooted within a stone's throw of his native village of Shaikh-burhon. He seems to have ruled his collective farms with an iron fist and a minute attention to detail, punctuated by grand gestures of generosity and patronage. The kolkhozes he led glimmer round the edges like mirages, and they were more like Potemkin villages even than most.⁷⁶

Like Pulod Bobokalonov, he retained throughout his life his Central Asian style of dress, including a khalat robe secured with an embroidered kerchief (remol) round his waist, and a duppi on his head – though his khalat gradually acquired a row of very Soviet medals. He wore this outfit when he travelled to Moscow for the All-Union gatherings, when he met Stalin and other Politbiuro grandees, just as he apparently did, invariably, at home.

A post-Soviet, locally published biography gives great attention to the cultural contribution made by Urunkhojaev to the kolkhozes he directed. While Urunkhojaev was at the helm, the Moscow kolkhoz acquired its own local radio and television stations, and its own newspaper.

He ordered 3,000 radio sets and 400 telephones distributed in the service of the people. In the kolkhoz, cultural affairs were also well established, with a museum (*osorkhona*), library and people's theatre. It became a tradition to hold soirees (*shabnishini*) and meetings, various sporting contests and concerts. Many representatives of the arts world, including Ma'ruf-khoja Bahodurov,⁷⁷ Urunbek Hamdanov, A'zamjon Vohidov,

⁷⁶ Sheila Fitzpatrick discusses the Potemkin village qualities of certain collective farms in *Stalin's Peasants*.

⁷⁷ Ma'rufkhoja Bahodurov (1920-1997), People's Hofiz of the Tajik SSR (1947).

Abdurahim Ne'matov, Murodov, Zohirov, Mehri Abdulloeva, Gavhar Erkaboeva and other took their first steps in the ranks of art in the people's theatre of this very farm.”⁷⁸

Like other successful kolkhoz chairmen, Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev increased his prestige, and burnished his reputation locally by acting as a patron of the arts and promoting talented young people as his protégés. Ma'ruf-khoja Bahodurov (1922-1997), whose first public performances took place at Urunkhojaev's invitation in the kolkhoz theater, began learning to perform shashmaqom as a child. He was already performing at a high level as a teenager, and benefitted from being taught by Sodirkhon Hofiz, among others, before the master's death in 1932. He sang and played the tambur, and at the age of just 19 was sent to Moscow to take part in the Dekada (Ten Days) of Tajik Art and literature in Moscow. On his return from Moscow, he was employed by the Tajik State Philharmonic until 1950, and then spent several years working for state radio and television in Uzbekistan – like Hoji Sodiq and other Khujandi artists and writers, he did not limit himself to either Tajik or Uzbek, but performed a rich shashmaqom repertoire in both languages.

Palace in the village

Even such impressive achievements in the cultural realm as these, however, pale in comparison with what must surely be the most tangible sign of Urunkhojaev's power and influence, if not his crowning achievement: the Arbob Palace. Even today, after more than a decade of expensive vanity projects erected by President Emomali Rahmon around the country,⁷⁹ the scale and design of the palace at Arbob remain striking. The palace occupies an iconic place in the history of the Tajik nation, as it was the site where the declaration of Tajik independence

⁷⁸ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (literally “Unrepeatable Faces,” or more loosely, “Personalities Never To Be Seen Again”), Khujand (2010), 32.

⁷⁹ The Palace of Nations, the National Library building in Dushanbe and the world's tallest flagpole spring to mind.

was made in 1992, and also the location for the peace conferences brokered by the OSCE which eventually ended the bloody Tajik civil war in 1997, and brought Emomali Rahmon to prominence. It was built in the 1950s, under Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev's close supervision, as the headquarters of the kolkhoz of which he was then chairman (and which would later be renamed in his honour).



Figure 15: "Palace in the village"

The photo depicts the Palace of Culture built by Urunkhojaev in his native village. SOURCE: Izvestiia, 3 May 1957, 2.

However you approach the Voroshilov kolkhoz in Leninobod district, Tajik SSR, you will notice the enormous two-story building, erected on the summit of the Arbob hill. This is the Palace of Culture, built to a design by the prominent Tajik architect Kh. A. Ioldashev. Twice a Hero of Socialist Labour, S. Urunkhojaev, head of the Voroshilov kolkhoz and initiator of the palace building project, gives us a tour of the premises. The amphitheater and the balconies overlooking the auditorium seat 1,200 people, and the reading room seats 250. The recreation room and teahouse can accommodate 300 people. The sports hall is also ample. Beyond these, the palace also has a lecture hall and a meeting room for the kolkhoz management. The permanent exhibits of the kolkhoz gallery are arranged in six large rooms. Here are displayed the achievements of the best cotton farmers and silk workers, the wine growers and the animal farmers, builders and gardeners.

More than ten rooms are devoted to amateur artistic and theatrical circles. The kolkhoz spent several million roubles on this building.

All the work to build and ornament this palace was carried out by the kolkhozniks themselves. To tell the truth, the laying of the walls was begun by bricklayers, invited over from Leninobod. But the kolkhoz gave each of them several apprentices, and soon the kolkhoz's own bricklayers became sovereign masters of their own construction.

Experienced kolkhoz carpenters U. Faiazov and U. Rajabov taught their trade to fifty people. And the plasterers, the painters, and the electricians were trained in the same way.⁸⁰



Figure 16: The Palace of Culture on Arbob hill.

Undated photograph, presumably from late Soviet period. Source: Mirboboi Mirrahim, "Qasri Arbob va sarnavishti talkhi me'mori on," *Ozodagon*, 23 December 2013 [<http://www.ozodagon.com/14035-mmirraim-asri-arbob-va-sarnavishti-talhi-memori-on.html>]

Urunkhojaev apparently got the idea for building the palace on Arbob hill after a visit to Leningrad in which he toured the Peterhof Palace. Although several million roubles were spent on its construction, the work was carried out almost entirely by members of the kolkhoz themselves. Newspaper articles written at the time of the Palace's inauguration do not go into detail regarding the financial basis for the project, but according to post-Soviet sources, the Arbob Palace decreed by Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev was built according to that same "hashar method" which he himself decried as a tool of the exploitative bai. In other words, the Palace was built by unpaid labour.

⁸⁰ V. Baiderin, *Dvorets v kishlake*, *Izvestiia*, 24 March 1957, 2.

A 2011 journalistic account of the history of Arbob palace, based in part on conversations with the then vice-chairman of the Urunkhojaev AOOT (post-Soviet successor to the collective farm), Hakimjon Dadabaev asserts that the workers were given token amounts of wheat in exchange for their work.⁸¹

Urunkhojaev was a good strategist and tactician. He called a general meeting attended by around two thousand kolkhozniks (out of a total of four thousand). They themselves decided that day to build a single structure. The projected cost of the project amounted to 50 million rubles. But he managed to build it for 1,200,000 \$. He economized on labor, by a tried and tested means – the hashar method.⁸²

Perhaps to Urunkhojaev himself there was a clear distinction between the abuse of the hashar method perpetrated by the pre-revolutionary bois, and his use of the hashar method to build a Palace for the people on the cheap. We do not know how the kolkhozniks themselves felt about this arrangement, and it is undeniable that the kolkhoz chairman had a disposed of considerable powers to make their lives more – or less – pleasant.

Figure 17: *Sut' delo*, 1970

This is an illustration from a collection of humorous stories by Hoji Sodiq, satirizing a variety of human types in the broad tradition of Balzac's *La Comedie Humaine*



⁸¹ Bakhtiyor Valiev, Tainy dvortsa “Arbob,” *Asia-Plus*, 18 April 2011, accessed 25.04.2015. URL: <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/tainy-dvortsa-arbob>

⁸² Bakhtiyor Valiev, Tainy dvortsa “Arbob,” *Asia-Plus*, 18 April 2011, accessed 25.04.2015. URL: <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/tainy-dvortsa-arbob>

Asilzoda and socialist: life after the Komintern kolkhoz

Hoji Sodiq left the Komintern kolkhoz, which had provided him with his first real job, in 1940 at the age of 27. He lived for the remainder of his life in Leninobod, and built upon the experiences in journalism gained on the farm for the rest of his career. In 1940 he was admitted to the Party, and following the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, he promptly enlisted as a volunteer, fighting alongside other Tajiks in the Battle of Stalingrad before being wounded and sent back to Tajikistan in late 1943.

His career as an editor and journalist took off in the post-war period, as he became editor of a series of newspapers – *Bo Rohi Lenin*, *Hakikati Leninobod*, and eventually the Uzbek-language national daily *Sovet Tojikistoni*. He retained therefore in his public persona the bilingualism of his Ferghana Valley upbringing, as well as an affectionate, ironic regard for the wide spectrum of human types that populate his satirical stories and articles. He received honours throughout his life as a prolific playwright, journalist, and satirist and lived until the age of 77, dying as the Soviet Union was on the cusp of disintegration.

The Party line on Hoji Sodiq credits him with exposing, through his short stories and plays, “alien happenings” (“*chuzhdye ... iavlennia*”) in Soviet society. His family life suggests, however, that the line he drew between what was properly socialist and what merited righteous censure was far from clear cut. In his son’s characterization, Hoji Sodiq was a sincere communist who had willingly turned his back on the customary honorifics used in his family (he did not officially include the honorific Mirzo in his name, as his forebears had). In conversation, Hoji Sodiq’s son was adamant that hereditary privilege had no place in his father’s biography – while at the same time providing, through his telling of family anecdotes, significant evidence to the

contrary. Despite coming of age in a rapidly evolving social landscape in which class struggle was a prominently touted imperative, elements in his biography mark him out as a member of an elite that, though new, showed significant marks of continuity with the old. Hoji Sodiq may have, in his son's words "give[n] his whole heart to the Communists," but when he married, soon after the war, his bride was the young war-widowed daughter of another Mirzo family, that of Mirzo Rohim. Thus, this was an endogamous marriage as required by custom.

His father-in-law was considered very rich at the time, on the basis of his ownership of some forty tanaps of land. "At that time" as his son explained "he who had a horse, 2-3 cows, 5-6 sheep, 2-3 wives, who had murut working for him [was considered rich]." Mirzo Rohim had two wives, and his own second marriage in the 1920s – to the then thirteen-year old Bi-Robiia – seems to have been a somewhat contradictory attempt to adapt to the rapidly evolving social landscape, and escape the retribution that his wealth and elite status could attract. On the one hand, second marriages were illegal; but on the other Bi-Robiia, belonged to an undeniably simple Khujand family, and her brothers were Bolsheviks who had distinguished themselves in fighting against the Basmachis. The Bolshevik brothers-in-law returned the favour by shielding Mirzo Rohim from being purged, and helping him to settle in Khujand once his ancestral lands had been confiscated.

During the war, everyone was needed for the workforce, so people could keep their head down and work undisturbed. After the war was over, however, Mirzo Rahim, the father in law of Hoji Sodiq was judged to be rather a rich man, and his land, horses and wealth were confiscated, and he was imprisoned as a kulak. He was fortunate enough, or well protected enough, to be imprisoned in Khujand, where his daughter could visit him regularly, unlike the earlier waves of

purges of the 1930s, which had led to mass population transfers (if not executions), often between Central Asia and the Caucasus.

By the time my interviewee Hoji Sodiq's children were growing up in the 1960s, their mother's family was no longer "that rich," although my interviewee remembered being shown her little stash of "Nikolaevskie" ten ruble gold coins. His maternal grandfather Mirzo Rahim had lost much of his wealth when he had been imprisoned, including his prize white horse from Shahrizabz, who "danced on slender hooves whenever he saw his master." Sodiqov recalls knowing several of the hired labourers, who had worked for his mother's family as he was growing up in the 1960s:

"I asked my mother "why do you use the *ty* (like the French *tu*) form with Mast-ako, even though he is older than you?" She would say "This is our murut. Though you are younger than him, you need not address him with the respectful form." A murut does not have the right to marry into our family. I said "But he's a good guy, why should he not marry my cousin?" And she would just say "Because he's our murut. Not one of us."

Just such a position as this, might Hoji Sodiq have satirised in his short stories, and yet his marriage seems to have been a happy one.

When he was growing up, Munavvar Sodiqov was taken each year by his maternal uncles to his grandfather Mirzo Rahim's former estate, Bush-ato, in order to visit the family mazor. At that time, the property had been turned into a kolkhoz, some of whose members had formerly worked for Mirzo Rahim. Munavvar Sodiqov remembers an occasion as late as 1970 when his uncle was recognized by some elderly men there, who hastened to bring them melons and all manner of fruit, as a sign of respect for their former lord and his family. To this day, Munavvar's extended family continues the tradition of visiting "their" mazor every year, to sacrifice a sheep or cow, and the position of *shaikh* of the mazor is still held by Mirzo Rahim Shaikh's descendants. Although many decades have now passed since the land was confiscated from its

long term owners and collectivised, the family's close connection to the land and its people endures, along with vestiges of the pre-revolutionary social hierarchy.

Hoji Sodiq himself did not use honorifics, placing himself at variance from his wife, who was attached to such niceties, and was clearly – as a woman not employed outside the home – in a better position to uphold tradition. As a Communist and member of the Tajik Supreme Soviet, Hoji Sodiq was expected not to circumcise his children – and so his wife would organise these rituals while he was away on business, so he would not get into trouble.⁸³ Hoji Sodiq's wife used also to slip unobserved into the mosque as often as she could, and leave money for prayers to be said for her children. There were many small accommodations, concessions and subterfuges that could be employed by the household who wished to be both Communist and Muslim.

Do leopards change their spots?

“Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi”⁸⁴

(“If we want everything to remain as it is, everything has to change”)

This famous line from the mid-twentieth century novel *Il Gattopardo* encapsulates the attitude of “gattopardismo,” with which the aristocratic author Tomasi di Lampedusa typifies the Sicilian nobility on the eve of the social upheaval brought about by unifying Italy. In the novel, *gattopardismo* is the attitude of one who, having belonged to the old elite of a previous regime, adapts to a new political, economic, or social situation by presenting oneself as the initiator or

⁸³ In fact, it appears that rates of circumcision remained close to universal for Tajik Muslims throughout the Soviet period, regardless of party affiliation.

⁸⁴ Line spoken by the character of the young Tancredi in Tomasi de Lampedusa's novel *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard), on page 29 of the English language translation by Archibald Colquhoun, *The Leopard* (London: Fontana, 1963).

promotor of such changes, as a means of preserving one's own power and class privileges.⁸⁵ The Soviet regime was clearly a far more formidable and deadly adversary for the old elites of Central Asia than the project to unify Italy under the Savoia ever was to the aristocrats of Bourbon Sicily, but as I have argued in this chapter, there is a sense in which the entirely new form of the kolkhoz, whether embraced by the *asilzodagon* with sincerity or more Sicilian cynicism, allowed for the preservation of old cultural forms that might well otherwise have been lost.

A substantial, if not in fact determinant, role in the construction of a socialist Tajik culture for the masses was played by scions of elite Khujandi families. I have also suggested that a cotton farm could provide a good litmus test for early experiments in what such a culture might look like: if a piece of music, play or humorous story goes down well with the collective farm workers, its working class credentials are assured. The process of Cultural Revolution, though wide-ranging and destructive on many levels (in terms both of cultural heritage and human lives), did not entail the complete transformation or eradication of what had come before. There were, in fact, some surprising survivors, including *shashmaqam*.

In his recent book, Ali Igmen describes the awareness and sense of regret felt by some Kyrgyz intellectuals of the role they had themselves willingly played in the destruction of traditional Kyrgyz culture.⁸⁶ I have not yet encountered a similar feeling articulated among Tajiks intellectuals, and there may be several reasons for this (including denial). The urban, settled, literary culture of the Tajiks and Uzbeks was considered by Soviet orthodoxy more advanced, and thus more worthy of being reworked and retained, than the no less ancient or

⁸⁵ "Gattopardismo," in *Treccani: vocabolario* (2015).

⁸⁶ Ali Igmen, *Speaking Soviet with an accent: Culture and Power in Kyrgyzstan*, University of Pittsburgh Press (2012), 37.

beautiful nomadic, oral culture of the Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. The losses incurred by Tajik culture were severe, but the opportunities to reinterpret and adapt the cultural legacy of a courtly, aristocratic past were also greater than those enjoyed by some other national groups.

The importation of class warfare to the Ferghana Valley was a mixed success, and something was lost – or gained – in translation. There is a stark contrast between the characterisations of class warfare in the region intended for public consumption and those labelled top secret, the latter generally far more doubtful, even neurotic, about the prospects for class consciousness among locals. I have argued that identifying the principal class enemy, the bai, as the main obstacle to the Union's chief economic and strategic goal in the region – growing more cotton – led to some unexpected results.

I have argued that the relative success of collectivised cotton cultivation in the Ferghana Valley led to some unusually favoured Potemkin villages, in the sense employed by Sheila Fitzpatrick: these were the kolkhozes that existed and were publicly celebrated to show what all collective farms could be, once socialism really arrived. These cotton kolkhozes, for decades effectively above reproach (at least until the cotton scandals of the 60s and 80s), seem to have enjoyed significant latitude in adapting the model of the collective farm to local tastes and traditions. Chairmen like Pulod Bobokalonov and Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev ruled over their collective farms like satraps, dispensing bicycles and gramophones, in lieu of silk robes and turbans, to those they favoured among their workers/subjects.

Chapter Four. Purging the Elite: Politics and Lineage (1933-38)

ACT ONE: *Ittihad-i Sharq*, 1933-1935

PLACE: Apartment of Abdurahim Hojiboev,¹ Chairman of the Tajik Council of Ministers (SovNarKom), in Stalinabad, Tajik SSR

TIME: unknown date in July 1932, sometime after midnight

“Hojiboev turned to me and said:

‘You said that you believe in God and in his Holy Qur’an’

I assented. He showed me a Mauser [pistol]: ‘Do you know what this is?’

‘A Mauser,’ I replied.

‘And what is it for?’

‘Killing people’

‘That’s it, and if you reveal our secrets to anyone, at that very moment this Mauser will wipe you off the face of the earth.’ He then handed the Mauser over to Hojiarov [of the People’s Commissariat of Justice, NarKomIust], and picked up a Qur’an, saying ‘This is a committee meeting of the Tajik nationalist organisation *Ittihadi Sharq* (“Union of the East”). In the presence of these gentlemen, repeat this oath after me: 1) I will work for the organisation unto my last drop of blood. (I repeated this). 2) If, contrary to the organisation’s wishes, I reveal to anyone its secrets and wishes [...], I can expect death that very day (I repeated this). 3) Ballakhi, Ballakhi, Talakhi (the most powerful Islamic oath) I will keep my promise, and be a dedicated and loyal member of the organisation. [...] (He swears, and is welcomed into the organisation by Hojiboev and his associates).

– *Minutes of the interrogation of Ashur Muhamedov, conducted June 25, 1933 by Dimentman, OGPU plenipotentiary in Central Asia*

The secret police investigation into the Tajik nationalist *Ittihad-i-Sharq* organisation took place over several months in 1933, prompted almost 700 arrests, generated hundreds of pages of

¹ Russian language sources render his family name as Khodzhibaev. In this paper, for the sake of consistency, I have transliterated from the Tajik version of names, even when quoting from Russian-language sources (which are themselves rarely consistent in their rendering of Central Asian names).

interrogation transcripts, and appears in all respects to have been most thorough. And yet, in spite of its faithful mimicry of the standard OGPU formula for a bourgeois nationalist conspiracy, similar to many others that would be uncovered and liquidated across the Soviet Union, the Tajik one failed to secure a single conviction. The two alleged ringleaders – Abdurahim Hojiboev, chair of Tajik SovNarKom (Council of People's Commissars), and Nusratullo Makhsum, chair of the Tajik Central executive committee (TsIK) – were roundly criticised and removed from their positions, but then, rather than being summarily executed or even imprisoned, they were both sent off to Moscow, to continue their studies in rather prestigious institutions.

Both this chapter and the next focus on the purges of the 1930s. In chapter four I consider the ways in which the Communist Party used lineage as a weapon both against the same cohort of young Tajiks & Uzbeks whom it had trained and promoted over the course of the previous decade, and also as a tool of terror against the non-Communist population at large. In chapter five, I deal with the attacks levied at the world of Tajik literature and culture over the same time period.

In this chapter, I use this methodical, yet abortive, investigation into an entirely fictional nationalist organisation as a prism through which to throw light on the trauma and violence inflicted on the *asilzodagon* during the Stalinist Terror of the 1930s. The evidence that Hojiboev and Makhsum were harming the Soviet Union was no better (or worse) than that used to justify thousands of other arrests in the Tajik SSR in the course of the half decade that followed. The fact that the investigation of 1933 did not secure the convictions of Makhsum and Hojiboev – despite the mountain of evidence – suggests, I argue, the extent to which the central authorities, European Communists, were still somewhat unsure as to how to proceed in Tajikistan. Had the

Central Committee accepted the picture presented by the Central Asian branch of the OGPU, it would have meant that the most highly placed Tajik Communists were enemies, thus calling into question all that the Party had built thus far in the southernmost corner of the Empire.

The investigation into an organisation that did not exist summoned once again the powerful spectre of *gruppirovshchina*, portraying the Tajik leadership as an inveterately factional, tight-knit group with their own agenda and plans for how to run their country. In some sense, alas, the investigation overestimated them, but to some extent I take the investigation's failure to secure convictions as an acknowledgement of the power and pervasiveness of patronal politics in the Tajik SSR. It was not long, of course, before the Central leadership under Stalin did in fact move more resolutely to smash the remaining old elites, by thoroughly purging state and Party institutions one by one, but also targeting old elites who had hitherto maintained only minimal contact with the state.

Although the OGPU somehow failed in 1933 to concoct a plausible bourgeois-nationalist plotline for the Tajik SSR, in the process a flickering, uncertain light was thrown on a cohort of people engaged in a patronal system of politics that did find some echo in reality. The networks cut across Party lines, which is why this chapter considers both purges of the Tajik Communists, and of the old elite non-Communists. Although members of the Ulama would seem to fall into a very different category to Communist Party leaders, in fact, the way that the purges in Tajikistan were most often construed and presented was as a comprehensive attack on old privilege, a battle against the old way of life (*starogo byta*), feudal relics – and thus, often, the purged Communist was blamed for similar failings to those exhibited by those who persisted in upholding the tenets of Islam. This was the final and most deadly stage of the attacks on inherited privilege that had begun with the Revolution, and in Tajikistan the first time that Communists had been targeted.

The necessary context for the case that the secret police constructed against Abdurahim Hojiboev includes the key role that he played in negotiating the territorial delimitation of Turkestan, and advocating for full republic status for Tajikistan; for Makhsum, his responsibility for overseeing the traumatic internal population transfers was determinant.



Figure 18: Relief Map of Tajikistan

This contemporary relief map of Tajikistan clearly shows how physically isolated the northern city of Khujand/Leninobod was, and to some extent remains today, from the rest of the country. The Ferghana Valley runs East-West, and thus facilitates movement between Khujand and towns such as Kokand, Ferghana, Margilan, Namangan, Andijon and Osh to the east; Jizzakh and Samarkand to the west, and Tashkent to the north. All of these are more easily accessible than Stalinobod/Dushanbe.

When Tajikistan finally did acquire full republic status within the Soviet Union in 1929, Khujand was the only major urban centre included within the borders of the new nation.² The

² On the formation of the Tajik SSR, see Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*,

two main centres of Persian culture in Central Asia, Samarkand and Bukhara, remained in the Uzbek SSR. When Dushanbe, a small and sleepy market town with no pretensions to political or cultural significance, was renamed Stalinobod and became capital of the Tajik SSR, Khujand was, in a way, doubly marginalised. In another sense, Khujand went from being one among several Ferghana Valley towns subordinated to Tashkent, to being the major economic and cultural centre of the republic. It was not inevitable, however, that Khujand would supply the bulk of the Tajik political and cultural elite for much of the Soviet period: as we will see in the next chapter, there were also literate and ambitious young men from old elite families in Bukhara and Samarkand who moved to the Tajik SSR to play their part to build a new nation. The contribution of the old elite of urban Central Asia to the revolutionary project received its most serious challenge yet in the years between 1933 and 1938.

Abdurahim Hojiboev, the highest ranking Northerner (Northern Tajik) in the Tajik nomenklatura of the 1930s, was born in Khujand in 1900, to a khoja family that was educated and highly respected, if not conspicuously wealthy. His father, who owned an orchard whose small size Abdurahim was later to make much of, was addressed as “Mullo Hojiboi” in deference to his level of knowledge of the Qur’an,³ which he took care to pass on to each of his children. He was prosperous enough to embark on the Hajj at the turn of the twentieth century, a journey that was certainly beyond the means of most of his fellow townsmen. In the course of this pilgrimage, his gifts as a storyteller were much remarked upon, such that he earned himself the soubriquet of “maddoh” (holy storyteller).⁴

³ See “*Sarsupurdai millat*,” Interview with Prof. Baroat Hojiboeva, daughter of Abdurahim Hojiboev, conducted by Fotehi Abdulloh and published in Baroat Hojiboeva, Matlubai Mirzoiunus and Subhoni A’zamzod, *Abdurahim Hojiboev: Osor va Paikor*, Maqomoti Ijroiiai Hoqimiiati Davlatii Viloati Sughd, Khujand, 2010, p.543 and ff.

⁴ Baroat Khodzhibaeva (Hojiboeva), *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 11.

Mullo Hojiboi taught his sons Abdurahim, Salimboi and Abdumanon, as well as his two daughters, Monand-bonu and Maghrifatbonu, to read and write in Persian,⁵ and to read the Arabic of the Qur'an. In a striking example of the range of paths trodden by members of the Tajik old elite facing the upheaval of the Bolshevik revolution, the two daughters went on to become highly respected "*bibiotun*," or female religious teachers and guides, while their youngest brother joined a kolkhoz, and their eldest brother climbed the ranks of the Communist Party. Abdurahim Hojiboev would retain the habit of writing Persian fluently – in the Arabic script – throughout his life, a clear indication that his was not the semi-literacy attained by many attendees of the local maktab, or traditional Muslim schools, whose main function was to teach children to read (but not understand) the verses of the Qur'an in Arabic.⁶ As his daughter is at great pains to point out in her memoir, Abdurahim Hojiboev was a "cultured" man, who was known – even by the farmers in the outlying districts of Khujand – for sprinkling his speeches with poetry, and knew a vast amount of classical Persian poetry by heart.⁷ For the Soviet Tajik intelligentsia, familiarity with the poetic canon was the principal marker of belonging to the cultural elite.⁸

⁵ The national language of Tajikistan, now called Tajik, was at the turn of the twentieth century in all respects essentially the same language as the Farsi of Iran and the Dari of Afghanistan, as similar perhaps as British and American English.

⁶ Interview with Prof. Baroat Khojibaeva, daughter of Abdurahim Hojiboev, conducted in Khujand, 1 July 2011. See also <http://www.fergananews.com/article.php?id=6659>

⁷ Khodzhibaeva, Baroat. *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 136-38.

⁸ His early mastery of the sophisticated game of verse-capping was what brought the young Sadriddin Aini to the attention of his future patron Sadr-i Ziyoy, as we will see in the next chapter.

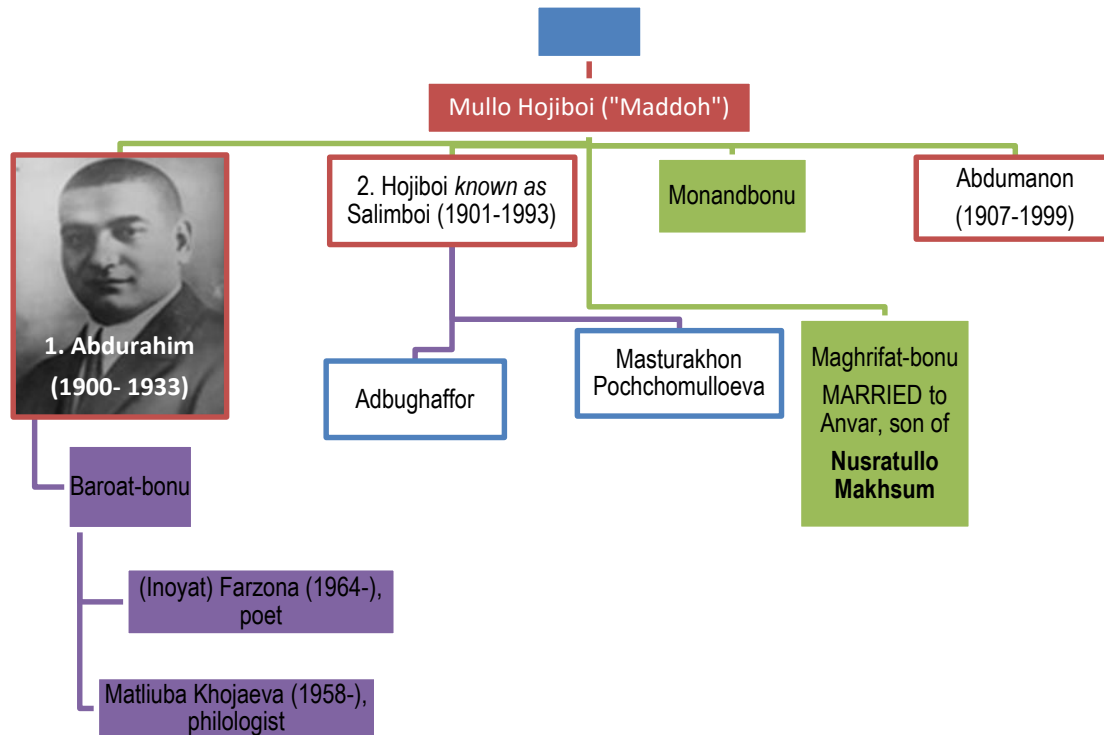


Figure 19: Partial family tree of Abdurahim Hojiboev.

Note that Nusratullo Makhsum married his son to Abdurahim's sister Maghrifat-bonu.

At his own request, and following consultation with his *avlod*, Abdurahim was later permitted to attend the Russian-native school of Khujand, placing him in the far smaller circle of locals who would become fluent and literate in the language of the colonial power. Abdurahim Hojiboev graduated from the Russian-native school of Khujand in 1916, and continued his education in revolution-swept Tashkent, where he qualified as an agronomist after a short course of study. He threw in his lot with the Bolsheviks from the start, and was sent in April 1918 to set up city and district soviets in the Trans-Caspian region. He returned to his native Khujand the

following year, however, joined the Party in 1920, and worked for the land department in Khujand province, and later served on several commissions overseeing land reform across the Ferghana Valley.⁹

In 1924 he became intimately involved with what would be both his lasting legacy and his downfall: the struggle over national territorial delimitation in Central Asia.¹⁰ Hojiboev was nominated to head the Tajik sub-branch of the commission convened by SredAzBiuro to establish borders between national territories. The issue was and remains a fraught one, and on this topic much revisionist Tajik historians' ink has been spilled.¹¹

Briefly, in Lenin's original vision, the territories of Tsarist Turkestan and the former Emirates of Khorezm and Bukhara were to be divided between three Turkic peoples: Uzbeks, Turkmen and Kazakhs – and Tajiks came close to not having a nation of their own at all. The Uzbek SSR included within its territory the main Persian-speaking population centres (the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, both of which also housed Turkic speakers), and a Tajik territory was formed as something of an afterthought. The rationale for assigning a territory to the Tajiks, some 40% of which were estimated to have fled out of Soviet territory to Afghanistan during the years of the Basmachi revolt, was partly to accommodate the ethno-culturally distinct inhabitants of the Pamir mountain range. Pamiris belong to a different branch of Islam (Ismaili) and speak a different

⁹ Baroat Khadzhibaeva [Hojiboeva], *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 27 and ff.

¹⁰ There are several useful English-language accounts of nation formation in Central Asia, including Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Cornell University Press, 2005 (see chapter 4 in particular), and Arne Haugen, *Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia*, Basingstoke, UK, 2003.

¹¹ Rahim Masov heads a group of nationalist Tajik historians who consider the national delimitation process to have been a near fatal disaster for Tajikistan, and place much of the blame on Uzbek Communists, and on (supposedly) ethnic Tajik Communists who failed to fight for, or fought against, the idea of a strong nation uniting all Tajiks. He has written several books expounding his views on the subject, such as *Istoriia topornogo razdeleniia*, which has been translated into English by Iraj Bashiri as *The History of a National Catastrophe* (available at <http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Masov/MasovHistoryNationalCatastrophe.pdf>). An interesting selection of archival documents is provided in the appendix.

(East Iranian) language to other Tajiks, and were thus considered deserving of a national territory of their own.

In representing Tajik interests at the national-territorial delimitation commission convened in 1924, Hojiboev argued most strenuously for assigning to Tajikistan any piece of land for which a reasonable argument could be made, on the basis of the inhabitants' language or ascribed ethnic group. Given the prevalence of bilingualism and the often arbitrary assignation of ethnic labels, neither of these criteria proved a satisfactory method of separating Tajik from Uzbek territory, so that eventually, in many cases, practical considerations (access to water, local markets, road networks and mountain ranges) prevailed.

A maximalist approach to a putative Tajik state – including Konibodom, Surkhon Darya, perhaps eventually Samarkand¹² and Bukhara – was not the only, or perhaps even the majoritarian, position adopted by the sovietised Persian-speaking elite of Central Asia. Many conceived of the Uzbek SSR as the main and favoured heir of Turkestan, and were quite content to throw in their lot with the Turkic-language speakers, with whom they had coexisted for centuries – rather than be yoked to the remote and alien Pamiri peoples. Abdullo Rahimboev (1896-38), who was also a native of Khujand, where he had attended the same Russian-Native school as Hojiboev, took the latter view, and in fact, as the chairman of the *Uzbek* sub-commission for SredAzBiuro, turned out to be one of Hojiboev's main adversaries.

The result of the 1924 commission was the creation of a Tajik ASSR subordinated to the Uzbek SSR, whose territory included no urban centres of any importance. In spite of Hojiboev's efforts, even his native Khujand had been assigned to the Uzbek republic, albeit as a Tajik "national

¹² Inconveniently, at that time, the capital of the Uzbek SSR.

okrug,” on the grounds that it was so hard to access from the newly constituted Tajik “heartland” (from which Khujand is separated by high mountain ranges). Having no cities of its own, it was officially recognized, including by Hojiboev, that the Tajik ASSR would initially have to rely on Samarkand as a cultural centre, where Tajiks would be able to receive a complete education. Before long however, the Uzbek SSR became the target of criticism from Persian speakers distressed by the inadequate provision of schooling, publications and other resources in their native language.¹³

The results of the 1926 census, which found drastically lower numbers of ethnic Tajiks than Uzbeks in Samarkand and Bukhara (unlike earlier Russian census results), added fuel to the fire. “Did all the Tajiks die?” queried Abdurahim Hojiboev satirically “If so, it must have been as a result of un-Soviet policies.”¹⁴ The controversy simmered on until 1929, when Hojiboev laid out the arguments for full Tajik statehood both in a brief monograph “Tajikistan: a short political and economic study,” written in Russian and published in Moscow. He was also apparently able to secure a meeting with Stalin himself, which took place on June 1, 1929. Stalin also invited a representative of the Uzbek SSR to the meeting, and after hearing the arguments on both sides, was apparently persuaded in the course of an hour and half that Tajikistan deserved full republic status.¹⁵

Bordering with a non-Soviet territory (Afghanistan), and containing a nominally autonomous region within its territory (the Pamir region became the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast), Tajikistan fulfilled all formal requirements for full republic status, and things

¹³ Paul Bergne, *The birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*, I.B.Tauris 2007, 53.

¹⁴ GARF f.3316, op. 22, d.129, ll.18,34, quoted in Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Cornell University Press, 2005.

¹⁵ Bergne, *The birth of Tajikistan*, 113.

moved quickly once Stalin's approval had been secured. In late 1929, the Uzbek SSR was obliged to cede Khujand and its surrounding territory (including the towns of Konibodom, Isfara and Uroteppa¹⁶) to the Tajik SSR, which in turn was expected to relinquish any claim to Samarkand and Bukhara. The separation between the two neighbours was complete at last.

By the time Tajikistan was awarded full republic status in 1929, the central leadership still favoured Hojiboev's contribution enough to make him Chairman of Tajik Council of Ministers (SovNarKom), but his dogged championing of the cause of Tajik nationhood had undoubtedly earned him several powerful local enemies. His record also made him highly vulnerable to charges of Tajik bourgeois-nationalism, a "bad" form of nationalism at times perilously hard to distinguish from the good kind of nationalism presumably expected of supporters of the newly established Tajik SSR. Essentially, from a Soviet point of view, a bourgeois nationalist perceives affinities and common interests binding Tajiks – in opposition to Uzbeks or Russians – which trump commonalities based on class origin or party membership (such that "Tajik" becomes a more important marker of identity than "Communist").

At the end of 1933, a large body of evidence against Hojiboev had been collected, and submitted to Kaganovich in Moscow by the Tajik branch of the OGPU. This dossier documents the existence of a "bourgeois nationalist counter-revolutionary secret organization," *Ittihad-i Sharq* (Union of the East), headed by Abdurahim Hojiboev and Nusratullo Makhsum. The alleged goal of *Ittihad-i Sharq* was to overthrow the soviet government in Tajikistan and establish a "democratic, bourgeois Muslim state modelled on Turkey," which would include the territories of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and northern India.

¹⁶ Uroteppa, now Istaravshan, is referred to as Ura-Tiube in Russian-language sources

The evidence against Hojiboev is presented in a series of over two dozen transcripts of interrogations conducted by the secret police in Stalinabad with self-confessed members of *Ittihad-i-Sharq*, as well as letters of denunciation sent by various highly placed members of the Tajik Communist Party and government. The accounts in the transcripts – of which the incipit to this chapter is a typical example – are vivid and colourful, describing sudden summons to Hojiboev’s apartment in the middle of the night, where potential members were groomed, cajoled and browbeaten (plied with spirits, threatened with Mausers), until they swore “by Allah” loyalty to the aims of *Ittihad-i Sharq*, right hand on a pocket-sized copy of the Qur’an.¹⁷ Other notable revelations made in the interrogations include the allegation that the organisation’s ringleaders maintained links with the British Embassy in Kabul (perhaps to negotiate the handover of British India?) and the former Emir of Bukhara, and were responsible for having brought Tajikistan’s transportation system, then consisting of several thousand camels, to its knees.

The interrogation transcripts, all dated to the summer of 1933, describe the organisation’s leadership and recruitment process in great detail, as well as specific actions undertaken with the goal of subverting the Soviet state. It need hardly be argued here that the existence of such an organization as *Ittihad-i Sharq* is a complete fabrication, concocted in response to an order from Moscow. In other union republics and autonomous territories in the USSR, discoveries of remarkably similar secret bourgeois-nationalist counter-revolutionary organizations were being made at around the same time, by other secret police officers following the same script.¹⁸

¹⁷ F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.82. There is also a version of this oath for self-confessed atheists like Hojiarov, who swear instead on the Mauser itself F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.156.

¹⁸ See for example Ksenofont Sanukov, “Stalinist Terror in the Mari Republic: The Attack on ‘Finno-Ugrian Bourgeois Nationalism,’” *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (Oct., 1996), pp. 658-682. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4212237>.

Although *Ittihad-i-Sharq* never existed, the investigation into its alleged activities, and the wave of accusations and counter-accusations that this triggered, can nevertheless reveal quite a bit about the functioning and internal dynamics of the local Tajikistani¹⁹ elite, and the fissures between it and the non-local Communist party leaders. Even a violent manhunt rolled out from Moscow over the vast expanses of the Soviet Union is capable of yielding very plausible insights into the situation on the ground in the sparsely researched Tajik SSR. Analysis of the evidence produced for the spurious charges of counter-revolutionary, anti-Soviet policies pursued by Hojiboev and others throws light on what the policy priorities were for this small peripheral republic at that time.²⁰

A conspiracy of the old elite?

The investigation paints a picture of an old boys' club on a grand scale, a thick web of mutually beneficent relationships stretching from Khujand in the north to the Afghan border in the south (and beyond), weaving together party members and class enemies – often in the same person. The prosecution alleges that after over a decade of Soviet rule, personal and kinship ties remained of paramount importance to the pre-revolutionary social and cultural elite of Central Asia, trumping interests of State and Party.

The wealthy landowners and merchants, Islamic leaders and state functionaries – or, in many cases – their teenage sons – were, as we have seen, often those most able to adapt to the new conditions of Soviet rule, and even climb the ranks of the Communist Party leadership. They were well-educated, polyglot, and previous exposure to the Muslim reform movement known as

¹⁹ By using the term Tajikistan rather than Tajik, I indicate that I make no claims about the ethno-cultural identity of the individuals in question, but only that they were native to the territories of the Tajik SSR.

²⁰ To the best of my knowledge no historical account of the great purges conducted in Tajikistan has been published in Tajik, Russian, or English – and so part of the task here is to establish a basic narrative.

Jadidism, led many of them to embrace the socially progressive message of Bolshevism, and to see nationalism as an element of the desired progress.²¹ The composition of the Khujand party organisation in July 1929, in which locals comprised 82,8%, counted 524 (36%) workers, 427 (19.6%) peasants, and 493 (34%) “employees and others.”²² Considering the evident advantages of claiming worker or peasant background, and the relative ease of doing so, it is surprising that the proportion of “employees” is as high as one third.

As listed in an executive summary to the investigation by Prokof'ev, vice chairman of the all-Union OGPU, the leadership of *Ittihad-i-Sharq* supposedly numbered seven people, of which the first five are explicitly described as having old elite, “class enemy” backgrounds. Hojiboev is “from the family of a Khujand merchant,” Mukhitdinov (or: Mirza Abdy Kadyr Muhiddinov) the “son of a Bukharan millionaire, of English orientation,” Nusratullo Makhsum, the son of a “cleric” who engaged in trade, Said Hojiarov, son of a bai and courtier of the Emir, and Abdu Jabarov, former translator for the Jizzakh district commander (Tsarist era).

Needless to say, these are not the terms in which these five long-term Communist Party members tended to present themselves – in soviet circles, at least. Nusratullo Makhsum's official biography, for example, presents him as the son of a peasant so poor he had not enough land with which to feed his family, and so sent his son at a young age to work for the (nascent) cotton industry in Kokand, where Nusratullo acquired a political consciousness, eventually being forced out some ten years later, in 1906, for taking part in strikes. Nusratullo Makhsum rarely used his Russianised last name, Lutfullaev, preferring to be known as Makhsum, which is an honorific title reserved for

²¹ On the relationship between Jadidism and the first generation of Muslim Communists, most of whom met their deaths between 1933 and 1938, see “1917: The Moment of Truth” (chapter 8) and “Epilogue” in Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (University of California Press, 1998).

²² RGASPI, F.62, op.2, d.1834, l.23

the sons of Islamic judges. As the son of a mullo, it seems at least as likely that was originally sent to Kokand to study in a madrasa, of which several had been endowed by Khudoyar Khan, and some were considered relatively progressive. Makhsum, though born in the rural and, to this day, socially conservative Garm region in the south, thus spent a formative decade of his youth in the rapidly changing, densely populated and ethnically diverse Ferghana Valley – which probably gave him more in common with Abdurahim Hojiboev than he might otherwise have had.

Hojiarov was, like Hojiboev, a Khujandi, who – the prosecution alleges – fled to Afghanistan with his wealthy family in 1920 – a common course for the old elite who saw little to gain in the new system that was taking shape. He returned, however, the following year, and studied at the Central Asian Communist University in Tashkent (SAKU), graduating in 1924. According to his interrogation transcript, Hojiarov required a long “ideological working over” before being ready to join the ranks of the anti-Soviet conspirators, which Hojiboev initiated as soon as Hojiarov travelled south from their native Khujand to take up his post at the Ministry of Justice. Hojiboev supposedly took advantage of the coolness between Hojiarov and Bludau (vice-chairman of Tajik SovNarKom) to cause a rift between the former and the Central Committee, and lure him into his own circle.

The interrogation transcripts yield details of many other members of the Tajik pre-revolutionary elite who had been unmasked as anti-Soviet conspirators, such as Bobojonov, Hojiboev’s former personal secretary, who in another life had allegedly been a functionary of the Emir of Bukhara charged with tax collection (*amlakdor*).²³ He threw his lot in with the jadids of

²³ On the role of the *amlakdor* and how their status was altered by Russian colonial rule, see Alexander Morrison, “Amlākdārs, Khwājas and Mulk land in the Zarafshan Valley after the Russian Conquest” chapter one in Paolo Sartori (editor), *Explorations in the Social History of Modern Central Asia (19th- Early 20th Century)* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 23-64.

Bukhara before the revolution, and subsequently considered himself “an old revolutionary.” In conversation, Bobojonov would dwell on the role he played in the revolution in Bukhara, and on the struggle of the Jadids to free the people from the yoke of the Emir, and establish an independent nation state – “but things turned out differently, and Soviet power is clearly far worse for the people.”²⁴ Again according to Bobojonov, the Bukharan jadids had chosen none other than Muhiddinov to head their new nation.²⁵

Abduqodir Muhiddinov was the son of prominent Young Bukharan and millionaire Mirza Muhiddin Manşurov, who had founded Central Asia’s first Persian-language newspaper (“Bukhara the Noble”) in which the reformist writings of Aini and Fitrat had been published.²⁶ He himself had also been a leading jadid and revolutionary in Bukhara, and he had later played an important role in the National Territorial Delimitation process.²⁷

The voluble Gul’ Makhsum, interrogated on no less than five separate occasions, is described as “an extremely well known personality in Tajikistan,” from the family of an Islamic notable, who was also in the pay of the Emir of Bukhara before the revolution, occupying the post of *mirakhura* (stablemaster). Together with the Emir, he is said to have escaped to Afghanistan, where he spent about a year before returning to Bukhara. There he used his influence and connections to secure a series of leadership positions in the new regime, rising up to chairmanship of the Kuliab RevKom (revolutionary committee). Gul’ Makhsum knew Hojiboev well: the latter

²⁴ RGASPI... d.103, l.105-106

²⁵ RGASPI... d.103, l.107

²⁶ Michael Zand, “BOKĀRĀ-YE ŠARĪF,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/3, 327-329; available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bokara-ye-sarif--first-central-asian-newspaper-published-in-persian> (accessed online 25 September 2014).

²⁷ Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 19.

always stayed with him when he visited Kuliab, and had allegedly helped him secure his most recent position as director of the sheep farming state farm in Kuliab.²⁸

Chronology of the Investigation

The first deposition – that of Ashur Muhamedov, collected on June 25, 1933 – establishes the basic narrative, mirrored in its essential features in several of the interrogations conducted later that summer.²⁹ This was followed by other arrests and interrogations which, although kept under tight wraps, evidently soon began to make others in the Tajik leadership extremely uneasy.

On July 13 Muhiddinov, former head of the People's Commissariat of Supplies (NarKomSnab), who had indeed been implicated as a leader of the organisation in the early interrogations, wrote a shrill, self-exculpatory letter to Bauman, first secretary of the Central Asia Office (*SredAzBiuro*). In these, he is clearly trying to predict the direction being taken by the secret investigation, and levies a number of accusations that he evidently hopes will establish him as being above suspicion, and on the OPGU's side. He correctly identifies bourgeois-nationalism and agricultural development as sources of concern, but understandably makes no reference to an underground anti-Soviet organisation of which he is supposedly a lead member. In his first letter, he gestures vaguely to Makhsum's shortcomings ("I can confirm that what we see in him today is his genuine character, rather than the accidental product of this or that error of judgement"),³⁰ but does not mention Hojiboev, with whom he is alleged to have had close ties. By the next day, however, he seems to have received fresh intelligence, and hastily drafts a second letter, in which he denounces the "anti-party and anti-Soviet activities of Makhsum and Hojiboev."³¹ Among many

²⁸ RGASPI...d.103, l.88

²⁹ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.79

³⁰ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.114

³¹ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.116

other charges, Muhiddinov accuses them of hating and fearing the OGPU, which they try to discredit and undermine wherever possible.³²

Several of the interrogations transcripts suggest that in fact, Muhiddinov was known to be on bad terms with Hojiboev: Hojiarov claims to have expressed surprise on learning that the two belong to the same organisation: “how can you two be in the same organisation, when he is your rival and opponent?”³³

Muhiddinov was himself arrested shortly after sending these letters, as we learn in a letter from Bauman in Tashkent, addressed to Stalin and Kaganovich, dated 27 September 1933.³⁴ Bauman reports that, on the heels of the evidence provided by Muhammedov³⁵ of a counter-revolutionary nationalist organisation *Ittihad-i-Sharq*, a large number of arrests have been made (270 to date, including 17 employees of republic-level institutions) and a large quantity of new evidence uncovered by the OGPU, which largely backs up and confirms that provided earlier. The OGPU was evidently playing close attention to ensuring internal consistency.

The leading role played by Muhiddinov has been established to Bauman’s satisfaction, although the former, though under arrest at this point, quite understandably persisted in denying his involvement with the fictional organisation. Bauman also accepts the evidence of Muhiddinov’s illegal contacts across the border, and of a considerable fortune held in Afghanistan, and presents a list of specific counter-revolutionary tasks undertaken on orders from Hojiboev, Makhsum, Muhiddinov and others.³⁶

³² RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.117

³³ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.155

³⁴ Muhiddinov was eventually shot: probably in 1937, though perhaps as early as 1934. See Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 70.

³⁵ In this instance spelled Magomedov

³⁶ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.49. The letter is signed by Maiorov as well as Bauman.

By this point, in late September, Bauman warns the party leadership that

The facts about the arrests have filtered through to the party organisations and give rise to a great many conversations. Undoubtedly Makhsum and Hojiboev have understood the meaning of what has been going on. In the last meetings of party activists in Stalinabad there were already several speeches criticising the disorder in the districts addressed to the Tajik party leadership.

Bauman ends by urging that Hojiboev and Makhsum be removed from their posts without delay, and assures Stalin and Kaganovich that the situation will be taken in hand, and that he will leave for Tajikistan shortly in person, and remain there for two to three weeks.³⁷

The strange fruits of the investigation into the anti-Soviet *Ittihad-i-Sharq* organization are comprehensively set out in a report signed by Prokof'ev, vice chairman of the all-Union OGPU, and sent to Kaganovich a month later, on October 28. He begins by assuring Kaganovich that the counter-revolutionary organisation had been comprehensively unmasked and liquidated, resulting in 693 arrests. He provides a breakdown of the occupational profile of those arrested, as laid out in the table below. Over half of those arrested were *bois*, allegedly wealthy old elite types with no position of influence in the soviet state. Given the argument made in the previous chapter positing a causal relationship between reported successes in cotton cultivation and a decline in episodes of boi unmasking, it is worth clarifying that these arrests were predominantly – and quite possibly exclusively – made in the south of the country. The focus was on the new cotton-growing areas opened up in recent years in the southern plains bordering Afghanistan, at the cost of a massive use of forced internal migration, primarily from high mountain districts.³⁸

³⁷ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.51

³⁸ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103. Botakoz Kassymbekova, "Humans as territory: forced resettlement and the making of Soviet Tajikistan," 1920-1938 in *Central Asian Survey* (30:3-4), 349-370

Table 3 – Arrests made during the Ittihad-i Sharq investigation

	POSITION HELD	
1	Republic-level institutions (party and government)	14
2	District-level party secretaries	8
3	Executive committee chairmen (district level local government)	15
4	Vice-chairmen of district-level executive committees	12
5	(other) leadership positions in district-level institutions	141
6	Village soviet workers and kolkhoz leadership positions	145
7	Bais and former functionaries of the emir active in village level organisations	358
	Total number of arrests	693

Source: RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103.

Prokof'ev concluded that *Ittihad-i-Sharq* had a network of members at every level of the party and state bureaucracy, having infiltrated local government down to the kolkhoz level, all across the South of Tajikistan. It also, allegedly, enjoyed the support of foreign powers, and the first phase of the uprising had been timed to coincide with an anticipated foreign intervention.

As might be expected from the leadership of a top secret plot to overthrow the state, Hojiboev is said to question those whom he would have join the organization closely with regard to the friendships they keep, whom they go drinking with, and, crucially, whether they have friends in the OGPU. He instructs his followers to place their trust in some people, but avoid others; Russians and other non-locals are curiously absent from both categories.

The organisation attracts to its side party members, intelligent and thoughtful people, those in positions of authority, who join after at least a year of observation.³⁹ It is allegedly typical of their modus operandi that Hojiboev and Makhsum shield their associates from being fired, arrested or prosecuted, such as Mulla Kasym Tairov, a qozi (Islamic judge) and basmachi who managed to hang on to his post as chief investigator in a southern district thanks to their intervention.⁴⁰ In one particularly flagrant case, *Ittihad-i-Sharq* is credited with having arranged for 400 prisoners, “many of them kulaks,” to be freed from prison in Northern Tajikistan.⁴¹ Despite the fictional nature of *Ittihad-i-Sharq* organisation, it seems plausible that some such mass jail break nonetheless did take place, and that a powerful albeit fictitious organisation was used to explain an actual episode that had revealed significant shortcomings to Soviet state power.

Tajik supremacy?

The evidence presented to mount a case for Hojiboev’s purported bourgeois-nationalist policies, or “nationalist deviation,” in the language of the Seventeenth Party Congress held in January 1934, was the least convincing and internally consistent component of the allegations concerning him. It was Hojiarov, in one of several interrogations, who claimed that Hojiboev had thought of himself as a nationalist since the beginning of his political career. Hojiboev allegedly believed that Tajikistan has “colossal natural resources” and the capacity to be fully independent. His alleged plan was to first detach various districts from Uzbekistan, such as Surkhan Darya, Samarkand and Bukhara, ⁴² then detach Tajikistan from the Soviet Union, and ultimately to form

³⁹ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.84

⁴⁰ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 104, l.21

⁴¹ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 104, l.15

⁴² It is clear from more reliable sources that Hojiboev did indeed make a case for including Surkhon Darya within Tajik SSR.

a “Greater Tajikistan” uniting Afghanistan, Persia and the Muslim parts of India.⁴³ The fact that Hojiarov, who identified as an ethnic Uzbek, was purportedly recruited into a Tajik nationalist organisation, is only one of the more obvious logical problems with this conspiracy theory, in which the secret police’s determination to go after class enemies got in the way of establishing a clear pattern of bourgeois nationalist behaviour.

It is, on the other, all too plausible that Hojiboev’s impassioned exertions on the Tajik side in the course of the process of territorial delimitation should have made him an easy target for charges of “bourgeois-nationalism.” Ashur Muhamedov, the informant whose testimony launched the subsequent chain of arrests and interrogations, gives a sense of the stakes involved in assigning national status to territories in the densely populated and diverse Ferghana Valley. He claimed during interrogation to have been expelled from the party in 1925 for his role in the struggle between Uzbeks and Tajiks for control over Konibodom district – a bureaucratic rather than an armed struggle, in this case.⁴⁴

Involvement of the intelligentsia is a typical feature of bourgeois-nationalist conspiracies uncovered by the OGPU – in the Mari Republic, as in the Ukraine, as in the Kazakh SSR.⁴⁵ Of course, the Persian-speaking intelligentsia who had elected to identify as Tajik in national terms had indeed played a key role in the heated discussions surrounding Tajik identity in the 1920s, and were for this reason made scapegoats in the *Ittihad-i-Sharq* investigation. Muhiddinov is said to have boasted to Hojiboev that he has “more than enough” of the intelligentsia on his side.⁴⁶ He

⁴³ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.154

⁴⁴ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.103, l.79

⁴⁵ On the “nationalist plots” uncovered in the Ukraine, in 1929 and again in 1931, Postyshev commented “the class enemy is disguising his struggle against socialist construction by a nationalist banner and chauvinistic slogans” (Semnadtsatyi s’ezd VKP(b), quoted in T. Szamuely, “The Elimination of Opposition between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Congresses of the CPSU,” *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Jan., 1966), 330.

⁴⁶ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.104, l.2

mentions Kameli and Bektosh⁴⁷ as allies of his in the literary world, and described holding drunken soirees to which *intelligenty* were invited to discuss Tajik literature. On one such occasion they discussed Fitrat's theory of Chagataism.⁴⁸ Abdurauf Fitrat (1886-1938) was an influential Jadid who had been politically side-lined in 1923 following the demise of the Bukharan People's Republic, and his Pan-Turanist and Turkophile leanings left him in very bad odour with Tajik nationalists, including orthodox, pro-Soviet ones such as Bobojon Ghafurov.⁴⁹

Of Cotton and resettlement

The organisation's main anti-Soviet and wrecking activities were allegedly conducted in rural areas and targeted agriculture, particularly the newly established collective farms. *Ittihad-i-Sharq* sought to undermine cotton cultivation (sometimes referred to as a monoculture), and the resettlement policies designed to support the cotton sector, in which mountain Tajiks and "expert" cotton farmers from the traditional cotton-growing areas in the Ferghana Valley were moved, often forcibly, to the new cotton-growing areas in the South. Hojjarov claims that, when employed by the People's Commissariat of Justice, he was ordered to release a number of people – many of them kulaks – who had been imprisoned for disrupting cotton cultivation or not fulfilling their quotas.⁵⁰ Archival evidence from this time period indeed suggests that the problem of cadres was so severe that prison terms for those deemed to be standing in the way of the state's agricultural and economic goals tended to be minimal.⁵¹

⁴⁷ See the following chapter for more on the ill-starred writer and intellectual Nazrullo-i Bektosh

⁴⁸ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 104, l.5

⁴⁹ Habib Borjan, "Fetrat, 'Abd-al-Ra'uf Bokari," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online Edition, December 15, 1999, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/fetrat-abd-al-rauf-bokari>

⁵⁰ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.173

⁵¹ See for instance Botakoz Kassymbekova, "Helpless imperialists: European state workers in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Central Asian Survey*, 30:1 (2011), 21-37.

Potential recruits to the organisation in rural areas were invited to meetings in which their attitudes to various hot topics were tested, through questions such as whether it was better to plant cotton or grain, whether it was necessary to dekulalise and persecute kulaks was questioned, could the Tajik nation be strengthened from below, and so on.⁵²

By wreaking havoc with the agricultural sector and trampling on poor and middle farmers, the organization – so the story goes – had provoked bitter resentment against the Soviet state, thus (deliberately) triggering mass emigration to Afghanistan and strengthening the hand of the Basmachestvo. The emigration to Afghanistan of no less than 2,804 households in 1932, and of over 3,000 households that had followed suit in the first nine months of 1933 alone, was blamed on *Ittihad-i-Sharq*. While the secret organisation is a red herring, the figures given for the number of households who emigrated are broadly plausible, or at least unlikely to be deliberately manufactured. The number of fleeing households is a high one, and it was not in the interests of the secret police to exaggerate the scale of a problem for which they were ultimately accountable. One of the OGPU informants, who had been sent to investigate the situation in the border areas, claims that Hojiboev took pains to pin the high rates of emigration on the “disgraceful” actions of the secret police itself, whose fierce punitive measures had forced the population to flee.⁵³

Once these allegations are backed up by examples of concrete actions allegedly undertaken, or orders given, by the *Ittihad-i-Sharq* leadership, the picture becomes more murky. Nusratullo Makhsum, who was in charge of the resettlement campaign,⁵⁴ is accused of having urged pity for the farmers – and for the richer ones in particular, suggesting that rather than obliging them to

⁵² RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.174

⁵³ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.170

⁵⁴ Botakoz Kassymbekova, “Humans as territory: forced resettlement and the making of Soviet Tajikistan,” 1920-1938 in *Central Asian Survey* (30:3-4), 359.

relinquish their supplies of seed for sowing, “tell the Central Committee that there is no grain for sowing in the district (*raion*) – let the state provide grain for sowing.”⁵⁵ Interestingly, at a meeting of the Tajik Central Committee held in 1930, Nusratullo Makhsum had in fact been openly criticised for being too harsh in imposing resettlement on unwilling households. He was accused of having come to Garm, whence many residents had refused to be resettled, and threatened the population, announcing that “we will crush and ruin all the households that return back!”⁵⁶ Three years later, the *Ittihad-i Sharq* investigation found that Makhsum advocated letting kulaks involved in mining gold out of paying their grain tax – reflecting a general eagerness on the part of the investigators to present evidence that the leadership had been accumulating gold for their own nefarious purposes. Makhsum and Hojiboev are portrayed as shielding kulaks and bais (“the bais have nothing left”) and having contempt for the poor batraks (“all pickpockets and lazy-bones”).⁵⁷ This last was the accusation that ultimately seems to have gained the most traction, and would resurface to determine the ultimate fates of Makhsum and Hojiboev some four years later.

On the other hand, and in direct contradiction to the allegations above, Makhsum and Hojiboev are accused by their alleged associate, Muhiddinov, of holding the view that, as far as the situation in the Tajik countryside is concerned, “the worse the better.” In Muhiddinov’s letter of denunciation, he claims they the pair does not “fight honestly against hitches” that occur, even if they denounce them verbally; it suits them better to say “They don’t listen to us, let them do things their own way: they will lead the country to utter ruin, and then understand that we were

⁵⁵ Interrogation of Khojaev, vice-chairman of Khovalin district Executive Committee, RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.74

⁵⁶ RGASPI, f. 17, op. 28, d. 20, ll. 119. Tsentralnyi Komitet VKPb. Stenograf. Otchet I. Uchreditel’nogo S’ezda KPb Tajikistana. 1930; cited in Botakoz Kassymbekova, “Humans as territory: forced resettlement and the making of Soviet Tajikistan,” 1920-1938 in *Central Asian Survey* (30:3-4), 359.

⁵⁷ Interrogation of Khojaev, vice-chairman of Khovalin district Executive Committee, RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.74

right.”⁵⁸ While it is possible to imagine Hojiboev or Makhsum articulating a sentiment such as this, it is far harder to imagine how they might have acted differently in order to escape censure. Muhiddinov’s criticism follows the pattern established in the first interrogation, in which Muhamedov reported as follows:

In 1926 Stalinabad and the other districts of Tajikistan were considered prosperous. Now, if you go to the villages, you will not find even one crust of bread, and next year you will find not even a single sheep. It was the same in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and now they too have not a crust of bread! They migrate to our country and then on to Afghan territory. The proposed remedy for this dire situation is to burden the poorest part of the population [*bedniaks*] with agricultural taxes (in kind) so high that we oblige them to flee their villages and escape to Afghan territory.⁵⁹

The evidence is contradictory, but it is easy to see why agricultural productivity was a major concern not only for the Tajik leadership, but for the Soviet Union as a whole, in 1932-33. These are the years of the Holodomor, and widespread man-made famine across many areas of the Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan, in which 38 percent of the native Kazakh population is estimated to have died between 1931 and 1933.⁶⁰ The interrogation transcripts include plausible eyewitness reports of the effects of this famine, as when Alikul Khalmuradov describes a trip to Moscow in 1932 which took him through Kazakh territory. “At the railway stations we met Kazakhs – ranging from elders to young children – who were begging, one and all.” When asked why they had abandoned their households and resorted to begging, they explained it was “on account of the meat tax” (in reality an attempt to collectivise the livestock), which had forced them to flee their homes and live at the mercy of others. To see the proverbially proud and independent Kazakhs reduced to these straits allegedly impressed Khalmuradov so much that, as soon as he

⁵⁸ RGASPI F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.117

⁵⁹ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d. 103, l 83-84

⁶⁰ Niccolo Pianciola, “The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931–1933,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4 (Fall 2001), 237.

returned from Moscow, he allegedly gathered a group of friends comprising several bois as well as kolkhozniks in his home, and told them “all about what I had seen, how the Kazakhs were starving and reduced to begging with their women and children because the government had taken their cattle.”⁶¹ To avoid a similar fate, he and his friends resolve to sow as much grain as they can, in the mistaken belief that “this is what the Russians in Samara do [...], and they do not hunger, but live quite adequately.”⁶²

Hojiboev is also said to have warned his associates of a severe crop failure sweeping across Russia, which was “triggering a hunt for the last crusts of bread to be requisitioned,” and was sure to entail dire consequences for Tajikistan also.⁶³

While the organization itself is a red herring, it seems that the Tajik leadership may in fact have been punished by the central government for pushing back against the implementation of policies ratified by the centre, which seemed counter-productive or ill-suited to local conditions. Whereas by the mid-1930s, as the previous chapter showed, the collectivisation of cotton was beginning to show some encouraging results (greatly reducing the neurosis about class enemies in the process), the situation in southern Tajikistan was quite different, and Soviet power still quite weak. The resettlement policies had caused a significant backlash, living conditions in the newly settled areas were abysmal, and the porous border with Afghanistan caused great unease.

⁶¹ Kamil Ikramov was also traumatised by the sight of starving Kazakhs lying along the railroad tracks. Kamil Ikramov, the son of Akmal Ikramov, who was Uzbek Party secretary between 1927 and 1937, and one of the most prominent Central Asian purge victims, wrote a memoir, *Delo moego otsa: roman-khronika* (Moscow, 1991), cited in Sarah Isabel Cameron, “The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934,” PhD diss., Yale University, 2010. ProQuest (AAT 3440506), 1. In the memoir, “Kamil recounts a rail trip he took with his father through the Kazakh steppe in the early 1930s, and his astonishment at the striking differences in the conditions of the two neighboring Soviet republics.”

⁶² RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d. 103, l.95

⁶³ Interview with Kasymbekov, chairman of Yangi-Bazar district (*raion*) executive committee

Hojiboev and Makhsum respond

The first and only recorded reaction to the investigation by its most high-profile victims, Hojiboev and Makhsum, was not submitted until November 27, and once again took the form of a letter to Kaganovich. At this time, over five months into the investigation, both Makhsum and Hojiboev were not only still at liberty, but remained in their respective positions on the Central Committee (both), Central Executive Committee, and Council of Ministers. This makes one wonder in what sense Prokof'ev considered the organisation they allegedly led to have been liquidated, when he wrote to Kaganovich in late October to report on the results of his investigation.

In their joint letter, Makhsum and Hojiboev made no mention of *Ittihad-i-Sharq*, or any direct reference to accusations levied against them, but rather laid out a long list of accusatory questions that they request Kaganovich put to comrades Bauman (head of the Central Asia Office), and Huseinov, then First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party (1930 to December 1933).⁶⁴ Thus, in this exchange, we have the two Tajikistanis most highly placed in the nomenklatura standing together against the two 'foreign' cadres with most power in the Tajik SSR. By mid-1938, all four will have been shot.

Makhsum and Hojiboev essentially accuse Bauman of prematurely phasing out the "special treatment" accorded to Tajikistan and implementing measures suited only to "advanced areas of the Soviet Union." Chastising mountain Tajiks for not knowing the Internationale, forcing through the formation of artels – allegedly against the express wishes of comrade Stalin (as articulated to Hojiboev), and rolling out an anti-religious campaign (including in the very isolated Pamir

⁶⁴ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.104, l.173and ff.

mountain area), were all, in their view, the actions of a zealot with no understanding of local conditions. He also apparently defended the appointment of the “trotskyite” Bludau as vice-chair of Tajik SovNarKom, against Hojiboev’s objections, on the provocative (and implausible) grounds that – given that Trotskyites as a group are known for their critical bent – Bludau's appointment would inject a vein of much-needed self-criticism into the Tajik party organisation. More backhanded criticism of the Tajiks, in other words.⁶⁵

Bauman is further accused of ignoring repeated complaints that the Leninist nationality policy was being violated in Tajikistan – in other words, that targets for nativisation (*korenizatsiia*) were being ignored, leading to only two ethnic Tajiks out of the sixteen members and candidate members of the Tajik CC biuro. In the same vein, they supported Huseinov’s allegation (May 1933) that only Uzbek and Kazakh kulaks, rather than Tajik ones, were being exiled from the Tajik SSR. These accusations are interesting in that they are consistent, to some extent, with the case that had been constructed against the Tajik leadership, but not yet shared with them: accused of shielding and advancing their own people at the expense of others, they respond that in fact, the Tajiks have been neglected, and insufficiently promoted – in contravention of Leninist “affirmative action” policies (as characterised by Terry Martin). Arguing that they were supposed to be defending Tajik interests will, alas, ultimately turn out to be a poor line of defence indeed.

Perhaps Hojiboev’s strangest allegation against Bauman is this:

when he was making an analysis of the leading workers of Central Asia (in Hojiboev's office, October 14 this year), he [Bauman] said ‘Makhsum is the son of a powerful spiritual leader and cattle breeder, Ikramov⁶⁶ is the son of a powerful mullo and qozi [Islamic judge], Abdurahmanov, the son of a manap and a feudal lord, and You too,

⁶⁵ RGASPI, F.81, op.3, d.104, l.174

⁶⁶ Ikramov and Faizullo Khojaev were the only Central Asians to be tried – on charges of bourgeois nationalism - alongside Bukharin, Yagoda and many others, in the third great show trial of March 1938.

Hojiboev, are not of working class origin. Thus, inevitably all these comrades at various stages and in various ways do not go along with the Party.'

We know that by October, Bauman had already written to Stalin and Kaganovich urging them to replace Makhsum and Hojiboev, so was this an attempt to intimidate or warn Hojiboev of the impending danger? Whatever its purpose, Hojiboev would surely have refrained from relaying such a conversation, regardless of whether or not it took place as described, unless he felt confident that his own (alleged) class enemy background would not prove a liability. Clearly, Hojiboev still could not believe the Party capable of taking such a mechanical, deterministic view of class origin and lineage as to negate the effects of their many years' of service.

Just as Muhiddinov had hastened to denounce Hojiboev – albeit in the vaguest of terms – in July, as soon as he felt he knew which way the wind was blowing, Hojiboev reciprocated, claiming that he had repeatedly urged that Muhiddinov be removed from Tajikistan and brought to justice, but Bauman had defended him.

Against the First Secretary Huseinov, the main issue appears to be his failure to move decisively to tackle the extremely serious situation in several (rural) areas of the country, or even to perceive the gravity of the situation. Thus, in spite of repeated warnings from Makhsum and Hojiboev, he had allegedly downplayed their concerns over the mass emigrations to Afghanistan, comparing the numbers favourably to those of other exoduses then in progress: that from Azerbaijan to Persia (Huseinov was himself Azeri), and from Adjara to Turkey. Huseinov is accused of having shielded and promoted Tajik secret police chief Solonitsin, evidently a bitter enemy to Hojiboev and Makhsum. Solonitsin, in turn, is accused of having connections with Basmachi leaders, whose bands' activities are said to intensify in those very districts visited by Solonitsin. Feeling themselves under attack but unclear as to the nature of the allegations being

made against them, Makhsum and Hojiboev strained to prove their loyalty and shift the focus of the investigation elsewhere.

Moscow interlude

Next in the chronological paper trail comes a draft resolution of the CPSU Central Committee, heavily amended in pencil and in pen, but undated. After weighing up reports from Bauman, Huseinov (Tajik CP first secretary), the plenipotentiary chairman of the OPGU in Central Asia, and the explanations of Makhsum and Hojiboev, the Central Committee had reached a perhaps surprising conclusion. They find that the available evidence provides no basis for the conviction of Makhsum and Hojiboev for membership of a counter-revolutionary organisation against soviet power in Tajikistan. The Central Committee had, however, established that Makhsum and Hojiboev did not always follow the Party line in improving the condition of poor and middle peasants, but had instead maintained rather strong ties with kulak elements and former functionaries of the Bukharan emirate, whom they defended from the peasantry. Further, they had allegedly failed to prevent unlawful taxes, requisitions, arrests and even killings of peasants on the part of kulaks and anti-Soviet elements.⁶⁷

The Central Committee of the CPSU therefore resolved to remove them both from their posts, and would consider stripping them of Party membership. At the same time, in light of the poor efforts of the Tajik Communist Party to promote local cadres and combat anti-Soviet

⁶⁷ The resolution of Tajik Central Executive Committee – a body of which Makhsum had until that moment been the chair – which strips him and Hojiboev of their positions, adds to the official record of the charges against them that they disrupted Leninist nationality policies, and adopted a bourgeois-nationalist approach to their work, “violating the unity and brotherhood of Tajik and Uzbek workers.” *Postanovlenie IV sessii tsentral’nogo ispolnitel’nogo komiteta sovetov Tadzhikskoi SSR*, TsGA RT, F.11, op.3, ed.khr.368, quoted in Baroat Hojiboeva, Matlubai Mirzoiunus and Subhoni A’zamzod, *Abdurahim Hojiboev: Osor va Paikor*, Maqomoti Ijroiiai Hoqimiiati Davlatii Viloiati Sughd, Khujand, 2010.

sentiment among Tajik cadres, Huseinov was also removed from his position on December 23, 1933, and the Central Asian Office was requested to keep a closer eye on Tajikistan.⁶⁸ This acknowledgment that the Tajik Communist Party had hitherto failed to develop and promote local cadres in sufficient numbers offers the best explanation for Makhsum and Hojiboev's lenient treatment once they were removed from office.

A second, undated, Central Committee resolution finds that the secret police did not pay heed to "the particularities of the situation in Tajikistan" and had greatly exceeded their authority in the struggle with anti-Soviet elements, leading to mass arrests. The Central Committee thus appointed a commission comprising Bauman, Broido, and Hojiboev's old schoolmate Rahimboev to travel promptly to Tajikistan – Bauman was to stay for a month, and oversee the work of the Tajik Central Committee – in order to review the arrest files and free those wrongfully arrested.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ RGASPI, F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.44-45

⁶⁹ RGASPI, F.81, op. 3, d. 103, l.47

In spite of the colourful accounts of top-secret nocturnal plans to subvert the Soviet state, Abdurahim Hojiboev and Nusratullo Makhsum seem to have escaped with a reprimand. On being relieved of their posts, they were both sent to Moscow to further their education: Hojiboev to the



Figure 20: Nusratullo Makhsum
This photograph, dated to around 1929, shows Makhsum with two of his children, Khosiat and Akbarsho.

Economics department of the Institute of Red Professors, Makhsum to the All-Union Molotov Planning Academy (*Planovaya Akademiia im. V.M.Molotov*). Abdurahim Hojiboev, who was just 33 years old in the winter of 1934, brought his wife, his two daughters Rafoat-khon and Baroat-khon, and his younger sister Mahrifat-bonu with him to Moscow: it had been decided that she would continue her studies there.⁷⁰ He also insisted on having his large and, in his view, priceless collection of books and manuscripts with him, and spent much of his spare time in Moscow

reading. For several weeks they lived in a hotel,

where the little girls ran down the endless corridors

and marvelled at the elevator, and the yet more wonderful escalators on the metro. They were then moved into one of the more than five hundred apartments in the Dom Pravitelstvo (Government building), also known as the house on the Embankment, built in 1931 as a residence for the Soviet elite. It would prove a most ill-fated address in the 1930s.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Baroat Khodzhibaeva (Hojiboeva), *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 130 and ff.

⁷¹ Baroat Khodzhibaeva (Hojiboeva), *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 134.

Hojiboev and his family shared the apartment with Nusratullo Makhsum and his family, consisting of his wife, and his youngest daughter and son – another son would be born while they were living in Moscow. The children were all close in age and had already made friends while living as neighbours in Stalinobod; they enjoyed exploring the enormous building – which had a cinema and a club – together, and taking part in the cultural programs on offer: Baroat Hojiboeva remembers performing some verses on stage dressed in a cat costume sewn by her mother. In the summers, their parents would take the children out of Moscow for holidays – the Hojiboevs went to Yalta and to Sochi, where Abdurahim taught his daughters how to swim. Although in hindsight, Baroat Hojiboeva feels that she could sense her parents’ unease and unhappiness at being “banished” from Tajikista, they seem to have tried hard to protect their children.

Baroat, who was not yet six years old when she moved to Moscow, nonetheless writes vividly in her memoir about the many visitors who frequented their apartment: the former Tajik leaders were far from socially isolated, it would seem. Even Stalin, it would seem, from time to time called on the telephone to inquire how the former native leadership of the Tajik SSR were enjoying life in Moscow. More significantly, Hojiboev and Makhsum were part of a community of Central Asian ex-pats in the capital:

Among the guests who came to our house, those I remember best are Faizullo Khojaev, chairmen of Uzbek SovNarKom and Mu'min Khojaev, who was the Tajik SSR's permanent representative in Moscow at first [1930-32], and later the People's Commissar for Trade in the Uzbek SSR [1932-37]. Faizullo Khojaev was very elegant. His face, his beautiful dark eyes, his hair combed back – it all spoke to his *intelligentnost* [belonging to the intelligentsia], his high culture. Mu'min Khojaev came more often to our home. He stood out among all our guests not only on account of his clothes – always in excellent taste and fashion. He always distinguished himself by his courtesy, and polite regard for those around him. On entering the house, he paid his respects to his hostess first of all. He expressed this in gestures, in words, and in behaviour.⁷²

⁷² Baroat Khodzhibaeva (Hojiboeva), *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 145-46.

It is no less true in this case, as it is in that of the French society analysed by Pierre Bourdieu, that manners – including bearing and pronunciation - are an important form of social capital, that signal membership of a prestigious group.⁷³ The importance of manners and “good breeding” are much discussed in Tajik and Uzbek urban culture, but as the description of Mu’min Khojaev’s paying his respects to his hostess makes clear, his own were influenced as much by his contact with Russian culture as with his own native culture. Mixed gender social gatherings were a rather recent innovation for urban Central Asians.

By the time this account was written, Mu’min Khojaev and Faizullo Khojaev had long since been purged along with her father, but it was not without consequence that the families spent time together, as the networks binding these men would outlast them by decades. As Sergei Abashin has pointed out, Faizullo Khojaev of Bukhara may have considered himself an Uzbek, or perhaps a Tajik, but he was certainly of Khoja descent, and “without this aspect of his biography it would be difficult to account for his meteoric political career, his authority, and his connections in Bukharan society.”⁷⁴ In spite of the tense rivalry between the Tajik and Uzbek republics during the national boundary drawing process and beyond, the khoja identity again proved itself capable of bridging national divisions. The social circle in which Hojiboev found himself in Moscow privileged those of *asilzodagon* descent.

Hojiboev and Makhsum both remained in Moscow with their families, where the former wrote occasional articles for *Izvestiia* alongside his studies, for the next four years. Meanwhile in Tajikistan, the issues of agricultural productivity left centre-stage for the time being, but

⁷³ Pierre Bourdieu, translated by Richard Nice, “The forms of capital,” in J. Richardson (Ed.) *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York, Greenwood: 1986), 241-258.

⁷⁴ See note 19, Sergei Abashin, translated by Caroline Humphrey, “[Gellner, the ‘Saints’ and Central Asia: between Islam and Nationalism](#),” *Inner Asia*, Vol. 7, No, 1, Dedicated to Andre Grunder Frank (1929-2005) (2005), 83.

allegations of bourgeois-nationalism and of class-enemy origin and behaviour (rather broadly defined), continued unabated and eventually reached a deadly crescendo.

The terror campaign against “Bourgeois Nationalism” in the Soviet Union

Bourgeois nationalist, unlike say, *ishan*, is a class enemy label imported to the Tajik SSR from elsewhere. Understandably then, before setting out in June 1933 to unmask a secret anti-Soviet bourgeois nationalist organization, the Tajik secret police had looked beyond the borders of the republic for pointers as to how to go about the task. Perhaps unexpectedly, Ukraine and Belorussia seem to have been the most immediate precursors and closest counterparts.

The broader political context into which the 1932-34 phase of “bourgeois nationalist” witch hunts took place is that of the fallout from collectivization, which had encountered far stronger resistance in the non-Russian periphery. Many members of “diaspora nationalities” had voted with their feet and left the Soviet Union. In this respect the inhabitants of the Tajik SSR, although not strictly speaking a diaspora nationality, had the advantage of a long and almost impossible to police border with Afghanistan, and fled collectivization in vast numbers. Among other factors, dissatisfaction with the pace and results of the collectivisation campaign gave the impetus for two decrees issued by the Politbiuro in December 1932 criticizing Ukrainization, “decrees that” according to Terry Martin, “would usher in a fundamental revision of the Affirmative Action Empire.”⁷⁵ These Politbiuro decrees on the perils of nativisation, along with the Ukrainian show trials they gave rise to, seem to offer a plausible explanation for the timing of the *Ittihad-i-Sharq* investigation in Tajikistan, which precedes the main outburst of investigations of this type by over three years. As argued by Ksenofont, “putative ‘counter-revolutionary

⁷⁵ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 26.

organisations' inspired by local 'bourgeois nationalism'" would eventually become "a staple of the cases fabricated by the NKVD," but only once the Great Purges got underway.

The Ukraine, however, was a trailblazer when it came to the Great Purges: "In Ukraine, 1937 began in 1933" was Lev Kopelev's incisive comment. The Ukrainian blueprint for the *Ittihad-i Sharq* was the SVU (Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine), which had allegedly been founded in 1926, and had infiltrated a range of higher learning institutions. It was alleged that SVU members hated workers and peasants, but defended the interests of kulaks, big landowners and the urban bourgeoisie. Following an insurrection planned for 1931, overthrow of the Soviet yoke with help from foreign powers and émigrés, the SVU planned to establish a bourgeois nation modelled on the Ukrainian National republic. So far, these allegations overlap almost perfectly with those made against those arrested in connection with "*Ittihad-i-Sharq*." The only component of this ambitious plan which was not also attributed to the Tajikistani defendants was the planned assassination of Stalin, Voroshilov and Skrypnyk – perhaps that would have been too great an imaginative leap even for the OGPU. Significantly for the Tajik comparison, many were also sons of priests, and thus – class enemies by birth.

The defendants admitted to the charges of aiming to re-establish a bourgeois order in the Ukraine, denying only that the SVU was a terrorist organisation. Despite inconsistencies in the testimony on various accounts, the defendants were all found guilty and sentenced to three-to-ten year terms in labour camps in Siberia and elsewhere.⁷⁶ Having used this show trial – which was widely covered in the national and all-Union press – to create an atmosphere of suspicion, Soviet authorities then launched a broadly based offensive against the intellectual elite of the Ukraine.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ George O. Liber, *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR 1923–1934* (Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 162.

⁷⁷ Orest Subtelny, *Ukraine: A History*, University of Toronto Press (2000); 417.

The alleged aims and activities of the SVU and *Ittihad-i-Sharq* were similar, as we have seen, but the outcome differed considerably: the Tajikistani case never even came to trial. Another difference is in the profile of those arrested: the SVU defendants who were brought to trial were almost all academics, whereas the Tajik OGPU, rather more ambitiously, attempted to use this narrative to take down the most highly placed local communists (although lower level officials and non-party members were also arrested). Academia and the arts in Tajikistan would become a serious target only in 1936-38, as we will see in the next chapter.

The trial of the Union for the Liberation of the Ukraine was widely publicised, and thus could well have provided a model for the Tajik OGPU, when the *Ittihad-i-Sharq* investigations of July 1933.

The theme of the bourgeois-nationalist secret organisation returned with a vengeance in the Great Purges of 1936-38, most spectacularly with the Moscow show trial of Faizullo Khojaev – one of only two Central Asians to be singled out for such high level scrutiny and punishment at the Trial of the Twenty-one. Khojaev, referred to during the trial as the “son of a Bukharan millionaire,” was tried alongside Bukharin and other “Trotskyite-Rightists” and confessed to having belonged to a secret bourgeois-nationalist organisation plotting the overthrow of the Soviet Union, by the name of *Milli Ittihad* (National Alliance). A few minutes later in the same courtroom, his associate Ikramov, former first secretary of the Uzbek CP and member of the All-Union CC, confessed to belonging to a *different* secret bourgeois-nationalist organisation plotting to overthrow the Soviet Union, also active in the Uzbek SSR, called *Milli-Istiklal* (National Independence).

ACT TWO: The Great Purges, 1936-38

“I never ate plov with him”⁷⁸ – The “maksumo-khodzhibaevskaia linea”

The first Union-wide purge of national Party cadres in 1928-29 was hampered in Tajikistan by a severe shortage of the qualified staff needed to conduct such an operation. Despite the perception that a Purge was urgently needed to weed out opportunists, bourgeois-nationalists and other trouble-makers, it was hard to find enough cadres of the appropriate class background, experience within the Party and language skills to staff the purge commissions.⁷⁹ When it came to Party members who held positions of responsibility, even those who were the object of persistent and severe complaints, such as Mu'min Khojaev (see chapter two), they might be removed from their posts but, like Hojiboev and Makhsu, face no severe consequences for the time being. Following the concerted campaign against his *modus operandi* in his native Khujand, Mu'min Khojaev had served as secretary of the Samarkand ObKom (1923-27), and then as the People's Commissar for Enlightenment in the Uzbek SSR (1927-29). After a brief stint back in Tajikistan as Orgbiuro secretary, he was relieved of those duties and sent off to Moscow, as we saw, to represent the Tajik SSR to the All Union SovNarKom.

In June 1934, barely a year after the secret police had concocted and carried out the *Ittihad-i Sharq* investigation, the Central Committee of the Tajik SSR was once again making plans for a Party Purge. Members of the CC biuro met to coordinate a press campaign that would lay the ground for the imminent shake up in Party ranks. The meeting was chaired by Grigorii Broido, who had only been First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party since the previous November.

⁷⁸ Speech of Kurbanov, People's Commissariat of Health, at Tajik CP plenum of 14-18/2/1936. See RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.68, l.166

⁷⁹ Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 66-67.

The group discussed a list of twelve articles to be published in the course of the following month to fulfil this remit – each article was assigned to an author, and each author was given a title. The topics included the appearance of local nationalism in Tajikistan, revolutionary watchfulness and “great-Uzbek” chauvinism. Shotemur was told to write an article entitled “*Chto takoe makhsumovshchina i khodzhibaevshchina?*” (What are the Makhsumov affair and the Hojiboev affair?).⁸⁰ That same month, the Central Committee met to discuss the baleful influence felt to have been exerted in certain districts (the problematic southern districts, along the border with Afghanistan) by Makhsum and Hojiboev, and debated how to counter their influence.⁸¹ As Makhsum and Hojiboev had both been dispatched to Moscow some six months prior, they must have appeared handy scapegoats to those seeking to deflect criticism from themselves in front of the new First Secretary, who is unlikely to have had much interaction with the banished pair himself. For the time being, their studies continued, uninterrupted, in Moscow.

The Tajik CP was still singing to the same tune almost two years later: at the Plenum held in February 1936, all the speakers in turn assessed their own relationships with Makhsum and Hojiboev, a session in which finger-pointing, rather than breast-beating, set the tone. The phenomenon known by the cumbersome shorthand of the “*makhsumo-khodzhibaevskaia linea*” was understood to have been continued unabated, in spite of the ringleaders’ absence from the scene. And although Suren Shadunts,⁸² the Armenian first secretary of the Tajik Communist Party, characterised the topic under discussion as “nationalistic policies,” all speakers appeared

⁸⁰ RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.51, l.5

⁸¹ RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.51, l.40

⁸² Suren Shadunts (1898-1938) was first secretary of the Tajik CP between 1936 and 1937. He was arrested on November 11, 1937 and shot on April 21, 1938.

to interpret this as a call to participate in the ritual of distancing themselves from “class enemy” behaviour, and do their part in unmasking old elite types.⁸³

Criticism of Hojiboev himself ranges aspersions cast on his “famous” book on Tajikistan, to muck-racking allegations that so and so supplied him with women when he was vacationing.⁸⁴ His fellow Khujandis appear particularly well qualified and eager to air Hojiboev’s dirty linen: Shirinov describes the wedding party Hojiboev hosted for his sister, when he married her off “the old-fashioned way,” sitting in state together with merchants and bois, presiding over the feast.⁸⁵ As pertaining to Central Asian weddings, the “old-fashioned way” would suggest an arranged marriage marked by conspicuous consumption, to which the whole mahalla (neighbourhood), along with every person of influence involved in a patron-client relation with the hosts, is invited, partly as a means of cementing patronage and mutual support networks. Hojiboev had two younger sisters, and Shirinov did not mention who the bride or groom was on this occasion, but we do know that one of the sisters, Mahrifat-bonu was married to Nusratullo Makhsum’s son sometime after they had moved to Moscow.⁸⁶ Was the alliance thus cemented between Abdurahim Hojiboev and Nusratullo Makhsum not the real reason this wedding was a topic of discussion?

The theme of the patronage network occurs again when a Khujandi Central Committee member, the first Chair of the Writers’ Union and Minister of Culture Said Nosirov [in Russian, Turabaevich Nasyrov] takes the floor. Said Nosirov was only one year younger than Hojiboev, and they had been schoolmates at the Russian-native school in Khujand. He had had a varied career – he took part in the military campaign to “liberate” Eastern Bukhara (1920-22), served as

⁸³ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.169

⁸⁴ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.145 – Stenographic report of the Tajik Communist Party plenum, held 14-18/2/1936

⁸⁵ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.208

⁸⁶ B. A. Khodzhibaeva [Hojiboeva], *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 13-15.

prosecutor for Uroteppa and Penjikent (1927-29), and as chair of the Khujand executive committee (ispolkom), before moving to Stalinobod in 1931. His path had surely crossed frequently with his fellow townsman and schoolmate Hojiboev while they were both living in the capital, between 1931 and 1933.

Nosirov describes seeing a familiar face while serving in the ranks of the Red Army, and recognises the son of Mirzo Fatullah, the “wealthiest of the wealthy” in Khujand, who had owned a lot of land⁸⁷ and a cotton-cleaning plant. This young man, as Nosirov well knew, had been deprived of voting rights in 1930, but Hojiboev, then People’s Commissar for Land in the Uzbek SSR, had allegedly given him a document attesting that he was a poor cotton worker, deserving of being “resettled in the south at government expense.”⁸⁸ On writing to the prosecutor, Nosirov had discovered to his shock that, although by law a kulak’s son was debarred from a career in the Red Army, the law could do nothing as on paper, all was in order as the millionaire’s son had been made a *bedniak* by Hojiboev’s protégés in charge of land reform in Khujand.⁸⁹ Across the country, followers of the “*makhsumo-khodzhibaevskaia linea*” were discovered to have similarly performed the (alas, reversible) miracle of turning bois and kulaks into *bedniaks*.⁹⁰ The atmosphere was becoming so oppressive that even an otherwise apparently principled and honourable man such as Nosirov⁹¹ resorted to denouncing former schoolmates in an attempt to save his own skin.

⁸⁷ We encountered a Mirzo Fatullah in chapter two, when he prevailed upon a member of an electoral commission (a member of the Mirzabaev clan then being investigated) to help him conceal 25 desiatina of land that he owned. It may be the same person.

⁸⁸ This formulation makes it sound as though Hojiboev was conferring a rare privilege on Mirzo Fatullah’s son, although of course the government struggled to find enough cotton workers, poor or otherwise, prepared to be resettled in the south, and was obliged to use considerable force to meet the quotas. The opportunity to join the Red Army was a more attractive offer, however.

⁸⁹ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.178

⁹⁰ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.133

⁹¹ See the following chapter for Jalol Ikromi’s favourable assessment of Said Nosirov.

The continued power and influence of the old elite, and their continued presence in CP ranks, was also a point made by the report on those expelled from the party, broken down by category in the table below:⁹²

Table 4 - Reasons for expulsion from the Tajik Communist Party
As reported at the party plenum of February 1936

	Party members	Candidate members
Concealed social origin or links with social aliens	20%	22.3%
Class enemies: merchants, lishentsy, eshons and mullo	4.6%	5.6%
Speculators, swindlers, embezzlers of socialist property	21%	15%
White guards, kulaks and basmachis	12%	11.7%
Trotskyite-zinovievists	3.7%	0.2%
Spies	1.3%	2.1%
Passive, morally lax, disengaged from the Party	36%	43%
TOTAL expelled from the Party	540	480

Source: RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.20.

If one adds together those who concealed their social origin, to the number of kulaks, basmachis and other class enemy categories, we see that well over a third (37%/40%) of party members and candidate numbers were expelled for reasons connected to their social extraction, rather than for any specific reprehensible behaviour.

⁹² In stark contrast, at the first Tajik CP conference in 1930, First Secretary Huseinov was actually able to argue that too many people had been deprived of voting rights, and that it was not possible that the numbers of bois, mullahs, eshons and so forth were on the rise as the figures suggested. The figures he gives are 1,37% lishentsy in 1927-28, and 4,9% in 1928-29. Huseinov blamed this on the weakness of the justice system and the incompetence of the NKVD. See RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.20, l.44 ff

Most ominously for their absent former colleagues, in his speech Nosirov argues that Moscow is not far enough away to shield Tajikistan from Makhsum and Hojiboev's harmful influence – "we must remember that they put down deep roots here."⁹³ Apparently, they have retained the power to pull strings behind the scenes:

While sitting in Moscow, they know what we are talking about here – there may not be a radio link between us and their apartment, but they know everything, all the same. Not incidentally, they are supplied with rice, oil and so from here, to this day.⁹⁴

Noticeably, Nosirov's criticisms of his former colleagues focus on their actions rather than their lineage or class background, because as a tura he surely outranked both Hojiboev and Makhsum, and undoubtedly felt himself to be in considerable danger too.

From Stalinabad, the next step had begun to look like a foregone conclusion, when Hojiboev and Makhsum were both arrested in July 1937. The Moscow institutions that had been hosting them during their studies were in the throes of a very heavy purge at the time, and many career academics were executed who had never wielded the kind of direct power held by the two former Tajik leaders. At the Party plenum in March 1937, Zhdanov had complained that "of the 183 members of the Institute of Red Professors, 32 were arrested between 1933 and 1936, and 53 have more recently been found to be enemies of the people."⁹⁵ Similarly, the residents of the building where Makhsum and Hojiboev had been housed in Moscow, the Dom Pravitelstva, had been very heavily purged, and seemed over half empty to Bukharin's wife Anna Mikhailovna when she was moved there in 1937.⁹⁶

⁹³ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.177

⁹⁴ RGASPI F.17, op.28, d.68, l.176

⁹⁵ Quoted in Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (Pimlico, London: 1990), 293.

⁹⁶ Baroat Khodzhibaeva, *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 134.

Nusratullo Makhsum had taken his younger children and wife with him to Moscow in 1933, and they all lived there happily enough, in his daughter's memory, until 1937. On July 12 1937, the whole family was holidaying in Tet'kovo, in the Moscow region when three men arrived and led her father away. Her father's last words to them were "Continue your vacation, I will go to Moscow, everything will be cleared up, and as I am not guilty of anything, I will come straight back to you." His daughter Khosiat, who tells the story, was then aged 11, her brothers were aged 8 and 54 days old, and they never saw their father again. On September 8 they came to arrest Makhsum's wife, who was taken away with her infant son. She was released after a few days on account of her new baby, but arrested once again on December 4, after which her children did not see her for several years. In April 1938 however, Makhsum's elder son Munavvarsho was able to bring his younger brother and sister back to Stalinabad, where they lived for some years with their older (married, presumably) sister Muharram until 1944.⁹⁷

Nusratullo Makhsum and Abdurahim Hojiboev were convicted of those same charges of which they had formerly been acquitted for lack of evidence – principally, of belonging to a counter-revolutionary terrorist organisation. Makhsum was shot on November 1, 1937, and Hojiboev on January 25, 1938.⁹⁸ Meanwhile in Tajikistan, Abdurahim's father Mullo Hojiboi was also arrested, and shot in 1938, and both of his brothers were also arrested and imprisoned. His younger brother Abdumanon was a brigade leader on the Bolshevik kolkhoz,⁹⁹ and was due to receive a prize for having fulfilled his harvest plan that day, but was arrested instead by an

⁹⁷ Bahriniso Kabilova, "N. Maksum: Dolgii put' k priznaniu," interview with Khosiat Maksumova taken in 2001, and published 13.06.2011 in http://www.toptj.com/News/2011/06/13/n_maksum_dolgiy_put_k_priznaniyu . Bahriniso Kabilova is Nusratullo Makhsum's granddaughter.

⁹⁸ Sakharov Center archives, *Martiolog rasstrelliannikh v Moskve i v Moskovskoi oblasti*, see <http://www.sakharov-center.ru/asfcd/martiolog/?t=page&id=14927> (accessed 11/05/2014)

⁹⁹ The Bolshevik kolkhoz had been founded by Pulod Bobokalonov (among others), and would later join up with others to form the large Saidkhoja Urunkhojaev kolkhoz, on the outskirts of Khujand.

officer sent from Stalinobod to fetch him on 2 December, 1937. All the adult males in Abdurahim Hojiboev's immediate family therefore were arrested, as was his wife; only his mother was left in their house in Leninobod to care for her youngest son, who was still a child. Such vindictive thoroughness, though quite common in Russia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, was almost unequalled in the Tajik SSR, as we will see.¹⁰⁰

Nusratullo's daughter Khosiat, was eleven at the time of her parents' arrest, and over the next few years she wrote many letters to the authorities, pleading for the release of her mother. She may have known, or suspected, that there was no use in pleading for clemency for her father, but remained hopeful that something could be done for her mother, who, after all, "had done no wrong, and was illiterate." Finally, in early December 1943 she was notified that the request for her mother's release was under consideration. Khosiat, now eighteen years old, decided to set off – alone – across the Soviet Union at war to find her mother, who, as she now knew, was being held in a labour camp for wives of enemies of the people in Temnikovsky district, Mordovia.¹⁰¹ She found her mother, and was able to spend a whole week with her. As her mother's documents were not yet in order, her mother urged her to go on ahead back to Tajikistan, and take her little brother Muzaffar with her, without waiting for their mother. Muzaffar, an infant when the family was torn apart, was being housed in a children's home not far from his mother. Khosiat recalls:

When I went in to the children, their teacher said: "Children, someone has come to us from very far away, and she is the sister of one of you children. What do you think children, whose sister is she?" At that my brother, who did not know me, who had never seen me, flew into my arms crying "That's MY sister, my sister!" Everyone cried.

¹⁰⁰ B. A. Khodzhibaeva [Hojiboeva], *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 13-15.

¹⁰¹ This was one of three camps designated for the "wives of traitors," the other two being in Alzhir-Akmolinsk, Kazakhstan and in Tomsk. See <http://alzhir.kz/en/2014-03-17-08-12-58/2014-03-17-08-13-35.html>

Their mother finally followed them to Tajikistan in May 1944. Khosiat had been going to the station every day to wait for her, but overslept on that one day, and woke to find her mother already home. Up until Khosiat married, she was often advised by people not to use her father's name. But neither she nor her brother's changed their name, "on the contrary, we wore his name with pride in the knowledge that he was innocent, and that the day would come when he would be vindicated. And that is what happened. In 1957, twenty years later, he was rehabilitated."¹⁰²

Hojiboev's wife was also arrested, and sent to a prison camp. His two daughters, aged 9 and 11, were placed in Russian-speaking orphanages, first in the Ukraine and then in Mordovia. They were able to return to Tajikistan only in 1944, where they were finally reunited with their mother in 1946, after nine years apart. Baroat has lived in Khujand ever since, and has done much to rehabilitate her father and grandfather's reputation in post-Soviet Tajikistan.

"When they began to form kolkhozes, father – foreman (*sarkor*) Mullo Hojiboi, along with his third son, went with the others to work from dawn to dusk on the left bank of the Syr Darya, in the place called Sumchak. Now there is a sovkhos there. But then there was a dry, waterless steppe, which they were only just beginning to prepare for cultivation. They made several kolkhozes there, and one of them was later named after Abdurahim Hojiboev." [...] After two-three years flowers bloomed in the desert fields of Sumchak, and the kolkhozes grew stronger and wealthier. And it has always gladdened me to think, that in these stunningly beautiful trees, that even today grow on the right bank and delight people with their fruits, there is a share of labour of those close to me."¹⁰³

Purging Leninobodi old elites from the Party 1936-38

It has been argued before that some non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union suffered disproportionately during the Purges, but even if this is true of the Tajik SSR, not all sectors of the population were affected equally. The latest estimates suggest that 0.52% of the Tajikistani

¹⁰² Bahriniso Kabilova, "N. Maksum: Dolgii put' k priznaniyu," interview with Khosiat Maksumova taken in 2001, and published 13 June 2011 in http://www.toptj.com/News/2011/06/13/n_maksum_dolgiy_put_k_priznaniyu

¹⁰³ Khodzhibaeva, Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. *Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 13.

population of 1,382,168 were convicted in 1937 to 1938, of which 2,582 were shot, and 4,552 sent to the gulag.¹⁰⁴

As to the impact on the old elites of Khujand, the profound seismic shocks of the Great Purges represented the biggest challenge ever levelled at their authority (and, of course, their physical persons). For a few years after the dust had settled, the Communist Party appeared to have finally affected the changing of the guard that had been on the cards since 1917. Very few of the old elite families escaped unscathed, and only those with the most elaborate camouflage – who resorted to stratagems such as changing name, walling up the family Qur'an, moving to another city, adopting European dress, marrying a Russian, taking a job in industry (or another sector not favoured by old elites). In combination, these might help, but nothing could guarantee survival.¹⁰⁵ Some of those who had cultivated connections to highly placed officials paid dearly for their efforts: when patrons were arrested, often their protégés were rounded up too.

The repeated investigations into the activities of party member Khamro Khojimuratov, however, point to the occasional resilience of solidarity networks and systems of patronage, even in the face of mass state terror. Khamro Khojimuratov, born 1905, of Tajik ethnicity, classed as an “employee of batrak origin,” had served in the army between 1927 and 1929, and been a Party member since 1928. The Penjikent party organisation had expelled him in 1934 for concealing from the Party the class enemy status of one Bobo Yunusov, but Khojimuratov had been reinstated in early 1935 following an appeal. Khojimuratov had been once again expelled from the party in September 1937, this time for connections with one of the many alleged counter-revolutionary nationalist groups, this one supposedly headed by one Israfil' Babajanov.

¹⁰⁴ Mark Iunge, Gennadii Bordiugov, Rol'f Binner, *Vertikal' bol'shogo terrora*, Moscow 2008, 529.

¹⁰⁵ By camouflage, I refer to tactics such as changing one's family name, burning or walling up the family Qur'an, adopting European dress, and entering a profession not favoured by old elites, such as industry.

Khojimuratov was also accused of shielding (or concealing) kulaks, and more particularly of shielding the son of a powerful functionary [presumably a pre-revolutionary functionary of the Emirate] and exploiter Abdulqosim Aliev, for whom he himself had worked for ten years. He was accused of continuing to support the Aliev family and of insinuating several counter-revolutionary nationalists into positions of power (named in the document).¹⁰⁶ Once again, the Party dismissed the charges brought against Khojimuratov by the Penjikent party cell, finding no evidence of connections with counter-revolutionary groups, and ordered the Penjikent party cell to give him back his party documents.

It is of course, impossible to be sure that there was any truth at all to the allegations brought against Khojimuratov – particularly in the oppressive, paranoid atmosphere of 1937, it is almost as easy to imagine that the charges were invented *ex nihilo* to fulfil a quota. The number of similar cases over the years, however, suggests that it was indeed possible to shield those in one's patronage group steadfastly from harm, to advance their careers, and to get away with it.

“My father was such a righteous man (*odami ganda halol budegi de*)”

In Khujand, many arrests were made on the basis of a list produced in 1936, and subsequently updated several times, detailing the names, for each *mahalla* (neighbourhood) of Khujand, of every class alien who had lost his voting rights due to their current occupation or social status (usually a combination of the two). Each male name on the list is followed by a label expanding on the class alien classification, such as imam, merchant, or boi (rich man); the women appear on the list only by virtue of being married to or daughters of a male class alien. These lists by neighbourhood include 112 people whose names include the -khon suffix

¹⁰⁶ RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.91

distinctive of the *turaho*; for perhaps half of these, their designation as ‘*tura*’ is the reason they feature on the list; others are described as kulaks, shaikhs, imams, *eshon* or merchants (*savdogar*). Where more than one version of the list exists for the same mahalla, the later list will note that certain people have died, others have been ‘purged’ (*sof shudegi*: in Persian, to cleanse or purify), or removed because their names were counted twice. Where the same names appear again, quite often the accompanying label is different, suggesting that there was greater clarity concerning who the class enemies were in practice than which aspect of their identity (their wealth, piety, or ancestry, for example) was the more offensive.

1936 to 1938 were also, in the memory of Khujandis, the years of the harshest crackdown against Islam. Those were the years in which antique books, hurriedly disposed of, could be seen floating down the Syr-Darya.¹⁰⁷ Those were the darkest years for Muslim believers, as the elder of Qozi Lucchakon mahalla recalled. In summer 2011, the rais of Qozi Luchchakon mahalla recited his *haft pusht* (literally, seven skins) to me – seven generations of his male, patrilineal ancestors in ascending order. His paternal grandfather had owned the teahouse by the neighborhood mosque. Together, these two buildings formed the social hub of that mahalla, and growing up in the family of the *choikhonachi* was the reason, I was informed, that my interlocutor was so knowledgeable about the history of the mahalla and its inhabitants. The mosque before which we chatted looked newly built, but I was assured that an old mosque had once stood on the same location. When I asked what changes the Bolshevik Revolution had brought to the life of the mahalla, the rais’ reply was emphatic: [after the revolution] there had

¹⁰⁷ The image is attributed to Amir Ghafurov, brother of Bobojon Ghafurov, First Secretary of the Tajik CP 1946-56. Source: Nurali Davlat, “Sovetskii ideolog, sovershivshii hadzh,” published 5 July 2012 and accessed online at <http://gazeta.tj/dp/5102-sovetskij-ideolog-sovershivshij-xadzh.html>.

not been “a single minute when this mosque was not functioning” (“*Ne, in masjid yagon minut be kor mondegish ne*”). The mosque had remained open and operational until 1937:

At that time there was turmoil, troikas were formed, and they were arresting people. People became fearful, and hid or escaped any which way. (*vakti ke u hurriyat meshad-ku, troika paido meshad, odam kapi meshad, odamo metarsad, chorta rav megureza*)

As the story had been told to him (my interlocutor was born in 1952), it was only in 1937 that things had become dangerous in the mahalla. That was the time when “they were burning those books, those Muslim books...they took away the books – the old, rare manuscripts, and the Qur’ans, from people’s homes. Some people walled up their tokcha, the shelved niches in the wall, in which books, ceramics and other valued objects are kept and displayed (see photo on following page) so as to preserve their holy books from detection and destruction. Others burned their Qur’ans, as this was considered the most respectful way of disposing of a holy object, rather than allowing them to be defiled or fall into infidel hands.



Figure 21: *Tokcha* in a traditional Khujandi home of a tura household

Photographed in Khujand in 2011 by the author.

“Many many tura were taken away in 1937, it was a terrible year. They were all innocent, they had done no wrong. They didn’t break anybody’s trust (*khionat*). But – ‘when asked to bring a cap, they brought the hat as well’ (Tajik proverb, meaning ‘they overdid it’).”

- Interview with Ona-khon conducted by this author, July 2011

During the Great Terror almost every head of family in Khujand (now renamed Leninobod) who could be identified as “tura” (pl. *turaho*) was arrested – at least, almost all those who had somehow evaded or survived previous campaigns against religious figures, kulaks and bois, landowners and merchants. Those arrested in 1937-38 were either sent into exile, or to a firing squad. In 1937, heads of *tura* families were arrested explicitly because of their lineage.

Tura families claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammed's early caliphs and had preserved a strong group identity founded on endogamy, association with family shrines, Islamic piety and a proud tradition of literacy – and indeed literary production – in Chagatai (Turkic), Persian and Arabic. Tura group identity and solidarity was reinforced through weddings, funerals and other life-cycle events, as well as pilgrimages to shrines and holy places. While some younger scions of Tura families, such as Bashirkhon Ishoqi and Akram Mansurov (aka Mansurkhon Akramov),¹⁰⁸ had been able to leverage their family's cultural capital to acquire a Soviet education and career, others had continued to occupy their traditional niche in society, while succumbing to successive confiscations of property and loss of political rights (all known *turaho* were *lishentsy*).

The great hunt for candidates for arrest based on lineage sheds light on the close and multiple ties between those old elite families I will call “non-aligned” (those who openly rejected the new Soviet way of life) and those who had made their peace with the system, or even embraced it, and built a Soviet career for themselves. The story of Yusufkhon Tura is one example of this phenomenon.

Yusufkhon Tura, a prominent cleric and Islamic scholar who had studied in Bukhara, Samarkand and Andijan, was among those who was arrested for the first time in 1937. In conversation with me, his elderly daughter produced an anecdote designed to illustrate the great esteem in which her father continued to be held by his fellow Muslims and fellow townspeople, even as the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet rule in Central Asia approached. “My father was going out one day when I was very small, 4 or 5, [in 1936 or 37]. At that very moment, a Hoji

¹⁰⁸ see Norinisoï Alimuhammad and Hotami Homid, *Mardi Neksirisht*, Dushanbe 2006.

[someone who had performed the Hajj] was coming up towards us on a horse, just as my father was coming out from the hujjra of the mosque. The path was narrow, and one of them would have to give way to the other. The Hoji's name was Olimi Dandon – in those days Hojis were few [the Hajj to Mecca and Medina had always been expensive and arduous, but at that time it was also forbidden]. The Hoji jumped down from his horse, and folded his arms in front of his chest (in sign of respect), bending forward to indicate that my father should take precedence. The Hoji said to my father "Taksir, you will go first, and then I will go later." Then I remember my father saying "No, no, you go first, and I will go later." They discussed the matter, but the Hoji would not budge: he gave way to my father, and then passed himself."

Ona-khon also remembers her father's arrest:¹⁰⁹ "I was 5 years old when he was taken away. I remember that I ran after him with one of my girlfriends as far as Sari Sang. I ran but I could not catch up with him, though there were no cars at that time. Two policemen had hold of him from the back and were pushing him forward. I could see the very big turban that he wore, because he was a big Eshon.¹¹⁰ They took him away! He was so dearly respected. For nothing – a cruelty of God – he was taken from us, and he died."¹¹¹

The police had come earlier, his daughter recalled, and had taken the family's sheep and goats. But this one time, in 1937, "they paid no attention to anything else, but just took our father

¹⁰⁹ Elsewhere in the interview Ona-khon describes the story of her father's arrest as her first memory of him, suggesting that the story of the Hoji may perhaps have been a family anecdote.

¹¹⁰ Eshon: (pers. ishan means "they," honorifically, "he, his honour") a title of respect for religious and quasi-religious dignitaries such as doctors of the law (olim, pl. ulamo, pop. mullo), elder of Sufi brotherhoods (shaykh, pir) – especially of the Naqshbandi order – and local aristocrats (khoja, sayyid).

¹¹¹ interview with Ona-khon, conducted by Flora Roberts in Khujand, July 2011. Note that Ona-khon translates as "respected auntie / elder woman of *tura* lineage" and is not a given name. Her identity is not therefore revealed by its use.

and left.” Ona-khon recollects that at that time, “they” took the older people, the heads of families, but left the womenfolk and children behind.

By this time, in Ona-khon’s account, most of the *turaho* had run away to Afghanistan, but her father did not run away, because he believed to have earned himself solid protection from the very peak of the local power structure. Yusufkhon Tura had found a way to renew the marriage of Abdullo Rohimboev. According to Islamic law, a marriage can be dissolved if the husband repeats a divorce formula three times (this is supposed to ensure that the man really means it). Once this process – the *se talogha* – is completed, the process is deemed irreversible. Rahimboev – Hojiboev’s former schoolmate and rival from the days of the National Territorial Commission – had apparently divorced his wife in this way, and subsequently repented. He then approached Yusufkhon Tura who, as an authority in Islamic law, was encouraged (and possibly pressured) to find a way to re-validate his marriage. This he did, and seems to have been protected by Rahimboev thereafter. This protection was of no little account given that, in Ona-khon’s words, in Khujand Rahimboev was “a *boi* as big as Stalin.” Ona-khon recollects that Rahimboev was arrested at around the same time as her father, suggesting a causal link between the two, in that Rahimboev’s protection would have been invalidated by his arrest. Further, during the Great Purges, it was common for protégés of those arrested to fall under suspicion at the same time.

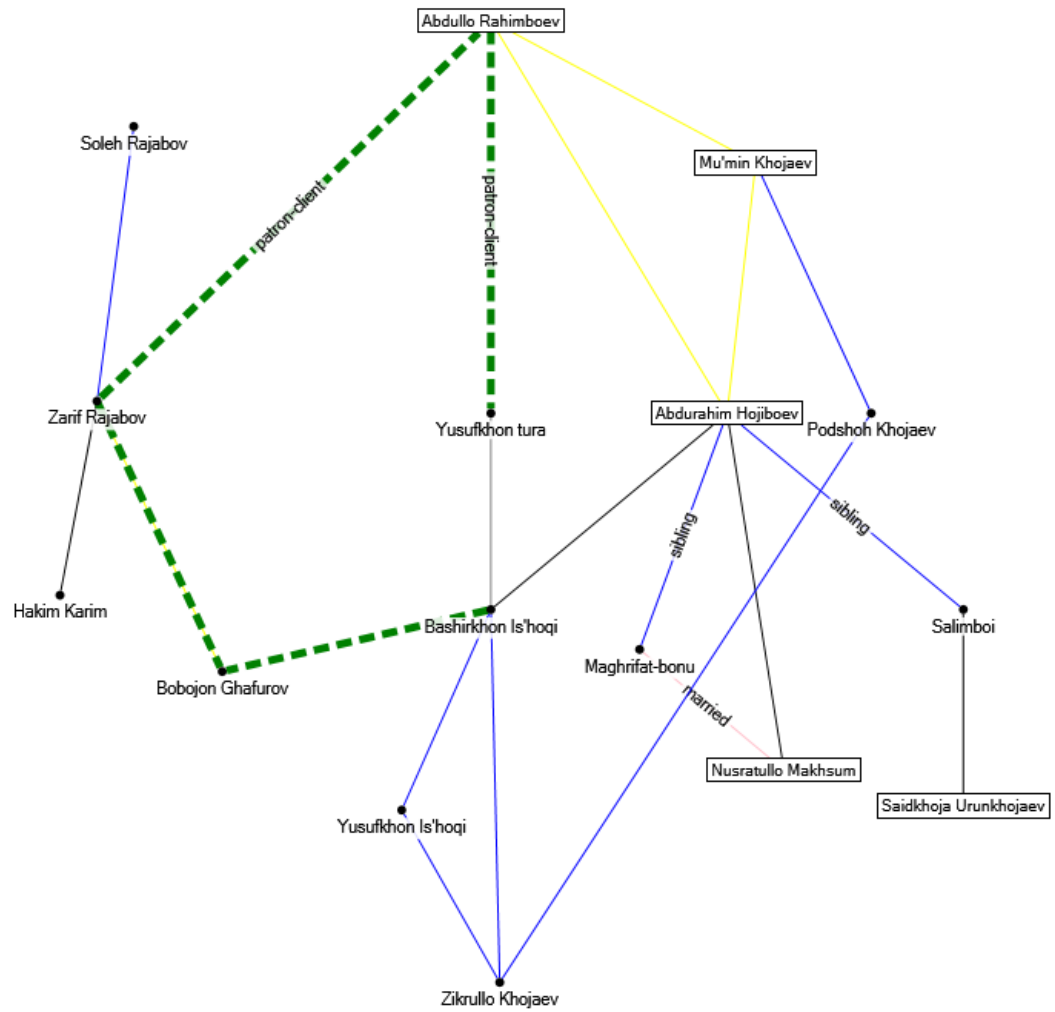
Rahimboev’s most recent appointment, it may be remembered, was as Chair of Tajik SovNarKom – he had taken over from his rival Hojiboev when the latter was relieved of his duties in December 1933.¹¹² Rahimboev’s sister and wife, meanwhile, like the wives and children of the arrested *turaho*, were suffered to remain in Khujand, along with his children. Interestingly, the

¹¹² He did not last long: an article in Moscow Pravda on September 22, 1937 refers to Rahimboev as a spy

story of her father's connection to the big boi Rahimboev was the only one that Ona-khon shrank from telling in full, cutting herself short and explaining that she did not want any trouble. Rahimboev's relatives still live in Khujand, and Ona-khon was fully aware that he, Rahimboev, unlike her own father, had been posthumously rehabilitated (in Tajik "*safed kard*" – lit. made white).

Even someone seemingly so far removed from the machinery of the Bolshevik state as Yusufkhon Tura, the respected scholar of Islam, could prove to have very meaningful ties to the new/old political elite, and the Great Purges is a time at which such connections are revealed. As far as Ona-khon is aware, none of the *tura* exiled from Khujand ever came back, although some others who had been exiled at the same time did return. Among those who did return was a certain Orifi, who, though not a *tura*, was from an old elite family whose son went on to become both a professor and a wealthy and well-connected businessman. When Orifi came back from exile in Siberia, he sought out Ona-khon's family to tell them that he had overseen her father's burial in person, thus bringing the family a degree of closure.

Whatever the reason for this state of affairs, the fact that the families of those arrested in the Great Purges were so consistently suffered to remain where they were (there are cases in which those exiled were accompanied by their families voluntarily), but this concession had a significant long term effect. Given that lineage is the basic criterion on which the prestige of families like the *turaho* is based, from which other sources of prestige, such as learning, piety and wealth stem, provided that the heirs of the purged survived, the family and the family honour could be rebuilt. And this is precisely what happened, as later chapters will tell.



Created with NodeXL (<http://nodexl.codeplex.com>)

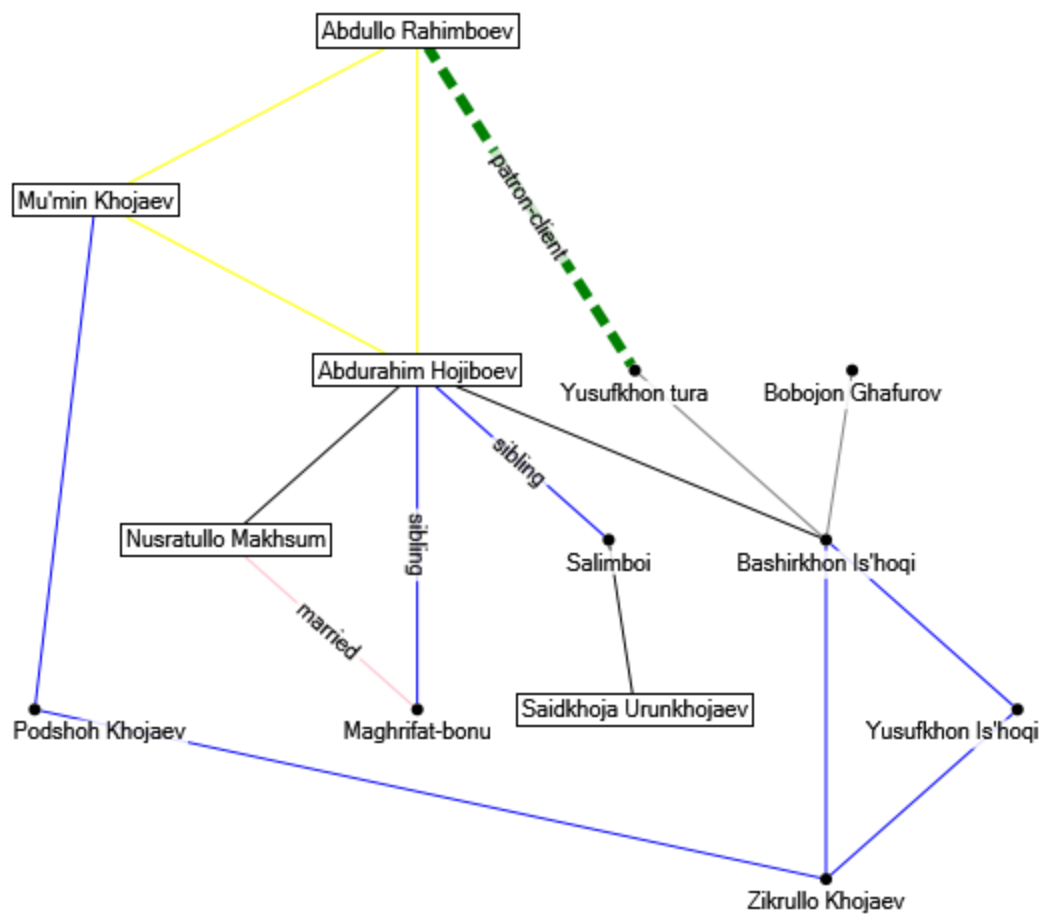


Figure 22: Illustrative connections between prominent Khujandi khoja families

Above is an example of a Khujandi network, in which different types of connection are displayed: blood connections are in blue (such as that between Mu'min Khojaev and the Mufti Podshoh Khojaev), work connections are in black (such as that between Makhsu and Hojiboev), and schoolmates are joined by a yellow line.

Chapter Five. City on Paper: Writing Tajik in Stalinobod (1930-38)

In August 1930, two young teachers from Bukhara were elated to receive official invitations to attend the inaugural Congress of Tajik Scholars, to be held later that month in Stalinobod, the new capital of the Tajik SSR. Progressive Persian-speaking academics, poets, educators and writers had been invited from every city in Central Asia, along with the most eminent Russian orientalists, in order to assist at the birth of a new Soviet language and literature.

Tajikistan had been made a full republic within the Soviet Union only the previous year, and would therefore now need a suitably socialist national culture, articulated in the titular language of the republic. This August 1930 congress would continue the work of codifying Tajik, or *Tojiki* – which was, and is, a close relative of the Persian spoken in Iran and Afghanistan – as a distinct language. Following the lead of their Turkic neighbors in Uzbekistan, the Tajiks had already passed a decree in 1928 that established the Latin script as the official writing vehicle for the Tajik language. Tajik officials hoped that the nation's new capital would begin to exert a gravitational pull over Persian speaking intellectuals in the region, for there was much to be done.

Our two young teachers, Bahoutdin Ikromi and Jalol Ikromi (no relation), both of whom were trilingual¹ and highly literate, having been educated both privately and in recently established Soviet schools, were delighted to have the opportunity to play their part in forming a

¹ They had been taught to read classical Arabic, Persian, Turkic (all in Arabic script) as well as Russian, and could speak Russian, as well as the languages now labelled Tajik and Uzbek. Jalol Ikromi, as we will see, could also speak Arabic fairly well.

new, genuinely Socialist, Tajik language and culture.² Being young and short on funds, part of their excitement was surely due to the prospect of travelling to a new place, by means of a railroad that had only been inaugurated the previous year. Stalinobod was a new place in more ways than one: before the establishment of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in 1929, Stalinobod had been Dushanbe, a village named for the day of its weekly market (*Dushanbe* means Monday). In 1930 Stalinobod was a capital, but very far from being a city.

It took a certain type of visionary optimism – not uncommon, at the time, in Bolshevik circles – to see Stalinobod as a location worthy of bearing the great leader’s name, but the decision to locate the capital there was no accident. Although the territory of the Tajik republic did exclude all the major Tajik urban centers when it was formed in 1925,³ there were ancient towns larger and more prestigious than Dushanbe to choose from, such as Penjikent, close to the western border with Uzbekistan (and perhaps excluded on those grounds), and Hisor. Hisor was a town less than thirty kilometers to the west of Dushanbe, which had in centuries past been the seat of an independent khanate, and later served as the governor of East Bukhara’s winter residence. It was decided instead to build the Soviet capital afresh, from the ground up. The chosen location would be relatively unencumbered by traditions of noblesse oblige and deference to authority – to say nothing of any buildings worth mentioning – and here a new Soviet architecture modulated by socialist urban planning would mold a new Soviet man and woman.

² For a clear and strikingly concise history of Tajik Literature, see John R. Perry, “Tajik Literature: Seventy Years Is Longer than the Millennium,” in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 70, No. 3, Literatures of Central Asia (Summer, 1996), 571-573

³ See previous chapter for a brief account of how it came to be that the major centers of Tajik culture, Bukhara, Samarkand and Khujand, were all initially excluded from the territory of the Tajik ASSR. Khujand became part of Tajikistan in 1929, while Samarkand and Bukhara remain within Uzbekistan.

After the Congress, delegates were warmly invited to stay on and make of Stalinobod the capital not only of the Tajik SSR, but of Tajik language and culture. A genuinely socialist Tajik culture could not so easily take root in any of the ancient centers of Persianate culture in Central Asia: for the project to succeed, the progressive or malleable portion of the Persian-speaking intelligentsia must be resettled from Bukhara, Samarkand and Khujand into the socialist tabula rasa that was – or rather, would be – Stalinobod.⁴ For anyone who agreed to make Stalinobod their home, there were down payments in cash, the promise of modern apartments, and a choice of careers in the arts, journalism or teaching. Many gladly accepted this offer, including many young heirs of elite lineages – several with Jadid connections – who felt that the atmosphere in their hometowns was becoming too hot for them, and not without reason.

As the 1930s dawned, Stalinobod was an exciting and stimulating destination for Persian-speaking intellectuals, attracted by the investment in Tajik arts and culture that followed the establishment of Tajikistan as a full republic within the Soviet Union. As the decade wore on, it also became an increasingly fraught and deadly location. Intellectuals who responded to the siren call of that 1930 Congress suffered a far worse fate than those who toiled away in relative safety and obscurity in minor towns and settlements.⁵ By the close of the decade, almost an entire generation of Tajik intellectuals – scholars, poets, musicians, composers, journalists, actors and singers, had been wiped out.

Here I will explore what drew Tajik intellectuals, and in particular, the Sovietised *asilzodagon* to Stalinobod, and what opportunities they were provided with there that helped to

⁴ Given the intermittent and restricted access to Tajik archival sources, my explanation for the decision to locate the capital in Dushanbe is currently based on a hunch, informed by several conversations with Tajik historians and scholars that took place during my fieldwork in the country (2009; 2011)

⁵ See previous chapter on Hoji Sodik and the Tajik *kolkhoz* as a venue for artistic production

compensate for the rather unpleasant living conditions in newly established capital, greatly inferior to those in their spacious, traditional courtyard homes in Bukhara, Samarkand and Khujand. The high points of living in the capital of a new national republic, in the nerve center and building site of Tajik national culture emerge clearly from the memoir of the Soviet novelist Jalol Ikromi, as does the mounting dread and paranoia of the mid to late 1930s.

For several reasons, the Khujandi intelligentsia did not feel the gravitational pull of Stalinobod to the same extent as the Persian speakers of Samarkand and Bukhara in the early years of the Tajik SSR. Bukhara and Samarkand saw their budgets for Tajik-language cultural production diminish sharply once Tajikistan became a full republic, whereas Khujand, transferred as we have seen from the Uzbek to the Tajik SSR, saw a corresponding shift in funding in favour of the titular nationality. Furthermore, while a rail network connected Samarkand and Bukhara to Stalinobod, and Khujand to Kokand and Tashkent, these northern and southern routes did not link up, making it very laborious and time-consuming to travel between Khujand and Stalinobod by rail (or, indeed, by any other means). Although, as we saw in the previous chapter, Khujandis were by no means spared in the purges of the 1930s, the capital was yet more deadly for the intelligentsia during those years. By the time the Khujandi/Leninobodi intelligentsia started coming to settle in Stalinobod in significant numbers in the postwar period, the ranks of the Tajik intelligentsia from other urban centers had been considerably thinned, and the period of the greatest ascendancy of the Leninobodi elite would begin.

What were the factors that led some intellectuals to feel, and to be, particularly vulnerable during the 1930s, while others survived? Was an elite family background always and inevitably a disadvantage, or were other factors (also) determinant? If so, which ones?

I explore the interpersonal relations between Tajik intellectuals in Stalinobod – who helped whom get a job, who collaborated with whom, who socialized together, who avoided whom – in order to get at the issue of agency during the Stalinist purges. Although it became clear, in retrospect, that the purges had been initiated by Stalin himself and enthusiastically supported by his henchmen, it is nonetheless clear that many Tajiks also felt that their fellow nationals shared moral responsibility for the purges. Tajik intellectuals, like other national intelligentsias, attacked one another in the press and took part in the climate of mounting hostility and frenzy to unmask “enemies of the people.” In the Tajik SSR, just as elsewhere in the Union, there were many who professed a sincere belief in the veracity of the charges levelled against others, and did not call the rationale of the purges into question even after they were themselves arrested, preferring to believe that the mistake made in their case was an isolated incident.

To what extent were the fault-lines exposed by the Stalinist purges those that had been fostered by Soviet society – along class lines, primarily, and to a lesser extent, along national lines – and to what extent did they reflect other types of loyalties or rivalries? I argue that in many cases, Soviet institutions and forms of socialization frequently reproduced, even where they sought rather to disrupt, pre-Soviet institutions and forms of socialization in the Tajik republic. Furthermore, dynamics peculiar to Tajik society, or, more broadly characteristic of sedentary, urban Central Asian societies – norms governing male socialization, and female seclusion – affected the implementation of the purges in the Tajik republic such that a surprisingly high number of elite lineages were not able to survive physically, but to recover lost ground in the post-Stalin period.

The Things That Befell Us

The posthumous publication of the memoirs of the novelist Jalol Ikromi (1909-93) in 2009 was a milestone event in the small world of post-Soviet Tajik publishing. There had been almost no other memoirs published by public figure of his generation – so few of whom had even survived as long as he had – and such candid and detailed reminiscences of the Stalinist purges were virtually unprecedented. The memoir has been widely cited in Tajik scholarly work and dissertations,⁶ but remains virtually unknown outside the country (it has not, so far as I know, been translated even into Russian). There simply is no comparable first-hand account of the impact of the purges on the Tajik literary world.⁷

Jalol Ikromi began to write his reminiscences at the age of seventy-five, in the mid-1980s, but the manuscript remained unpublished for many years. His son Jonon, a Chemistry Professor at the Tajik Academy of Sciences, emphatically states in the preface that there could have been no question of publishing it before the fall of the Soviet Union. In old age, his father had been too frank in his assessment of prominent public figures, too outspoken in his criticism of the Stalin's henchmen, both local and European. A further publishing delay was caused by the Civil war of 1992-1997, so that although the preface is dated to 1993, the year of Jalol Ikromi's death, the book was not published until 2009, when a grand total of seven hundred copies were printed in Dushanbe.

⁶ See for example Usmanjon Gafarov, *Dzhadidizm v Srednei Azii v kontse XIX-nachale XXvv.* (Dushanbe, 2013), Makhmudzhon Ma'rufovich Shodiev, *Zhizn' i tvorchestvo Ali Khusha* (Dushanbe, 2003),; Masrur Ahmatovich Abdullaev, *Problemy evoliutsii natsional'noi identichnosti v Tadzhikskoi publitsistike (konets XIX- pervaiia polovina XX vekov).*

⁷ The publication of *On chi az sar guzasht* was preceded by the publication of several autobiographical articles by Jalol Ikromi, and also by Dadojon Rajabi's landmark book on the purges, *Osmoni Hamida* (lit. Commendable Sky). Dadojon Rajabi, however, was born in 1938, and so his account is based on personal testimonies and survivor accounts that he collected (he also cites Ikromi's articles).

Ikromi's preface includes an apostrophe to his readers:

Come, reader do not lose your patience with me, if in describing these people, I clothe some of them in black, or in grey, others in tints of rose and green, while others in white robes of honor. I am impartial, and I will write all there is. Even an impartial description gives them color, as it was their own deeds and actions that made them white or black.⁸

On chi az sar guzasht, which can roughly be translated as *The Things that Befell Us* (or: *What Swept Over Our Heads*), promises in the introduction frank – and even “impartial” – assessments of some of the major personalities of twentieth century Tajik history, each depicted in their true colors, whether these be black, grey, or “tints of rose and green,” and in this respect it does not disappoint. Even by the time of writing, most of the author's contemporaries and conversation partners had died, so Jalol Ikromi felt few restraints in leaving his own version of events for posterity. Archival access in Tajikistan has been so difficult for many years, and assessments of the true impact of the Stalinist purges are still so rare and apparently feared by the authorities to this day, that memoirs such as his are invaluable in reconstructing what life was like in Stalinobod in the 1930s.

Jalol Ikromi's memoir is very much the work of a novelist, albeit one who professes himself thoroughly tired out with fiction, and of the struggle to write and publish under Soviet conditions: “I have now promised myself that I will not write another novel [...] This memoir will be my last work.”⁹ So although he writes with the eye and ear of the novelist, he seems to have excused himself from following the linear progression common to his and many other Soviet novels. As a novelist, he remains intent on exploiting the dramatic potential of an anecdote, selectively deploying dialogue to illuminate character traits and idiosyncratic speech

⁸ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 8-9. Jalol Ikromi's memoir has not been translated into Russian or English, and all translations offered here are my own.

⁹ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 8.

patterns, and indulging in the occasional lyric description of places. It is possible that the author intended to edit the manuscript further prior to publication, but as published, the style of the memoir is conversational and informal: several anecdotes begin with something along the lines of “I can’t remember whether I have told you about this already, but in any case, here goes...”¹⁰

For Ikromi, the boundary between fiction and memoir is a porous one: more than once, he refers readers wishing for more information about certain personalities described to a certain character in one of his published novels (a technique also adopted by Aini in his memoirs). Of his own youngest brother Muhiddin makhsuṁ, for example, who worked for the secret police in the 1920s, Jalol Ikromi has this to say:

Cruel Muhiddin makhsuṁ committed many betrayals and crimes, but in the end he was exposed and brought to trial. I portrayed him in the novel “Twelve gates of Bukhara” as Asad makhsuṁ and described all his betrayals and crimes in detail.¹¹

While the above quotation does little to speak to the veracity of the memoir directly, it does suggest that Ikromi drew from a common pool of lived experience for his fiction and non-fiction, and that he expected his reader to find both useful in forming an understanding of the times in which he lived and wrote.

In form, his memoir is loosely constructed, episodic, and although the order is roughly chronological, in that he begins by reporting what he was told of his family’s history prior to his birth, and an account of his childhood precedes that of his adulthood, other organizational principles also govern the text. The early chapters are centered on his extended family, as he deals with both the previous generations and his own, proceeding by describing in turn the character and fortune of each of his paternal uncles, their wives and children. Often, mention of a

¹⁰ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 208.

¹¹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 97.

character in passing will yield a vignette of a scene in which they played a part, and that scene will lead to another character sketch, and another key vignette: in this way, several episodes recur more than once, told from slightly different angles depending on the character whose portrayal prompted the memory. The last chapter is about his friends, and focuses on those friendships that have not already been dealt with in previous chapters. Throughout, his focus remains on relationships, and the connection between anecdotes is most often a character shared by both.

There are many digressions, or rather there are none: each story is linked to the next by a friend or relative of Jalol Ikromi's who features in both stories. Throughout his life, his social circle appears to be wide, but relatively uniform: he has a large extended family, almost all of whom he remains in contact with over the decades; beyond his family circle, his friends are almost all urban Tajik or Uzbeks, and are either writers, or patrons of writers. Many of the intellectuals he associates closely with in adulthood and describes in his memoir are from a similar social background to his own; often, he remarks that his father knew theirs. The very structure of the memoir – like a molecule – thus serves to underscore the crucial importance of personal networks in the life of Jalol Ikromi and of those in his circle.

Judging by his memoir, at all the most crucial junctures in his life, personal connections played a vital role in the outcome. At this point it should be made clear that Ikromi was born into one of the most prominent families in Bukhara: his grandfather was succeeded as main judge (*qozi kalon*) of Bukhara by his oldest paternal uncle. Personal and family connections thus played both negative and positive roles in his life under Soviet rule. To give just one example, while still a teenager, in 1927, Jalol Ikromi was expelled from the teacher training institute in Samarkand on account of his family background. He was advised by family friends to go to

Termez, presumably precisely because there no one would know him, and he could have a fresh start. This situation proved most uncongenial – Ikromi describes himself as gripped by fear at the prospect of being surrounded by strangers, and became ill within days of being in this unknown, but not markedly inhospitable, town. He went to the doctor in Termez, told this doctor who he is and what his background is, and asks for a *spravka* advising that he be sent back to his hometown for health reasons. This he was given, and he returned very happy and relieved to his native Bukhara. He states explicitly that the occasional taunt at his school from people ribbing him about his father and ancestry is preferable to being among strangers.¹²

Ikromi's character descriptions reveal a mental habitus and cultural values very similar to other *asilzodagon* of his generation, commonly held by urban elites in Samarkand, Bukhara and Khujand. Ikromi always remarks on the degree of learning attained by those he describes, and deploys a rich vocabulary to describe gradations of education: semi-literate, literate, educated, learned, wise, enlightened, progressive.¹³ Particularly in the early, pre-revolutionary section of the memoir, those who are scholarly in their inclinations, like his father, are also described as enlightened, progressive, forward-thinking, whereas the illiterate (like his father's second wife, Oia-kalon) might be "given to irrational, eccentric behavior and appear feeble-minded."¹⁴ Those who are educated, in Ikromi's view, are also often sensitive, generous, restrained, polite – these are the traits that Ikromi values above all others. His moral judgments are made in no uncertain terms: he values loyalty, restraint, decency, and other traits that he associates with a "good

¹² Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 162-64.

¹³ Among the words Jalol Ikromi uses to denote degrees of literacy are: *bosavod*, *bafahm*, *donishmand*, *bo adab*.

¹⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 20.

upbringing,” in classist language somehow reminiscent of the moral code of the nineteenth to early twentieth century British gentleman – and altogether typical of the *asilzodagon*.¹⁵

Overall, Ikromi has left us an engaging, well-observed and opinionated memoir, and he is virtually the sole intellectual of his generation to have written so bold and detailed account of life in the Tajik SSR under Stalin.¹⁶ Viewing this key period in the formation of the Tajik Soviet intelligentsia through the eyes of a son of the Bukharan ulama like Jalol Ikromi allows me to note points of similarity and difference between the Khujandi *asilzodagon* cohorts at the heart of this project and their peers in other traditional Persian-speaking urban centres of the region.

“Join us!” The First Congress of Tajik Scholars

Jalol Ikromi recalled his journey to Dushanbe/Stalinobod¹⁷ for the August 1930

Conference of Tajik Scholars in these terms:

We travelled in the regular [second class] carriage, which had three tiers of bunks and rather small windows. After two days, with much merriment and conviviality, chatting and telling jokes, we arrived in Dushanbe. It had been a year since they had built the railroad from Termez to Dushanbe.¹⁸

The cheerful high spirits built up in the course of the train journey were undented by the arrival at the train station in Stalinobod, where there was as yet no station building, and no-one to meet them. The closest building to the station was the Central Executive Committee, which had been the first big new building to grace the horizon. The Congress delegates made their way to

¹⁵ For more on the upbringing of the *asilzodagon* in the early to mid-twentieth century, see chapter 7.

¹⁶ On the subject of memoirs, there is at least one other monumental Tajik-language memoir, in two volumes that deserves mention here: *Dar juvoli sangin* (“In a stone sack”), authored by Mordechai. H. Bachaev (whose pen name was Muhib), published in Jerusalem in 1988 and dedicated “to the memory of those who died in prison [camps] and in the war.” Although though

¹⁷ Although Ikromi never once uses the term Stalinobod, but consistently refers to his adoptive hometown as Dushanbe, the name the city reverted to after 1961, I will use its official name during the time period covered by this chapter.

¹⁸ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 172.

the Commissariat of Education, where they were given a warm welcome and sent on in their phaeton to the pedagogical *tekhnikum* (a teacher training institute), where they were to be lodged, as there were no hotels in Stalinobod at the time. Once they had rested, Jalol Ikromi set off on foot with some of the other delegates to explore the new capital.

The main street, the only one paved with stone, was Lenin Street, which led from the station to the last square of the city, and was flanked by teahouses, Kashgari¹⁹ cafes, and other shops. The House of the Peasant and the National Bank building had both been built on Lenin Street. The National Bank was a one-story building with a wide internal courtyard and there, under a broad veranda, there was a café which provided meals for the Congress delegates. In Gorkii Street, a one story building housing the Commissariat of Enlightenment (Education) and the office of Red Tajikistan (*Tojikistoni Surkh*), the organ of the local Communist Party. Of the House of the Press and the Commissariat of Communications, only the foundations could be seen. A cramped and narrow street, lined by the humble dwellings of the former village of Dushanbe, led to the banks of the Varzob River, where a large market still took place every Monday.²⁰

Early next morning, on August 30, the first Congress of Tajik Linguists and Scholars was inaugurated, the most ambitious government-sponsored gathering to date of scholars, poets, journalists and teachers from regional cities like Tashkent, Samarkand, and Bukhara. As far as I am aware, there were no participants from Khujand at the Congress, although a small number of Khujandi intellectuals, as we will see, would also later be attracted to life in the capital like

¹⁹ Kashgar is a city in East Turkestan (now Chinese Xinjiang); Kashgari cafes presumably served Uighur cuisine.

²⁰ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 173-74.

moths to a candle. The delegates included Sadriddin Aini,²¹ whose reputation as a writer and scholar was already firmly established, Iranian-born Marxist poet Abul-Qosim Lohuti,²² the Bukharan poet Pairav Sulaimoni, Sotim Ulughzoda,²³ the editor of the Tajik Komsomol newspaper, the Central Committee secretary, and Professor Semenov, who chaired the Congress. Many of the young Central Asians who attended had been trained as teachers in the recently established soviet teacher training institutes in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara.

One of the most pressing matters to be decided by the Congress concerned the models that were to shape the development of Tajik as a Soviet literary language. The choice of which dialect, or spoken variant of the language, to privilege as the model for literary Tajik would have far-reaching implications on the orthography as well as the vocabulary and syntax of Tajik. After much heated debate, it was decided by the Congress delegates that the language should be based on the Bukharan dialect – rather than, say, any of the dialects spoken within the actual borders of the Tajik SSR.

Given the goal of defining Tajik as a national language, as distinct from other national languages of the Union, for some, the most important consideration was limiting – as far as possible – the syntactical and vocabulary borrowings from Arabic and from Turkic languages that prevailed in the dialects of the plains and urban centers. Other considerations, however, carried the day. Most participants at the Congress being from those same plains and cities, and bearers of a traditional education in the classical Persian literary canon, it is unsurprising that the

²¹ Aini is a nom de plume, or *takhallus* in Persian. Many of the writers encountered in the chapter chose the name by which they became known in print, which in many cases became more widely known than their birth and family names. Pairav is a *takhallus*, as is Azizi, Munzim, Bektosh and so on.

²² Given the vagaries of transcription from diverse scripts, his name is also rendered as Abu'l-Qasem Lahuti, and Abolqasem Lahuti.

²³ The suffix -zoda (or -zade/h) is a Persian form of patronymic: it means “son of,” so that Ulughzoda = son of Ulugh.

literary language of Samarkand and Bukhara (very similar also to the Khujandi vernacular) was eventually adopted as the model for Soviet Tajik. Nonetheless, Arabic loan words were to be avoided as far as possible in writing Tajik. Because Arabic loan words – and particularly those that followed the rules of Arabic morphology – functioned as a measure of the cultural influence of Islam in the region, their eclipse was necessary to the creation of a more socialist linguistic landscape. This clearly parallels the way in which the chosen site for the socialist capital was as shorn as possible of all the Islamic sacred topography common to Muslim cities in the region – cemeteries, mosques, madrasas and shrines.²⁴

In his concluding remarks, the chair summarized the points that the Congress delegates had agreed upon: the new Tajik should be based on the existing language of Tajik newspapers, journals and books;²⁵ it should be close to the spoken language of Soviet Tajiks, so as to be understandable by them. As far as a Tajik script was concerned, the “lame donkey” Arabic script was to be retired, and replaced it with the “airplane” of Latin letters.²⁶ Sadriddin Aini himself, like many others of his generation, would continue to use the Arabic script until his death, in 1954 – but unlike many Islamic scholars and members of the traditionalist ulama, he had obliging copy editors at his command to transcribe his manuscripts.

As the Congress ended, a nineteen year-old boy educated in a Soviet orphanage in the Ferghana Valley, Sotim Ulughzoda, came to the podium. Too young to have clear memories of the time before the Revolution, an orphan unencumbered by potentially polluting family influences, and a graduate of the Tajik Teacher Training institute in Tashkent, Sotim Ulughzoda

²⁴ See “The Tajik Language,” chapter 8 in Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic* (I.B. Taurus, 2007), 75-85.

²⁵ This in spite of the fact that almost all of such publications had hitherto been produced outside of the borders of Tajik SSR.

²⁶ Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 81.

seemed to represent the future for Central Asia that the Party had in mind. On reaching the podium, he read out the names of the seventy or so pioneering souls who had responded to the invitation and travelled to Stalinobod to assist at the founding of Tajik soviet literature. Ulughzoda also acknowledged those in attendance, many of whom were around his own age, who had agreed to make Stalinobod their home to continue this exciting project.²⁷ To this group, which included Jalol Ikromi, in the name of the Party, Sotim Ulughzoda conferred the title of “Brigade of pace-setting literary workers.”²⁸ A new chapter of their lives was about to begin, and it was full of promise.

For Jalol Ikromi, the words exchanged at his first meeting with the Iranian Marxist poet Abduqosim Lohuti (1887-1957) seemed to augur well for his own prospects of fitting in with the prevailing ideological winds. The young Ikromi was very much in awe of Lohuti, whose poetry anthology *Red Literature* he had encountered in Bukhara, and he and his friends had read it over and over again until they knew all the poems by heart. In his imagination, Lohuti loomed “tall and strapping” like a prophet over common mortals, so Ikromi was surprised to find before him a “man of medium height, with arresting eyes, rather small hands and feet, softly spoken... he moved like a young man of twenty.”²⁹ When Lohuti heard that Ikromi was a Bukharan, he congratulated him on the rich cultural heritage of his hometown: “You all are true Tajiks and bearers of a great heritage!”³⁰ This apparently bland compliment signaled an ideological position of great significance to Ikromi, and to most Persian-speaking intellectuals at the time: for the best

²⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 178.

²⁸ Among the members of this brigade were Bektosh, Murodzoda, Bahrom Sirus, Hilol Karim (1908-1985), Azizi, Bahoutdin Ikromi, Jalol Ikromi, Obid Ismati (1905-1945), Zehni, Bukhorizoda, Rahim Hoshim (1908-1993), Khokhomov, Pairav Sulaimoni (1899-1933).

²⁹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 175

³⁰ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 174-75.

part of the last decade, the ethnic identity of the inhabitants of Bukhara and Samarkand had been a matter of dispute. If the master Lohuti – an Iranian, ironically enough – accepted Ikromi as a “true Tajik,” there could surely be no doubt that he belonged in the Tajik SSR, and therefore in Stalinobod, at the center of the Tajik national culture production.

Throughout the protracted negotiations over the national territorial delimitation of Central Asia,³¹ opposing sides had vehemently insisted that the population of several major urban centers – Bukhara, Samarkand, Khujand – should be considered basically of Turkic stock (thus, Uzbek, in the new national label), or Persian (thus, Tajik). It is a cause of continued distress to Tajik nationalists today that several Persian-speaking intellectuals, including some who later chose to identify as Tajik and move to Stalinobod, at an earlier time had come out on the Turkist side, arguing that the development and progress of the urban centers of Central Asia would best be served by promoting literacy in Uzbek, and a Turkic ethnic identity over a Persian/Tajik one. Without delving too deeply into the history of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in Central Asia, a topic which has been treated elsewhere,³² suffice it to say that, by the time the Soviet Union had been established, Pan-Turkism was a dirty word and that Tajik nationalists in particular blamed Pan-Turkic influences for the decision to allocate both Samarkand and Bukhara (and initially also Khujand) to the Uzbek SSR.

Jalol Ikromi was the nephew of the last *qozi kalon*, or chief judge, of Bukhara, and thus a scion of one of the most influential families in the city. Naturally therefore Ikromi rejoiced at the ringing endorsement, from so eminent a source as Lohuti, of the suitability of those like him to

³¹ This is one of the few areas which has been covered by recent scholarship in English: see, for example, Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

³² See for instance: Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960, Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, University of California Press, 1998.

contribute to the cause of building a Tajik socialist culture. For beyond the excitement of travel, and of meeting fellow intellectuals at the Congress, the young Jalol Ikromi was also, like many others, eager to prove himself in the service of the regime, hoping to erase through hard and loyal work the stain of an unfavorable class origin. If the Marxist Lohuti considered Ikromi's identity as a Tajik of greater significance than his membership in the ulama class, could it be that his days of being mocked – indeed hounded – as a “*makhsum*” were finally over?

The ulama class had a long history of socio-political ascendancy in Bukhara, as in the former Khanate of Kokand (and thus, in Khujand, which was contested between the two). The Manghit dynasty which ruled Bukhara between 1756 and 1920, who had adopted the title Emir to signify their claim to legitimacy as Muslim sovereigns, emphasized the Islamic shariah as the basis of their rule. Thus, the Bukharan Emirs depended on the approval of the ulama (or religious scholars) of the city, whose support they ensured through lavish patronage of religious institutions. The courts of Shariah law were all under the administration of the *qozi kalon*, who occupied the top rung of a many-tiered religious and judiciary hierarchy.³³ The position of *qozi kalon* was a hereditary one, and prior to Burhoniddin, Ikromi's paternal uncle, the post had been occupied by Ikromi's paternal grandfather, Badriddin.

All male members of an Islamic judge or dignitary's family were entitled to use the honorific “*makhsum*,” something that, in the years since the Bolshevik revolution, had become quite a liability. During his school days at the Soviet teacher training institute, some of Ikromi's schoolmates – the Komsomol members, in particular – would mock him, calling out “Hey there,

³³ For a helpful introduction to the world of the Bukharan ulama in the modern period, see ‘Sadr-i Ziya and his diary,’ in Edward A. Allworth et al (editor), *The Personal History of a Bukharan Intellectual: The Diary of Muhammad-Sharif-i Sadr-i Ziya* (Brill's Inner Asia Library, Leiden: 2004), 1 and ff.

son a judge! Hey, makhsum dear! (*ho pisari qozi, ho makhsumjon*).”³⁴ In the years after 1925, many other makhsums from the ancient urban centers of Central Asia sought new beginnings and a chance to escape the smear of privilege in the ultimate city-in-the-making, Stalinobod.

Bahoutdin Ikromi for example, who travelled to Stalinobod for the Congress with Jalol Ikromi, was the third son of a celebrated and eminent mufti of Bukhara, Ikromjon, whose influence in the city Sadriddin Aini described in his materials on the history of the Bukharan revolution.³⁵ Although in Bukhara Bahoutdin had had no party affiliation, no sooner had he moved to Stalinobod, than he turned out to have joined the Komsomol, apparently thanks to his wife who had introduced him to Qurbonov, a Bukharan Eroni (Shi’ite) who was the Komsomol chairman.³⁶ Not long afterwards, Jalol Ikromi heard with envy and indignation that Bahoutdin had been made a full member of the Party – another honor that, officially, should have been denied him on the basis of his class background. Stalinobod, the city in the making, seemed to offer the possibility of almost boundless personal reinvention and social transformation, at least to those who understood how to play by the rules.

Let the good times roll in Stalinobod

As soon as the Congress of Tajik Linguists had concluded, members of the “Brigade of Pace-setting Culture Workers” who had undertaken to make Stalinobod their home were brought into the office of the Commissar for Enlightenment, Nisor Muhammadov. He expanded on the terms of their invitation: all who undertook to move to Stalinobod within the year would be

³⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 159.

³⁵ Sadr al-Din ‘Ayni, *Tarikh-i inqilab-i fikri dar Bukhara*, and Sadriddin Aini, *Bukhara: vospominaniia*, quoted in Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*.

³⁶ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 182.

given a standard wooden house in one of the city's new districts, which would be ready by October that year. There was work for all, particularly as teachers, but for those who did not wish to teach, there were jobs in publishing, for the (Party-) newspaper or journal. Each of the Brigade members was given a large cash advance, which did much to strengthen their resolve to try their fortune in Stalinobod. So welcome and unexpected was this windfall that on the train journey home to Bukhara, Bahoutdin Ikromi could not restrain himself from constantly pulling out his wad of cash from his pocket and exclaiming "here's the cash! Here's my lovely cash!" until his companions got sick of him and temporarily hid his hoard.³⁷

Jalol Ikromi hastened back to Bukhara to tell his family the news of their impending move. Such was his optimism and naiveté that he packed up all his family heirlooms and possessions – the carpets, jewelry, porcelain, bolts of hand-woven silk and all the household goods – and sent them off to Stalinobod by mail, while he himself came by train at the appointed time, in October, with his wife Saodat, his mother in law Salomatbegin, who was also his aunt, and his infant daughter.³⁸ He soon had cause to wish he had made his initial trip alone and unencumbered, for he found on arrival that the promised wooden house was as yet unbuilt, and a portion of his luggage had been stolen in transit. Fortunately for Jalol Ikromi, his nephew Sulaimonkhon Usmonov³⁹ had already found his bearings in Stalinobod to the point that he was able to direct the newly arrived family to a derelict little hut, with a single entrance way but no

³⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 186.

³⁸ Endogamy was the norm in old elite families of Central Asia, and first cousin marriages were common. See chapter 1 for more about marriage practices in the families of Islamic notables.

³⁹ Due to the custom of marriages between first cousins prevalent in ulama families Sulaimonkhon Usmonov was related to Jalol Ikromi through both of his parents: he was the son of Saodat's sister and of Jalol's first cousin (also, grandson of the last qozi kalon of Bukhara).

windows.⁴⁰ One wonders what Ikromi would have done for accommodation without the advantage of personal connections.



Figure 23: Stalinobod street view, 1928.

A horse drawn cart can be seen, and the traditional style of dress with a long robe and a turban predominate, but electrical wires are also a feature of the landscape.

Stalinobod at the time was a popular and chaotic destination:

On 1 May, 1929, the first train steamed into Stalinobod, and since then the stream of new arrivals has never ceased. Every day people arrived from all parts of the Soviet Union. They were not only men drawn here by enthusiasm for fighting at an exposed point for the socialist ideal. Many were enticed by the surplus food which was still being enjoyed here at a time when there was scarcity in many districts of the Union, or by the high salaries which specialists were paid here, ‘at the front’. Curiosity and lust for adventure must have attracted not a few, and during the NEP-time when the door was opened for free trading again, innumerable speculators streamed out here, all hoping to make money by buying up karakul skins, silk and carpets.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 188.

⁴¹ Hans E. Adler, “An Architect's Notes on Soviet-Turkestan,” *Man*, Vol. 44 (Nov. - Dec., 1944), pp. 129-134.
Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2791799>

Thus wrote the British architect Hans E. Adler, who was invited to Stalinobod in 1932 to oversee the construction of several buildings, and wrote about his experiences some years later. His report vividly conjures up the frontier atmosphere of a new town in the making, in which the myriad architectural styles springing up side by side mirrored the heterogeneity of the population. For an architect, the challenges of working in Stalinobod were considerable: until the railroad was opened in 1929, all building materials except clay had to be transported by camel and then by lorry. Even after trains began to arrive in Stalinobod, building costs were high, as there was no timber nearby and no stone quarries in operation. When Adler arrived in 1932, he saw “tall concrete edifices [...] growing out of a mass which included every imaginable type of human habitation.” There were yurts, which had been transported there by horse and camel by pastoralist nomads who had found work making bricks. Other workers had dug themselves basic shelters in the earth, covered by roofs consisting of boards, through which their stove-pipes projected. In the first phase of frantic building, a great variety of architectural styles were tried out in Stalinobod, ranging from the classical to “modern cubes and prisms of glass and concrete,” while others adopted what Adler terms “a semi-oriental style” for the homes they built.

In a tellingly imperialist response to the severe housing shortage, which speaks volumes about the attitude of the Soviet power towards the “backward” peoples of the Empire, it was decided to import standardized wooden houses, from European Russia.⁴² Such houses were presented as an incentive – a way of luring in qualified literate Central Asians who had been conditioned since the Tsarist conquest to think of European manufactured goods as superior,

⁴² Similar pre-fabricated wooden houses were apparently used in the early years to ease the housing shortage in Magnitogorsk. See Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 235.

more modern and desirable than the local architectural style that been molded over the centuries by the ecosystem, the climate and cultural preferences. An entire “standard district” was build, of wooden two story buildings, to which Tajik writers and journalists, among others, were assigned.



Figure 24: Aerial view of central Stalinobod in the 1930s.

These “standard homes,” imported at considerable cost and with great difficulty from distant factories in European Russia, proved to be completely unsuited to the climate, “and their occupants suffocated in them during the seven extremely hot and entirely rainless summer months.”⁴³ Loess clay, on the other hand, a versatile building material with a long history in the region, was readily available, but this was a material the Soviets bent over backwards to avoid deploying in the 1930s, because buildings of unbaked clay bricks were one among many symbols of backwardness – along with camels, female seclusion and the Arabic script – representing all that they sought to rid Central Asia of.

⁴³ Adler, “An Architect's Notes on Soviet-Turkestan,” *Man*, Vol. 44 (Nov. - Dec., 1944), 130. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2791799>



Figure 25: Lenin monument
in the Central Park of
Culture and Rest

Stalinobod, 1938.



Figure 26: The National
Theater of Tajikistan

Stalinobod, 1936. The first
home of the National
Theater of Tajikistan on
Kommunisticheskaya Street.

Photographs from the Central State Archives of the Republic of Tajikistan, and from the collection of the author, collected and published by Ghafur Shermatov for Aziaplus. SOURCES:

http://www.toptj.com/News/2014/08/21/znakomstvo_s_drugim_dushanbe_poteryannoe_detstvo;

http://www.toptj.com/News/2014/08/12/Stalinobod_dushanbe_%E2%80%93_rakurs_dlinoy_v_vek.

“And so too – Adler continues “was the daily life of this young capital town thoroughly mixed as was its population as heterogeneously composed, not only in its appearance, since the inhabitants had been scrambled together from even the remotest parts of the

USSR. These components together gave the town a personal character which was unique in the world.”⁴⁴

The geographic, social and cultural heterogeneity of Stalinobod must have been a strong component of its appeal for the progressive Central Asian intelligentsia who made it their home in the early 1930s, in part because – particularly since the sad demise of the bold experiment that had been the People’s Republic of Bukhara – Persian culture in the region lacked a compass. In centuries past, Bukhara had attracted scholar, poets, artists and craftsmen from across the Middle East and Eurasia, and now it seemed possible that Stalinobod could fulfil a similar destiny.

Unlike the old urban centers of Central Asia, which grew up as a series of neighborhoods, or *mahallas*, that constituted the social as well as physical units within the city, Stalinobod from the start was a centrally planned urban space in which address was most often determined by occupation. Each state and party institution undertook, at least in theory, to house its employees, although the scarcity of housing stock severely limited their ability to do so. In his early days in Stalinobod, when Jalol Ikromi was employed by the teacher training institute, the administration separated off a section of corridor by means of a wooden partition, and gave it to him as a home for himself and his family. Not long after, fortunately, he moved to the much vaunted “standard district,” where he shared a two story house with other “Pace-setting Culture Workers.”

In the “standard district,” designed as a beacon of modernity, there was no running water, or electricity, but inhabitants were supplied with kerosene for their oil lamps, and a cart loaded with water barrels would do the rounds from time to time. In rainy weather, the streets became a sea of mud, and the young culture workers would have to don galoshes or army boots for their

⁴⁴ H. E. Adler, “An Architect’s Notes on Soviet-Turkestan,” *Man*, Vol. 44 (Nov. - Dec., 1944), 129-134, Published by: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2791799>

long dark walks home of an evening, after their reading circles and meetings, and crowd their mud-encrusted selves into their cramped living quarters. Their “one joy” in the evenings was the radio “which sometimes spoke, and sometimes did not.”⁴⁵

In a sense, however, life in the Tajik capital was from the beginning more “urban” than elsewhere in Central Asia: once multi-apartment buildings were built, individuals and families from different towns, of different social origin, were assigned to live side by side, and moves were frequent (in part due to the persistent inadequacy of the housing stock). Although quite distinct from the organic development of the traditional mahalla, which grew up over many generations around descendants of a common ancestor who frequently also shared a profession or craft, in Stalinobod too the fact that colleagues were housed together eventually served to preserve certain aspects of the mahalla, in ways that the authorities could not have predicted.

The circumstances of living in a new town among strangers did not elide, but in many cases strengthened regional identities like Samarkandi, Khujandi, Garmi. Ikromi describes the particular confidence and familiarity with which he was treated by fellow Bukharans he meets in Stalinobod – including those with whom he was previously unacquainted – and uses the term *hamshahrigi* (“same-hometown-ness”) to describe the relationship between fellow townspeople met elsewhere. Unfortunately, the formation in Stalinobod of social networks based in part on town of origin of course rendered the promise of a liberating anonymity in the new town rather hollow, as events of later years would show.

In Stalinobod, Khujandi *intelligenty* from elite families, like Hakim Karim, Muhiddin Aminzoda and Rahim Jalil rubbed shoulders with colleagues from Samarkand – Rahim Hoshim,

⁴⁵ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 194.

Nazrullo-i Bektosh – and with Bukharans like Jalol Ikromi, Munzim and Misboh Burhonov. Their social origins were diverse: among those listed above, Bektosh came from a family of artisans in a village outside Samarkand, while the Samarkandi Rahim Hoshim, was the son of a chemist, or perhaps a haberdasher – sources differ.⁴⁶ Both Bektosh and Rahim Hoshim were educated in Soviet schools in the revolutionary period, and went on to marry Russian women. It is noticeable that Samarkand, by far the most Russianized of these three cities prior to the 1917 Revolution, with a greater number of Russian language schools, also yielded almost all of the first wave of Tajik cultural workers who were not from elite lineages (*asilzodagon*) or ulama backgrounds.

Among the Bukharans who moved to Stalinobod, however, many of the most prominent in the early years came from the most elite ulama families: Misboh Burhanov, Jalol Ikromi, Munzim, Bahoutdin Ikromi and Sadr-i Ziyoy all belong to this category. Other Bukharans who made a name for themselves on the Stalinobod cultural scene came from the highly literate end of formally marginalized communities, like the Shi'ites (*Eroni*), and the Bukharan Jews.

⁴⁶ See *Pisateli Tadjikistana* (Dushanbe: Irfon publishing house, 1976), 403.

Though separated by barriers of class, the new cultural workers of Stalinobod were mostly very young, in their early twenties or even late teens as the 1930s began. Even the older generation tended in their new urban setting to treat their younger colleagues with a camaraderie that the latter found very gratifying. In their hours of leisure, they gathered at each other's houses: Pairav Sulaimoni, who lived with his brother in quarters provided by the State Publishing house, would host parties fueled by a wine he made himself, and called "Pairav-wine" (*Pairavvino*).⁴⁷ Pairav Sulaimoni



Figure 27: Pairav Sulaimoni (1899-1933)

belonged to a prosperous family of merchants of the *chala* community of Bukhara: the word *chala* denoted Jews who had converted to Islam. Ikromi describes him as an elegantly dressed, lean and athletic young man with very large, clear eyes. He had a broad outlook, having travelled widely, and worked in Afghanistan, in the Embassy of the People's Republic of Bukhara, as well as in Iran and Moscow. He knew Russian well, having studied in a Russian-native school before the revolution, and by the time he moved to Stalinobod in 1930, Pairav was in his early thirties and an established poet. At his parties, conversation sparkled, Pairav recited freshly composed poetry, and his brother took photographs.

Misboh Burhonov, editor of the Red Tajikistan newspaper, also hosted regular literary soirees – ones that, in Ikromi's view, pushed the boundaries of social acceptability. Misboh Burhonov belonged to a family of influential and affluent Bukharan jadids: his two paternal

⁴⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 195.

uncles were founding members of the *Tarbiya-i Atfol* (“The Education of Children”), a secret society of Jadids in Bukhara, who provided scholarships for young men to study in Turkey. Misboh became a close neighbor of Jalol Ikromi, and treated him with the respect and confidence due to a “fellow townsman” (*hamshahrigi*). Misboh had a nice house in the center of the city, opposite the Pioneers’ Park, and often held hosted soirees (*suhbat*) in which, much to the amazement of those present, his “beautiful and pampered wife” Muallima also participated. Scandal ensued when, following the appearance at one of his parties of Misboh’s only sister Fotimakhon, the latter was apparently persuaded to abandon her husband, then in his forties and deemed too old for her – and choose a new one. The husband she left was none other than Abdurauf Fitrat, the main theorist of the Jadid movement and former minister of the People’s Republic of Bukhara.⁴⁸ He was reportedly heartbroken by his wife’s desertion and wrote a poignant poem about her, which decades later, Ikromi was still able to cite from memory. According to Ikromi, Fitrat’s poem “went from mouth to mouth and was very famous among the intellectuals of the time.”

Anecdotes such as this cast light on the thick web of personal connections binding together the Tajik-speaking intellectuals of the time. Not only was the Communist Misboh related by marriage to Abdurauf Fitrat, but after Misboh’s arrest in 1933, his own young wife was remarried to Jalol Ikromi’s cousin Zuhurkhon, a son of the last Qozikalon of Bukhara. For all the dangers inherent in this course of action, the old habits of endogamy within a narrow social circle died hard. The Bukharans transplanted to the Tajik capital formed a tightly knit group, though not one without its share of rivalries and scandals, in which the behavior of each

⁴⁸ Fitrat had subsequently retreated to less public positions, and in the late 1920s taught at the teacher training institute in Bukhara, where Jalol Ikromi was amongst his pupils.

was scrutinized and parsed according to the traditional code of honor as much by as the new Soviet cultural norms that were gradually gaining ground.

Ikromi described Misboh as “extremely energetic, active, talkative and charming – he was rather ‘red.’” Red, as in revolutionary, is a word that Jalol Ikromi only ever uses in scare quotes. Misboh, together with his like-minded colleague Said Rizo Alizoda (a Shi’ite from Bukhara) edited Stalinobod’s main newspapers (the Party and the Komsomol ones): “The two of them, you could say, were the leaders of letters and society in Dushanbe at that time.”⁴⁹

Some of the young literati of Stalinobod gathered in a slightly more formalized way in a *gashtak*, a form of male socialization widespread in Central Asia, where it has a long history.⁵⁰ In a *gashtak*, men who consider one another peers (and are thus generally close in age, social extraction, or kinship ties) meet regularly at each other’s houses, and take it in turns to host entertainments. In the *gashtak* which Jalol Ikromi joined in spring 1932, members gathered once a week, the host would prepare a plov with the help of his guests, and they would drink “a small quantity of wine.”⁵¹ Bahriddin Azizi (1894-1944), in his late thirties at the time, was the *aksakal* or elder statesman at these gatherings, and led the conversations. Azizi was an *asilzodagon*, a scion of an *ulama* family of Uro-Teppa, an ancient town 80 km south-west of Khujand, in Leninobod oblast. He published a collection of poetry in 1932, alongside humorous stories satirizing the old way of life in the *Rohbar-i Donish* newspaper, where Jalol Ikromi worked.

⁴⁹ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 100.

⁵⁰ On Soviet-era *gashtak* gatherings in the southern Tajik town of Khatlon, see Stephane A. Dudoignon and Ariane Zevaco, “Sur le “Mail des Rhapsodes:” sociabilités traditionnelles, groupes de statut, ethnies minoritaires en Asie Centrale soviétique,” in *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie* N.63 (2009), 273-321.

⁵¹ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 218.

Other members of this *gashtak* included Abdughani Mirzoev, Mirzo Tursonzoda, and Ali Khush,⁵² all writers.

As Adeeb Khalid points out, the expense of hosting a *gashtak* could be considerable, but it was considered a worthwhile investment to maintain a tight and supportive social network, which carried an expectation of solidarity and mutual support in time of need. The increasing sovietization of Central Asian society did nothing to undermine the central role played by the *gashtak*, as personal connections remained of paramount importance in the command economy. Jobs, vacations, trips to the sanatorium, and all manner of deficit goods could all more easily be obtained via personal connections, as memoirs of the time amply attest.⁵³

Ikromi retained fond memories of their *gashtak*, part social occasion and part literary soiree, where the food was ample and the conversation sparkled, but even in the early 1930s, there were ominous signs of a darker side to Stalinobod society. For Jalol Ikromi and for Pairav Sulaimoni, the first warning they received that they might not be able to outrun the taint of their class origins came on the occasion of the First Congress of the Tajik Komsomol. They had been invited to attend, and crowded into a large, brightly lit hall in the House of the Red Army along with many other young writers. Ikromi and Sulaimoni were waiting expectantly for proceedings to begin when they were approached by Bektosh, who, unlike them, had reason to feel quite secure in his own class background. Bektosh spoke to them in an undertone: “Get up quietly and leave the hall” he urged “the word is out that before the meeting starts, Gh. Alizoda will come up to the podium and say that the children of bois [in other words, the rich] and qozis [namely, the ulama] who are present here now, are to get out of this hall!” They left, cursing Alizoda – “who

⁵² Ali Khush, or Khushmuhammad-zade, was born in 1912 in southern Tajikistan (Garm district).

⁵³ Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 101.

himself was the son of a Bukharan shopkeeper,” as Ikromi points out – and found themselves standing outside, where a heavy rain had begun to fall. Pairav Sulaimoni had an umbrella, which they both huddled under as they walked dejectedly through the deserted streets. As they were passing the Commissariat of Enlightenment building, which employed them both, Pairav’s eyes fell on a rain bucket, which had been placed under the gutter to collect rainwater. He emptied the bucket, and carried it off with him. “We were driven from their meeting” he exclaimed “and so we’ll take their bucket!” This, as Ikromi observes “was but a small revolt from a frightened heart, a gesture born of sorrow and a burning pain – however insignificant, it was a gesture of revolt against injustice.”⁵⁴ So incomprehensible and unjust did it seem for the Party to use the blunt instrument of class origin to measure the loyalty of those who were working so hard and with such enthusiasm in pursuit of the Party’s stated goals of nation-building. “Did not even Stalin say” Ikromi mournfully asks his reader “that the son does not answer for his father?”⁵⁵

Aini and his Circle: Stalinobod at work

If personal connections were crucial to success in the literary world of Stalinobod – just as they were in much of the Soviet Union at this time – no single individual exemplifies the crucial role of patronage in this local form as does the father of Tajik literature himself, Sadriddin Aini.⁵⁶ Born in a safely humble and rural location outside of Samarkand, Sadriddin

⁵⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 196.

⁵⁵ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 201. The Stalin quotation “A son does not answer for his father” has an interesting history traced by Sheila Fitzpatrick in *Stalin’s Peasants*, 240. Stalin made this encouraging remark from the floor during a 1935 Stakhanovite conference, a propos of an affecting story of redemption told by the son of a kulak – it was reported in the press, where it evidently made a deep impression on a great many people, but the theme was not developed any further officially, and there may have been some disagreement as to whether class enemies’ children in fact deserved to be regarded with suspicion.

⁵⁶ On the development of Aini as a writer, see for example Jiri Becka, “Tajik literature from the 16th century to the present,” in Jan Rypka et al, *History of Iranian Literature*, D. Reidel Publishing Company, Holland:1968, 559 and ff.

was the son of a “small farmer and part-time carpenter,” Say[y]id-Murod Khoja, who had nonetheless studied for a short time at a madrasa in Bukhara and was thus able to set his son on the path to literacy. At about the age of twelve, having already lost both parents to cholera, Sadriddin had a chance encounter, while visiting his grandmother’s village, with a boy his own age who challenged him to a game of verse-capping. This is a traditional Persian game in which each player recites from memory a verse that begins with the same sound with which the verse recited by the previous player ended. Sadriddin’s challenger turned out to be Mirzo Abdul-Vohid Burhanov, who would become his lifelong friend, and who later also participated in the 1930 Congress and relocated to Stalinobod.⁵⁷ Abdul-Vohid, who would later adopt Munzim as his *takhallus* (nom de plume), was born in 1874 to a courtier of the Emir of Bukhara but, having been orphaned at a young age, he was brought up in the home of the wealthy Bukharan bibliophile and scholar Muhammad Sharif “Sadr-i-Ziyo” Makhsum. Sadr-i Ziyo, was the “son of the late chief kadi (*qozikalon*) and noted scholar Abdushukur,”⁵⁸ and thus, like Jalol Ikromi, a member of Bukhara’s inner circle.⁵⁹

Hearing that his “know-it-all” protégé Abdul-Vohid had found a worthy opponent for his game of verse-capping, Sadr-i Ziyo became convinced that the young orphan Sadriddin must also be given access to further study. Sadriddin was thus sent to Bukhara to study in a madrasa. During his years as a student, the young Sadriddin was for a time employed as a servant in the

⁵⁷For an account of the first meeting between Munzim and Aini, in which the former challenges the latter to a game of ‘verse-capping,’ see the volume of Aini’s memoirs translated into English by John Perry and Rachel Lehr, *The Sands of Oxus*, 189.

⁵⁸ Sadriddin Aini, translated by Perry and Lehr, *The Sands of Oxus*, 188

⁵⁹ The internal cohesion of Bukhara’s social elite long outlasted the Emirate, even in spite of Stalin’s depredations: decades later, Jalol Ikromi’s daughter Dilafruz would be married to Sadr-i Ziyo’s son, Muhammadjon Shakuri.

house of Sadr-i Ziyō,⁶⁰ which illustrates the persistent role of social hierarchies alongside personal networks in pre-revolutionary Bukhara, where the orphaned Abdul-Vohid was adopted, but the orphaned Sadriddin was taken on as a servant. Eventually however, in 1898 Sadr-i Ziyō, purchased Sadriddin a cell in one of Bukhara's best madrasas, where the young man could study undisturbed, although he soon became disenchanted with the traditional course of study.⁶¹

Despite the limitations of madrasa learning, Sadriddin, who would choose for himself the pen name Aini around this time, certainly expanded his horizons in Bukhara. Here he met the talented polymath Ahmad Donish, who had published accounts of his travels in Russia and critiques of the madrasa system, and came in contact with the Jadid reform movement. Aini joined the secret jadid organisation *Tarbiya-i Atfol* founded by the paternal uncles of Misboh Burhonov, who by 1930 had become the editor of Red Tajikistan. Together with his old friend Abdul-Vohid Munzim, Aini founded a jadid (or “new method”) school where parents could send their sons free of charge, and urged others to do the same. Among those who sponsored a jadid school at Aini's urging was Jalol Ikromi's father, whose own sons benefitted from this experiment (although it turned out to be short lived).⁶²

Aini was known to be a powerful patron for those whom he chose – whether on account of their family connections or personal talent – to take under his wing. His publication of the anthology *Namunai adabiyoti tojik* (A picture of Tajik literature) in 1926 forcefully argued for a millennial history for Tajik literature going back to the Classical Persian of Samanid times.⁶³ By

⁶⁰ John Perry and Rachel Lehr, *The Sands of Oxus: Boyhood Reminiscences of Sadriddin Aini* (Mazda Publishers, 1998), introduction, 10.

⁶¹ Perry and Lehr, *Sands of Oxus*, 2 and ff.

⁶² Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 16.

⁶³ Jiri Becka, “Tajik literature from the 16th century to the present,” 561; Perry and Lehr (introduction), *Sands of Oxus*, 14.

the time this controversial work was published, Aini had established himself as a mentor to a generation of young writers, whom he coached, cajoled, advised and had promoted. Sometimes, a simple recommendation from the master was enough, such as in the case of Ziyō Ikromi, son of the Bukharan Mufti Ikromjon whom Aini knew well. In Jalol Ikromi's not entirely sympathetic account, the story is as follows:

“Ziyō Ikromi [...] studied in the Samarkand Institute of Health, qualified as a doctor, and then somehow ingratiated himself with Master Aini, took the title of professor and thanks to the Master's efforts, came to Dushanbe [Stalinobod], gave classes in the institute of health, and became head doctor in the hospital nearby.”⁶⁴

It will be noted that Jalol Ikromi implies no criticism of Aini's own behavior here – one senses disapprobation of the advantage taken by Ziyō's of the Master's patronage, in reaching a position that his talents and learning did not justify, but this does not reflect poorly on the Master himself. Similarly, Abdushukur Pirmuhammad-zade, born in 1912 in a village near Samarkand, was recommended by Aini to work in the Samarkand department of Tajik state publishing, where he took part in drafting the first Russian-Tajik dictionary. He moved to Stalinobod in 1934, where he became editor of the children's section of the Tajik state publishing house, and survived the purges.

Aini amply repaid the benevolence extended to him in his youth by his patrons, and invested enormous amounts of effort advancing the careers of promising young people, and training young writers like Jalol Ikromi. Ikromi, who had met “Master Aini”⁶⁵ a few times during his childhood, hastened to compose a poem in Tajik, and present it to the master on the occasion of a visit of his to Bukhara. On reading the poem, Aini advised Ikromi to stick to prose, which

⁶⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 181.

⁶⁵ It is a standard honorific practice in Central Asia to preface the name of many types of expert with the title “Master” (*ustod*)

proved but the first salvo of an extremely demanding, sometimes harsh, but enduring mentoring relationship. Ikromi's first prose work, "A Night in the Registan of Bukhara," was published in *Rohbar-i Donish* in 1927 at Aini's instigation. Under Aini's ever watchful supervision, Ikromi revised his novella *Shirin* seven times. Until the end of his life, Ikromi kept the manuscript copy of his novel *Shodi*, which had been entirely covered by the master's handwritten edits. Aini was indeed, in John Perry's phrase "the *mirob* (he who controls water flow) of the written word in the Pamirs and the Oxus basin."⁶⁶

On the occasion of an anniversary celebration in Lohuti's honour, Aini composed some verses dedicated to the poet which he asked Ikromi to recite. When the latter consented,

"The master busied himself with me for two or three hours, determining how I should read the poetry, what movements I should make with my hands. For example, while reciting the line "Lohuti blasted out the trumpet (karnai) of revolution to the four corners of the earth" – I should hold up four of my fingers, and show them to all four sides"⁶⁷

Even without the benefit of Aini's exacting supervision, the members of the Brigade of Pace-Setting Culture Workers certainly worked hard. Beyond their main jobs at the teaching training institute, the Lohuti theater, Party newspaper and various journal offices, or the State Publishing House, Brigade members also served on various committees set up to advance the pace of socialist construction and shape a socialist Tajik language and culture. One such was the Tajik Scholarship committee, established under the leadership of Nazrullo-i Bektosh, whose members included several Russian orientalists and the Bukharan poet Pairav Sulaimoni,

⁶⁶ Perry and Lehr (introduction), *Sands of Oxus*, 7.

⁶⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 263

mentioned above. The committee's goal was to compile a dictionary and collect ethnographic material on the arts, crafts and folklore of Tajikistan.

In spite of Bektosh's apparently benign warning to Ikromi during the Komsomol Congress, the two young men seem to have had a difficult relationship from the start – whether due to differences in temperament, ideology or social background. Bektosh, as I have said, was the son of an artisan, born outside Samarkand, who had studied at the Teachers' Training Institute in Samarkand after the Revolution. When he moved to Stalinobod in 1930 with the rest of the Brigade, Bektosh taught history and theory of Tajik literature, and later became the head of the Literature department of the Tajik branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences.⁶⁸ Bektosh threw his seemingly boundless energy into organizing teams of young scholars who were sent out into the rural districts to collect folklore. Ikromi recalls being sent out on a trip in November 1930 to some of the southern districts of Tajikistan to collect materials on crafts such as pottery, leatherwork and weaving, and well as poems and stories, which were recited orally and transcribed by him.

In late February 1931, Bektosh organized a festival of Tajik music and folklore in Stalinobod, timed to coincide with the Fourth All-Tajik Soviet Congress. The festival was attended by local and European scholars, practitioners and journalists as well as by musicians, dancers and *hofiz*⁶⁹ – professional reciters of poetry, epic, the Qur'an and so on.⁷⁰ Bektosh assigned tasks to each of the committee members, and kept them busy transcribing the new (oral) poetry as it was delivered, and making note of the best *maqom*, the names and details of each

⁶⁸ Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, note 6 on page 154.

⁶⁹ For the meaning of *hofiz*, see Razia Sultanova, *From Shamanism to Sufism: Women, Islam and Culture in Central Asia* (I.B.Tauris, 2011), 69.

⁷⁰ The festival received coverage in *Sovetskoe Isskustvo*, 17 March 1931, with an article on page 2 entitled *V sedmoi sovetskoi: Pervyi slet rapsodov* (In the Seventh Soviet [Republic]: The First Rally of Rhapsodes / Bards)

performing *hofiz*. In the course of this festival, for reasons he fails to elaborate on in his memoir, Ikromi and Bektosh clashed severely, and each “had many harsh words to say to the other.”⁷¹ Such was the effect of his quarrel with Bektosh that Ikromi left Stalinobod for Bukhara soon after with his family, giving up his hard won living quarters there (but for a single room, in which he stored his belongings, and to which he would later return), and vowed never to work with Bektosh again.

Back in Bukhara, Ikromi bumped into Pairav Sulaimoni, who had – as he told his friend – similarly lost patience with the intrigues and backstabbing in Stalinobod, and vowed never to return there. The two friends sat together and enjoyed an unforgettable conversation over a bottle of vodka which Sulaimoni had accidentally dyed indigo when trying to open it with a pen.

“Ah, my friend,” said Pairav with a sigh
“*Let us pass through this time more bitter than poison,*
Next time our life will be as sugar!”⁷²

Pairav Sulaimoni had grown tired of the constant, sharp criticisms of his work from a “revolutionary” perspective levelled at him by his fellow Bukharans Misboh Burhonov and Said Rizo Alizoda. At that time, prior to the liquidation of RAPP and the establishment of a single Writers’ Union, the critiques of these “‘red’ spear-carriers,” as Pairav called them, had much influence in the local literary scene. Pairav Sulaimoni was among the first to be hounded out of the Tajik literary establishment in the name of establishing orthodoxy, and he spent the rest of his short life in considerable poverty living within the borders of the Uzbek SSR, where resources available for Tajik-language cultural production had been greatly curtailed. It was perhaps for the best that he died of typhoid fever in mid-1933, as it seems likely that he would

⁷¹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 197-98.

⁷² Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 199.

not have survived Stalin's purges. As it was, his premature death was publicly mourned by the literary establishment in the persons of Aini and Hamdi (both former Jadids), and others, who wrote elegies for him and celebrated him as one of the founders of Tajik soviet poetry.⁷³

Unlike Sulaimoni, Ikromi was soon lured back to Stalinobod by the offer of his dream job, in the office of that same journal that had published his first story, *Rohbar-i Donish* (Path of the Teacher). The journal had previously been published in Tashkent, but funds for Tajik-language projects having dried up there, the decision had recently been made to move its office to Stalinobod. Ikromi, who was taken on as the journal's executive secretary, was one of only two employees: two young men who sat writing from early morning until late at night, in the one-room office allocated to them by the Ministry of Education. The journal shared an accountant and copy editor with the party newspaper ('Red Tajikistan'), and all articles were submitted for publication in longhand. The two young men made up in dedication and sheer love for their work what they lacked in experience, often resorting to working until dawn and sleeping under the typesetters' boxes, curled up on bundles of newspapers.⁷⁴ It was still possible to believe that hard work and devotion to the Party would shield them these young men of elite background from persecution, but by 1933, a new wave of fear was spreading through the town.

First round of purges

1933 was a difficult year, a year of hunger, in Ikromi's memory: all the tortoises and frogs gradually disappeared from the countryside around Stalinobod, to be eaten. Tajik intellectuals lived in fear and dread after learning, at roughly the same time, of the arrests of

⁷³ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 203.

⁷⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 208.

prominent Tajiks Abduqodir Muhiddinov, then the Commissar of trade, of Komili, the head of Gosplan, and of Nazrullo Bektosh.⁷⁵ As we know, both Muhiddinov and Bektosh had been caught up in the web of hallucinatory accusations centered on the secret counter-revolutionary organisation *Ittihad-i Sharq*.⁷⁶ These arrests heralded two shifts in policy on the regime's part: a hardening of the regime's stance against those associated with the Jadidist reform movement, on the one hand, and against all local echoes of the RAPP approach to literature on the other.

Vitriolic articles appeared in the newspapers exposing further alleged crimes committed by those arrested, and Ikromi himself wrote an article entitled "A Word with Me," in which he denounced Bektosh, accusing him of being a nationalist, and of having thrown his lot in with the Basmachis – anti-Soviet guerilla fighters – in the early 1920s. Bektosh had himself earlier told Ikromi a rather hair-raising story about an evening spent with a group of Basmachis, who had either recruited or coerced Bektosh into joining them, to serve as a scribe. The group of fighters was sitting around a camp fire in a village outside Samarkand, and a female dancer was with them, who after dancing for their entertainment had fallen asleep with her head in the lap of one of the Basmachi fighters. Bektosh and his companion were drinking and talking, and did not notice what was happening with the girl, until they heard a "khar khar" noise and turned to see the girl's throat being cut by the Basmachi on whose lap she had been resting.⁷⁷ Such was the evidence that Ikromi could muster to condemn Bektosh, and he did not shrink from deploying it.

By the time he wrote his memoir however, Ikromi evidently felt some discomfort at his role in denouncing Bektosh, and he explores his motivations for doing so in some detail. In the first place, he informs his readers, Bektosh had already been arrested when his article was

⁷⁵ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 212.

⁷⁶ See previous chapter

⁷⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 192.

written. When Ikromi and Bektosh met in Stalinobod, Ikromi felt rebuffed and cold-shouldered by Bektosh. There were real ideological differences between them: Bektosh was a “revolutionary” – a word that Ikromi, tellingly, used only in scare quotes – who wished to champion Tajik folklore and rural oral literature as the basis for the new Soviet literary canon and literature, rather than basing literary Tajik on the literary tradition of Samarkand, Bukhara and so on. It was this alignment with the ethos and methods of the RAPP-associated authors that would seem to be behind his arrest, as well as that of the hapless Misboh Burhonov, who had combined outspoken, “red proletarian”-inspired critiques of the work of Pairav Sulaimoni and others with blood kinship to prominent Jadids, and was removed from circulation that same year (1933).⁷⁸

In that fear-filled year, as Ikromi recalls, “people picked quarrels among themselves, they took part in intrigues and provocations; anyone could be a ringleader, for all that he was a thug, this could be his bread and butter...”⁷⁹ Those with established connections to the Jadid movement were easy targets, and felt particularly vulnerable at that time. Ismoil Sadri,⁸⁰ a scion of a wealthy Bukharan family, was one of the young men who had benefitted from the sponsorship of the secret jadid organisation *Tarbiya-i Atfol*, and studied abroad in Istanbul, only to be dogged for years afterward by this mark of privilege. Once the Bukharan Republic, in which he had served in a leadership position, had been abolished, Ismoil Sadri sunk into relative obscurity for a while as a teacher. Finding himself the target of criticism in a wall newspaper in

⁷⁸ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 99.

⁷⁹ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 212.

⁸⁰ Ismoil was his given name. “Sadr was the ‘scholarly’ title which, in the last decades of the Amirate of Bukhara, was the highest in dignity and the third in order following after the inferior titles of *uràq* and *sudùr*” (Introduction to *Diary of a Bukharan Intellectual*, edited by Edward Allworth, 1). Compare *Sadr-i Ziyo* and *Sadr Id-Din* (Sadriddin) Aini.

the House of Culture in Bukhara, he too like many others chose to flee his hometown in pursuit of greater anonymity in the muddy bustle of Stalinobod. Jalol Ikromi squeezed Sadri both into his apartment as guest and as colleague into the “Path of the Teacher” office where he worked, but not for long. As Ikromi recalls:

Once Ismoil Sadri and I were walking in the street together when we bumped into Bahoutdin Ikromi,⁸¹ that troublemaker. He asked Sadri for the time. Ismoil Sadri’s watch was in his waistcoat pocket (a sleeveless jacket, worn under a suit) and the watch chain draped over to the other side of the waistcoat. Sadri drew out his watch, which was a “qopnok”, opened the cover, looked at it and replied, then put it back in his pocket. Malicious Bahoutdin with a smile said: “Oh-ho, so we’re Turks are we, we’ll survive then eh! (*‘I-i-i, in boz “Turkiz yashariz-ku!”*)”⁸²

By asking him for the time and obliging him to produce his – clearly expensive, imported – pocket-watch, Bahoutdin Ikromi deliberately sought out a means to “out” Sadri as a son of privilege who has acquired foreign affectations. The two clearly knew of one another, if they were not well acquainted, as they had moved in similar circles in Bukhara. Bahoutdin Ikromi, was the son of a prominent Bukharan mufti and nephew to one of the founders of that very Jadid organisation (*Tarbiya-i Atfol*) that almost certainly funded Sadri’s studies in Istanbul. By addressing Sadri in Turkic and mockingly including himself and his interlocutor in his wry forecast “we’ll survive, eh?” he signals his awareness of the latter’s vulnerability, while flaunting at the same time his own success in overcoming that same vulnerability. By 1933, any hint of privilege could be a liability, but in Sadri’s case this was compounded by a Jadid connection, and the taint of pan-Turkism. By rights, Bahoutdin Ikromi should have been no less vulnerable, but – having joined the Komsomol on first arriving in Stalinobod and becoming a full member of the Party soon afterwards, he had reason to feel complacent. Indeed, Bahoutdin Ikromi was never

⁸¹ Bahoutdin Ikromi was the son of a prominent Bukharan mufti Ikromcha-i Bukhori, see above

⁸² Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 206.

arrested during the great purges, and Jalol Ikromi believed this must mean that Bahoutdin himself was in the pay of the secret police.⁸³

Rightly therefore, did Ismoil Sadri read this encounter as a threat, and took it as his cue to disappear. He left Stalinobod that very day, without warning, and become “like one afraid of his own shadow.”⁸⁴ He worked for a while in a village in Hisor district as a teacher, but eventually returned to Bukhara to work in a museum, where he was arrested in 1937 and never seen again.

Another piece of the proud pre-Soviet history of Bukhara which sank in disgrace and oblivion at this time was the poet and scholar Mirzo Abdul-Vohid Burhanov, known by his takhallus (pen name) Munzim, Aini’s lifelong friend. Along with Misboh Burhonov’s uncles, Munzim was a founding member of the Jadid secret society *Tarbiya-i Atfol*, and founded the first jadid schools in Bukhara. He too moved to Stalinobod around 1930, where he worked for the Party newspaper, *Red Tajikistan*. Although revered for his poetic talent, piety and learning by Bukharans and Tajiks of a similar socio-cultural background, who flocked to his humble home in Stalinobod, Munzim too began to suffer from increasingly vicious attacks in the press. He did not long outlive his benefactor Sadr-i Ziyoy, who died of tuberculosis in a Bukharan madrasa that had been repurposed as a prison in 1932. When Munzim died in 1934, Aini, who had publicly mourned Pairav Sulaimoni but a year earlier, remained silent, and not a single newspaper so much as notified the public of the passing of one who had done so much for the cause of Tajik literacy.

Waves of fear and dread ebbed and flowed, and in 1934 some people – including Nazrullo-i Bektosh – were even released from prison. A few weeks after his release, he came

⁸³ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 182.

⁸⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 207.

face to face with Jalol Ikromi in the street – the latter’s confusion can be imagined – and made a satirical reference to the article that Ikromi had written denouncing him. Bektosh reportedly laughed in his face and said “I heard that you wrote an article called “A word with me” – now, let the [last] word be mine!”⁸⁵ The title of this article would return again to haunt Ikromi after someone reported this conversation to Broido, the First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party between 1934 and 1935, who took the occasion during a speech to comment that the “word” in question was not with Ikromi, nor yet with Bektosh, but “with the Party, comrades. *With the Party.*”⁸⁶

Despite the heavy atmosphere, Soviet writers continued their labors, and Sadriddin Aini continued to represent Tajik literature to the USSR. August 1934 saw the first All-Union Congress of Writers, convened in Moscow by Maxim Gorky and attended by several Tajik authors – Sadriddin Aini, of course, and Rahim Hoshim, who were able to rub shoulders with some of the best, and some of the most independent, Russian writers who were still in circulation. This was the occasion on which Stalin’s delegate Zhdanov introduced to those present an ominous phrase to describe the role to be played by all Soviet artists – “engineers of the human soul.”⁸⁷ Three years later, in August 1937, Sadriddin Aini was once again in Moscow, to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution. He was interviewed by *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, who introduced him to their readers as “one of the most powerful of the people’s poets” and “one who has done much for the development of his language and culture.” When asked about what Tajik literature had in the works to mark the momentous occasion, he responded that an almanac would be issued in both Russian and Tajik, containing new verses by Lohuti,

⁸⁵ Or “Now I shall have the last word!”

⁸⁶ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 193.

⁸⁷ James Van Geldern, *The First Congress of Soviet Writers*,

excerpts from his own long poem about the Vaksh-stroi project, a new play by Ghani Abdullo, a new novel by Ali Khush and a story by Jalol Ikromi.⁸⁸ The of the authors involved in the anniversary almanac, Ghani Abdullo, Ali Khush and Jalol Ikromi, would all be denounced and arrested just over a month later.

1937: Denunciations and Arrests

Early summer of 1937 found Jalol Ikromi still working hard and upbeat in general outlook, until a diagnosis of tuberculosis led him to travel to a sanatorium in Shahrison, where he would be treated with *koumiss*, or fermented mare's milk.⁸⁹ This remote sanatorium, where in their long hours of leisure the patients would gather on a grassy slope to watch the very rare automobiles passing by on the main road between Leninobod and Uroteppa,⁹⁰ proved to be a strange and falsely peaceful vantage point from which to watch the events of the summer of 1937 unfold:

In that sanatorium they provided delicious and rich foods, and the very best kumiss. But there was no club or theatre, no cinema – only a radio, and every two or three days they delivered a newspaper. We patients used to go, after our evening meal, to sit on a high bank behind the "black" houses, and sit there talking. [...] And so, I was passing the days peacefully and happily in the kumiss sanatorium in Shahrison, when suddenly I read in the newspapers of a sad and terrifying event. It said that the NKVD had uncovered anti-Soviet organizations and enemies of the people in Dushanbe.

Shirinov, the head of the high court, Shohtemurov, the head of the Supreme Soviet, Chinor Imomov, the Central Committee secretary and several other people had been unmasked, and every day the radio and newspapers carried frightening stories about them.

The patients were amazed. Some believed the news, that those mentioned above were

⁸⁸ "Navstrechu XX-letniiu velikoi revoliutsii: beseda s Sadreddin Aini," in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, Sunday August 15 1937, 1.

⁸⁹ As we will see in chapter 7, western medicine made somewhat slow and partial inroads into Tajikistan until the postwar period. Many educated people appear to have been unaware of, for example, germ theory in this time period. Jalol Ikromi attributes the death of his first child at two years old (while travelling by train from Bukhara to Stalinobod) to her having been startled by the hoot of an approaching locomotive.

⁹⁰ In Russian-language sources, Uroteppa is often referred to as Ura-Tiube. In 2000, it was renamed Istaravshan.

indeed enemies of the people. Others, on the contrary, did not believe it: Shohtemurov and Chinor Imomov, selfless leaders of the republic, were not deserving of such unjust defamation, they said. Several were seized by fear and dread, several certainly packed up their things and left early. Although I was greatly saddened, I was not afraid and had no suspicion that any such misfortune as had befallen Shohtemurov and the others would rain down on my head.⁹¹

Realizing that further treatment with kumiss would do no good in his current frame of mind, Ikromi left the sanatorium for Tashkent, which was closer and more accessible than Stalinobod, and where an older half-sister had her home. On arrival in Tashkent, he learned news of fellow Bukharans “that made my hair stand on end:” his paternal uncle Aminjon Makhsum had been arrested, as had the poet Ahmadjon Makhsum Hamdi (Abdusaid-zoda, 1875-1943), another of the founding members of the secret Jadid organization, *Tarbiya-i Atfol*. Even the publication in 1937 of Hamdi’s satirical piece “Karimboi as a guest of God,” eventually accepted as a model example of anti-Islamic propaganda, seems not to have been able to let its author off the hook. Faizullo Khojaev, Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars since 1924 and a member of an elite *khoja* descent group, had been arrested, together with several members of his family. These were arrests that must have hit close to home – of people with a similar social and cultural background to his own, whom he knew personally. Even the first secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party since 1929, Akmal Ikromov (1898-1938),⁹² had been arrested. Ikromi’s favorite cousin had fled headlong from Bukhara, and was living in Tashkent – when Ikromi went to see him, he was urged to look to himself, and travel somewhere fast, as far as he could go.⁹³

Being young and naïve as well as, realistically, having no idea where he might go or how, Ikromi returned to Stalinobod after a few days. There he was relieved to find his family well –

⁹¹ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 234-236

⁹² Akmal Ikromov was the son of a mullo, see Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, 68.

⁹³ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 238

his wife, four-year-old daughter, one year old son, and mother in law – but the latter was frantic with worry, and urged him to escape somewhere, anywhere. In an attempt to persuade her nephew and son-in-law, she urged the example of Muhammadjon Rahimi, another Stalinobod-based litterateur with ties to the ill-fated Bukharan People’s Republic, who – being a single man – had taken all the cash he had on hand and disappeared one night. It later emerged that Rahimi, who had studied finance in Leningrad in 1932, had gone to lie low in an outlying suburb of Leningrad, where he had set up house with an unmarried Russian worker, whom he later married and brought back to Stalinobod. Another acquaintance of Ikromi kept a suitcase packed in his apartment, and escaped through the back door and by train to a village outside Samarkand, thus escaping his fate. “Had I my wits about me, and money to hand, I too might have gone from Tashkent to somewhere like Ghizhduvon,⁹⁴ and would thus have escaped. But it was not to be.”⁹⁵

“In those days newspapers really grieved the soul. Every day, as soon as the newspapers arrived on sale and fell into the hands of their subscribers, loud moans and sobs rose up among their families.”⁹⁶

Only two days after Jalol Ikromi returned to Stalinobod, on September 24, the official party newspaper, Red Tajikistan (*Tojikistoni Surkh*), published a long article discrediting a group of writers and intellectuals based in the capital, who were accused of all the usual stock crimes: enemy of the people, bourgeois nationalists, and so forth. Among those accused, the names – other than his own – that Ikromi could still recall decades later⁹⁷ were Hakim Karim, both Ghani and Rashid Abdullo along with their father Abdullojon-aka, Ali Khush, Obid Ismati, Azizi,

⁹⁴ His father had once worked as a judge in Ghizhduvon, and owned property there, which was presumably still in friendly hands at this point.

⁹⁵ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 239

⁹⁶ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 239

⁹⁷ Unfortunately I have not yet been able to access issues of Red Tajikistan for the mid 1930s (there are no copies in North America, nor did I gain access to any copies in the course of two research trips to Tajikistan and two to Moscow), so I am working with indirect quotations in this chapter.

Mirzozoda, Rasuli, Hakim Qosimov, and poor Bektosh again.⁹⁸ Of these, Hakim Karim, both Abdullo brothers, Ali Khush, Hakim Qosimov and Bektosh were certainly all arrested. Of these, Azizi and Alikhush were members of Ikromi's gashtak; Ghani Abdullo had published a study of Ikromi's writing. Whether or not he knew who wrote the article, Ikromi did not name the author or authors in his memoir.

There were two people, in Ikromi's mind, who might have been expected to defend him: Mirzo Tursunzoda and Rahim Jalil "my close friends, conversation partners, fellow writers – like brothers, my flesh and blood." The three of them lived in the same building and worked side by side. In his memoir, Ikromi asks rhetorically "would they not support me? Why did they not protect their best and most loyal friend? Did they in fact join in calumny? I don't know! Perhaps on account of the dread in their own souls. They showed themselves as pure and spotless, as that was what the times demanded." In other words, as those accused in the press had come to expect, no one came forward to rebut the charges laid against them, or defend their reputations.

Almost a week later, on September 30, another, anonymous article was published criticizing the members of the Writers' Union and signed simply "Two Comrades:"

"Just as has occurred with other areas, the Writers' Union too has been occupied by enemies of the people, bourgeois-nationalists, Trotsky-Bukharinite fascist spies, who continue their treacherous work there. The enemies of the people, bourgeois-nationalists Mavlonbekov, Obdinov, Dailami, Rahim Hoshim, Ma'ruf Rasuli, Ghani Abdullo,⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 240 and 253. In his 1998 work on the purges *Osmoni Hamida*, Dodojoni Rajabi included excerpts from a 30 September anonymous article in Red Tajikistan titled "Enemies and their allies in the Tajik Writers' Union," which was signed simply "Two Comrades" – which may or may not be the same piece.

⁹⁹ Ghani Abdullo (1912-1984) was a Tajik poet and playwright, brother of Rashid Abdullo. He was born in Samarkand, and graduated from the Samarkand Pedagogical Institute in 1932. Soon after graduation, Abdullo joined the Tajik Commissariat of Enlightenment. Later, he became the Secretary of the Union of Writers of Tajikistan, then leader of the Literature Division of the Lohuti Theater. Both Ghani and Rashid Abdullo were imprisoned during the Purges, but only Ghani survived. He publishes both poetry and prose, in both Uzbek and Tajik, including a work of literary criticism dealing with the works of Jalol Ikromi (1933). Source: Iraj Bashiri, "Abdullo, Ghani" in *Prominent Tajiks of the Twentieth Century*, published online and available at <http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/TajikFigures/TajikFigures.pdf>.

Rabei,¹⁰⁰ Muinzoda, Jalol Ikromi, Rashid Abdullo,¹⁰¹ Alikhush and the like are one group of enemies in the Writers' Union, in leadership positions, [...] They load on their anti-Soviet insinuations into an important department of the arts – literary creative writing, and make use of creative writing for their own nefarious purposes. [...] In May 1934 the first Soviet Writers' Congress was held. The Writers' Union from the day of the Congress until now [...] failed to increase the number of satisfactory cadres. [...] Mavlonbekov the nationalist, the enemy of the people, who had been promoted to the position of head of the Union, showed no concern for the work of organizing the writers.¹⁰²

In common with other articles in this genre, this one is short on specifics of alleged misbehavior, relying mostly on heavy use of the standard slurs: as far as can be made out, the great crime attributed to “Mavlonbekov the nationalist” seems to have been resigning his position at the Writers' Union. A couple of days later, the *Red Tajikistan* daily published another article denouncing “Harmful bourgeois nationalists in the field of literature” on 2 October, 1937,¹⁰³ which inter alia outed Ikromi as “the son of the qozi of Bukhara.”

Once the torrent of denunciations and counter-denunciations got underway, and many did what they felt was necessary to save their own skins, is there anything to be gained by searching for patterns or groupings within the denouncers and the denounced? If you were a journalist or litterateur in Stalinobod at the height of the purges, was there anything more than blind luck to determine you were arrested, tortured, executed or survived? Even if one were to map the web of public denunciations accurately, which would of course exclude the many denunciations made privately, even anonymously to the NKVD,¹⁰⁴ would one learn from this anything about

¹⁰⁰ Rabi'i, Sa'dullo (1883-1939): Tajik poet born in Varzob (a village not far from Dushanbe) in 1883. He received his early education in Hissar. Early in life, influenced by the poetry of Mirzo Bedil and So'ib, he began composing verses which he eventually published as a collection entitled *Hisori 'Ishq* (The Love Barrier, 1920). He published several collections of poems and stories in the early 1930s, and joined the Tajik Writers' Union in 1934, before succumbing to Stalin's purges.

¹⁰¹ Brother of Ghani Abdullo, see Iraj Bashiri.

¹⁰² Dodojoni Rajabi, *Osmoni Hamida*, 7.

¹⁰³ Dodojoni Rajabi, *Osmoni Hamida*, 25.

¹⁰⁴ The archives of the Soviet era secret services remain closed in Tajikistan, inaccessible even to local scholars.

allegiances and fissures within Tajik society, or only, perhaps, something about the personal courage or integrity of certain individuals?

Among those who openly denounced Ikromi were Sotim Ulughzoda, who distinguished himself with his “literary criticism” of his erstwhile friend,¹⁰⁵ and Dehoti: both of whom chimed in after his arrest – the latter to shake his head mournfully at the notion that, it turns out, he had been sharing a home and breaking bread with an enemy of the people. “Ikromi, son of an Islamic judge (*qadi/qozi*) and nephew of the chief Islamic judge (*qozikalon*) of Bukhara, was never able to be a friend to Soviet power...”¹⁰⁶

Arrest and imprisonment

The spate of denunciations in the press concerning the Tajik Writers’ Union were predictably followed by a wave of arrests. Of the twenty members of the Writers’ Union in its founding year, 1934, concerning whom I have some biographical information, nine were certainly arrested in 1937, and of these, five died in prison, and a sixth spent more than a decade in prison – the other three were released from prison by late 1938, with their records cleared. Of the nine who were arrested, seven could certainly claim membership of the ulama class or other Islamic notable identity (Said Turabaevich Nosirov was a tura), and four of these seven died in prison. The three other notables – Hakim Karim, Ghani Abdullo and Jalol Ikromi – were released after relatively short terms. Three further ulama/old elite members of the Writers’ Union were not subjected to arrest in 1937: Badriddin Azizi, Muhiddin Aminzoda, and Abdullo Suhaili – notably, none of them were living in Stalinobod at the time. On the other hand, Ali Khush,

¹⁰⁵ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 222.

¹⁰⁶ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 247.

whose official social status was that of a poor peasant from rural Garm, died in prison, while the “haberdasher’s son” Rahim Hoshim suffered fifteen years of imprisonment (nor did his humble social background save Nazrullo Bektosh, who was not a member of the Union).

The NKVD’s “black crow” cars usually called at night: the officers would search the apartment, question family members, and make the planned arrests on the spot. Just as he had been dreading, two days after the publication in *Red Tajikistan* (*Tojikistoni Surkh*) of the first article openly attacking Jalol Ikromi by name, a loud knock was heard on the door of his family apartment at 4am. On opening the door, two NKVD officers, both Russians, entered the apartment together with the building supervisor, a Tajik. Ikromi was shown his arrest warrant, and the officers began to search his apartment.

They asked me whether I had any weapons. Then they saw the books. There were many volumes of the Tajik classics, all in the Arabic script, and as they were unable to read them, they questioned me about them. I explained, for example, that Bedil was a classical Tajik poet. In my cabinet there was a picture of Aini, alongside one of me as a young man, framed. They took both of these. In the room where *ammaposhsho* [his mother-in-law] was sitting with Zamira [his daughter], they were going to take the old lady’s Qur’an, but she resisted bravely and did not give up her Qur’an. They told me to take my coat and warm clothes. I did not want to do so, saying that as my arrest was a mistake I would soon be returning home. It was as if the men had not heard what I had said.¹⁰⁷

Ikromi marveled in retrospect at how, as he was being driven away in the fast black car, he felt no fear or dread, but only a sense of calm, which allowed him to observe the cleaners at work in the first light of day, in the quiet streets. He was taken to the jail within the NKVD compound, where he promptly recognized one of the jailors, who was a Tajik – indeed a Bukharan – but who refused to acknowledge Ikromi’s greeting. In turn, Ikromi refers to him as a

¹⁰⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 254.

traitor to his people, for the zeal shown in beating up the prisoners– his fellow countrymen – a brutal lackey for the Russians.¹⁰⁸

Table 5 - Members of the Tajik branch of the Writers' Union in 1934

NAME	BIRTHPLACE	SOCIAL EXTRACTION OE: Old Elite	FATE DURING PURGES
Obid Ismati	Samarkand	OE Makhsum, ulama	purged, died in prison
Ahmadjon Hamdi	Bukhara	OE: Makhsum, ulama	purged, died in prison
Said Turaboevich Nosirov	Khujand	OE: Tura (Islamic notable)	purged, died in prison
Rashid Abdullo	Samarkand	OE: Ulama	purged, died in prison
Ali Khush	village in Garm	poor peasant	purged, died in prison ("arrested due to slandorous calumny")
Rahim Hoshim	Samarkand	haberdasher's son	arrested, released after 15 years
Hakim Karim	Khujand	OE: tura	arrested, imprisoned, released 1938
Jalol Ikromi	Bukhara	OE: makhsum, ulama	arrested, imprisoned, released 1938
Ghani Abdullo	Samarkand	OE: ulama, son of Abdullojon, who had studied in Baku	arrested, imprisoned, released 1938
Muhiddin Aminzade	Khujand	OE: son of mudarris	not arrested
Badriddin Azizi	Uro-Teppa	OE: ulama, son of a poet Hazmi	Not arrested
Suhaili	Uro-Teppa	OE: son of the poet Zufarkhon Javhari Istaravshani	Not arrested
Abdusalom Dehoti	Bogi Maidon, near Samarkand	Merchant	not arrested
Muhammedjon Rahimi	Faiik, Bukhara oblast	"villager", son of a jeweler and hafiz	not arrested
Abduqosem Lohuti	Iran		not arrested
Rahim Jalil	Khujand	family of shoemakers'	not arrested
Mirzo Tursunzoda	Qaratag	son of a "gardener"	not arrested
Sotim Ulughzoda	village in Namangan	raised in Soviet children's home	not arrested
Hamid Obidi			not arrested
Sadriddin Aini	Village near Samarkand		not arrested
*OE: Old Elite Sources: The information in this table was compiled & cross-checked using various biographical dictionaries and reference works: <i>Pisateli Tadjikistana</i> (Dushanbe: Irfon publishing house, 1976), <i>Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia</i> (Hukumat Leninabadskoi Oblasti, 1999), Iraj Bashiri, <i>Prominent Tajik figures of the Twentieth Century</i> (Dushanbe, Tajikistan:2002).			

¹⁰⁸ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 255

Jalol Ikromi's neighbor, the Khujandi tura Hakim Karim (1905-1942), was arrested shortly afterwards – as was his wife, Bonukhon. For a few days, Bonukhon was the only one of the writers' wives who would still speak to Ikromi's distraught wife Saodat. Hakim Karim, also known as Karim-zoda, had first come to Dushanbe long before Ikromi and the other 1930 congress delegates – he came in 1925, barely out of his teens, to head the agitprop department of the Tajik Komsomol. He seems to have been a restless, passionate and energetic young man. He was posted to state administrative positions in Karatag and Kuliab (in the south of the country) between 1926 and 1928. Then, between 1928 and 1930 he had served as a political commissar (politruk) in the struggle against the Basmachis. In 1930 he began to move towards the literary sphere, working for a while in Moscow, in the publishing house for the peoples of the USSR. From 1932, he served as vice editor of the *Proletari Khujand*, the local Tajik-language Party organ (subsequently renamed *Haqiqati Leninobod*). His literary career was all too brief, but in the span of a decade he worked on numerous translations, as well as editorial work and his own creative writing.¹⁰⁹

Years later, in conversation with the writer Dodojon Rajabi, Bonukhon would recall that Hakim Karim strove to keep his work separate from his family life. Although his widow would read and re-read the story that he had published in 1937, "I don't remember a single when my husband gave me, or his mother and father any of his stories to read once he had finished them. About his work – whether he was translating or writing stories – he never spoke to us."¹¹⁰

Prison life

¹⁰⁹ See *Navisandagoni Tojikiston* (Dushanbe, Irfon 1986), cited in Dodojoni Rajabi, *Osmoni Hamida* (Khujand, 1998), 34.

¹¹⁰ Dodojoni Rajabi, *Osmoni Hamida* (Khujand, 1998), 36.

The NKVD prison had a long corridor flanked on both sides by heavy metal doors leading to the cells, each of which had a small window set into it, through which the jailors would periodically shout instructions at the prisoners, and pass food. The rules and regulations governing life in the prison, bearing the signature of Yezhov, hung on the wall of each prison cell. On being admitted to the prison, the cash Ikromi was carrying – 49 rubles – was taken from him, and he was given a receipt. Once a week or so, a delegate from each cell was permitted to go to a shop (presumably within the compound), and buy a limited amount of food – butter, green onions, tobacco, garlic, and sugar, to supplement the prison fare. Once a day the prisoners were taken out for some fresh air in the prison courtyard, which was separated by a high wall from the homes of the NKVD employees on the other side, and the poignant sounds of laughter and children playing would reach the prisoners in the yard.¹¹¹

For a while, Ikromi was housed in cell number six, which was big enough for its twelve inhabitants to do morning calisthenics in, and also for three or four inmates to sit playing cards, made out of tea packaging, out of the line of sight of the guards passing through the corridor outside. His cellmates here included an energetic young Tajik Komsomol worker in his late twenties, who was chosen as their “cell leader,” a learned *makhsum* from Tashkent who worked in publishing, two Tatars – a Finance Ministry employee and a teacher from Qurghonteppa (Southern Tajikistan), and one of the rare Russians who spoke Tajik well, a scholar, who had been the party secretary for Isfara district.¹¹² The learned and intelligent former head of the high court, Hamdanov, who had already spent a year behind bars after his arrest in 1933, was a model of composure and font of advice for the other prisoners. The strange young Russian, who had

¹¹¹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 258

¹¹² At the time, Tajikistan was divided into 32 districts, or raions, and the raikom secretaries of each one were arrested in 1937 (Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 262).

formerly worked at Gosplan and who often talked to himself and swore about a certain Yura, probably felt very isolated in that company.

Strangest of all their cellmates was a forlorn figure of a young man in Kyrgyz garb – a black satin robe and a *telpak* on his head – who when questioned about his identity and provenance could only say “Lo, lo.” Some of his cellmates realized from this that he was a speaker of Arabic, and gradually learned his sad story.¹¹³ Salim was a merchant from Mecca, of the Quraishi tribe, who had set out in search of his nephew in Kashgar, via Karachi and Afghanistan, with papers from the British Embassy incorrectly authorizing travel “to the Bukharan lands.” Salim had been picked up by the NKVD in near Murghab, in the Pamirs, on the wrong side of the Sino-Soviet border. Ikromi gradually improved his Arabic by conversing with the young Arab, such that when Salim was interrogated, Ikromi came with him as his interpreter. His Tatar investigator believed Salim’s story, and promised to write to Moscow for permission to release him at the border. Unfortunately, Salim was still awaiting release in August 1938, when he was transferred to the general prison along with Ikromi and many others, where he died of dysentery.

At first, the regime in the NKVD prison seemed relatively painless to Ikromi, who was not summoned for so much as an interview for many weeks. Nusr, the Komsomol worker and their cell leader, would hang about the aperture in their cell door, updating the others on who was being brought in, and who taken out “for a stroll.” Across the hall from their cell, was cell no.3 in which Ahmadbek Mavlonbekov, Abdullo Rahimboev and “one other CC secretary whose name I forget” – most likely Soren Shadunts – were being held. Once, the other prisoners saw

¹¹³ Ikromi, the head of the high court and the Russian scholar all spoke some Arabic

Rahimboev with his face all bandaged up, and it was clear that he had been beaten, and his jaw broken. “Poor Rahimboev, who had met Lenin in his time, and given loyal service establishing Soviet power in Central Asia... until some NKVD beast came along and broke his jaw.”¹¹⁴

The prison became increasingly crowded, however, and after a couple of months cell no.6 was divided into two smaller rooms: one much smaller cell, a third of its original size, housing upwards of eighteen people, while the rest of the space became a torture chamber, whose walls were too thin to muffle the cries of pain that kept the other prisoners awake, or seeped into their dreams. One day Klimchitskii was brought into their cell, the Russian Orientalist who had made Stalinobod his home since the late 1920s, and taken part in the 1930 conference of Tajik linguists. For the first few days, he spoke to no one – even to Ikromi, who considered him a friend: “I think he was convinced that all of us really were ‘enemies of the people,’ and that he alone, though innocent, had been thrown in amongst us.”¹¹⁵

It was three months before Jalol Ikromi was even questioned regarding the charges on which he had been arrested. After a preliminary summons in the middle of the night, which sent him into a state of panic and dread, but which turned out to require nothing more of him than basic demographic information, he finally came face to face with the investigator assigned to his case, Garitskii. Stalinobod was a small place – before being recruited into the NKVD, Garitskii, who was a graduate of the Oriental Studies department in Tashkent University, had worked alongside Ikromi in the Ministry of Culture, where they had produced the wall newspaper

¹¹⁴ Ikromi, *ibid.*, 262.

¹¹⁵ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 267. Another prisoner that Ikromi mentions having become acquainted with at this time was Bobokalonov the elder (*kaloni*), a kolkhoz director from Leninobod “a simple farmer and a good person.” Ikromi observes that Bobokalonov “often cursed his younger brother Pulod, who had been nominated to the position of deputy chairman of the Central Executive Committee at the time of his brother’s arrest.” Pulod Bobokalonov appeared in chapter 2 as a kolkhoz chairman and patron of the arts.

together. Garitskii's mother worked in the Firdausi National Library with Ikromi's wife Saodat, and the two of them were friends. Further, Garitskii had graduated from Tashkent in the same cohort as Klavdiia Blagoveshchenskaia, another Russian orientalist married to Ikromi's erstwhile friend and fellow writer Sotim Ulughzoda, who would denounce him with a "full-throated" article in Red Tajikistan shortly after his arrest. Ikromi later became convinced that Klavdiia too had played a hand in his arrest, allegedly making several visits to the NKVD to speak with Garitskii, and make accusations against him.¹¹⁶

When Ikromi was led into Garitskii's office, he was seated at his desk, and greeted his prisoner with the words "So, do you admit to having conducted anti-revolutionary activities with Bektosh? When did Bektosh draw you into the counter-revolutionary organization?"¹¹⁷ It was the same, tired script that had been inflicted on Makhsum, Hojiboev,¹¹⁸ and countless others across the USSR. Ikromi replied, addressing Garitskii by his first name: "Boris, you know what kind of relationship I have with Bektosh. I wrote that long article against Bektosh for the newspaper, 'A word with me,' in which I unmasked him as having been with the Basmachis. Why would I then team up with him?" Ikromi was sent back to his cell after questioning, where he found that a new cellmate had been assigned to his room, which he assumed had been done to send him a message. The newcomer was a Volga German who had just broken down after two months of torture, and placed his signature to a narrative much like they wanted Ikromi to sign – "I set up such and such an anti-Soviet organization, I made so-and-so a member, our plan was as follows, that with the help of the German fascists I would overthrow the Soviet Union, and so on..."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 244

¹¹⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 270

¹¹⁸ See previous chapter

¹¹⁹ Ikromi, *ibid*, 270

The standard confession was so formulaic that Ikromi could recall the wording quite accurately decades later – the version in his memoir matches closely those found in the central party archives.

Over the next few months, Ikromi had only rare interactions with his interrogators – once Garitskii summoned him in order to hand over a small bundle of clothes, smelling of home, from his wife Saodat; once an NKVD underling beat him into signing a confession alleging that Sadriddin Aini was the leader of the particular counter-revolutionary organization that Ikromi had joined, at the master's invitation. This script sounds particularly odd, in that Aini never was subject to arrest, although following a vitriolic attack in a press by one Pirmqulov, his works were withdrawn from sale and from library bookshelves.¹²⁰ It does, however, fit in with Ikromi's own conviction that his fate during his imprisonment was firmly tied up with that of his mentor.

Once, finally, Ikromi was brought face to face with Bektosh:

[“In his hands he had a little black satin robe, neatly folded, and he wore a worn green cotton shirt. He placed the robe on his knees when he sat down. Garitskii asked us both whether we knew each other. We assented. Then he asked Bektosh whether he confirmed all that he had said. He said that it was all true, so Garitskii asked him to repeat it. Bektosh showed no shame – he said he had set up a counter-revolutionary nationalist organization and that he had recruited me, Jalol Ikromi, as a member. I could not control myself, I rose from my seat shouting ‘This traitor is lying!’

Ikromi tried to hit Bektosh over the head with his stool, but he was restrained, and Bektosh was led out.¹²¹ That was the last Ikromi saw of Bektosh, who is assumed to have been shot shortly afterwards, but after Ikromi's release, he was given permission to go down into the NKVD basement – alone, inexplicably – to retrieve the papers that had been confiscated from his

¹²⁰Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 242

¹²¹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 272

home at the time of his arrest. Ikromi found himself in a room piled high with manuscripts and folders, heaped haphazardly and scattered without order, and there, his eyes fell upon a sheaf of papers which turned out to be one hundred manuscript pages in Arabic script of Bektosh's unfinished, and never to be published, study of Mirobid Saiido Nasafi, a Tajik/Persian poet of the seventeenth century.¹²² It is not hard to see why Bektosh would have chosen to devote himself to this subject after his first sobering encounter with the NKVD in 1933: Saiido Nasafi earned his living as a weaver – quite isolated from the social elite of Bukhara, where he lived – and used the conventional poetic form of the ghazal, as Keith Hitchins writes, as a “vehicle to criticize the prevailing social and political order and to lament the hard life of scholars and workers. His heroes are not the romantic lovers of the traditional *ghazal* but rather ordinary men engaged in the life of their time.”¹²³ Ikromi badly wanted to take Bektosh's manuscript with him, but his courage failed him, and he regretfully left it behind, to sink into oblivion.

The winter of 1937-38 passed, and summer came without any new developments on his case. Prisoners were able, however to receive some news from each other and from the outside world via the “hand” telegraph, a code system of taps on the wall which could be amplified by means of a mug placed on the wall, and resting an ear on the bottom of the mug. In this way, Ikromi and his cellmates learned that the murderous rage of the purges was now engulfing the NKVD itself, as the local NKVD chief was replaced, and Ikromi's own interrogator, Garitskii, had been arrested and executed by firing squad. In August 1938, by which time Jalol Ikromi had spent about eleven months in the NKVD jail, all the prisoners were gathered together in the prison yard and sorted into groups. On this occasion, which Ikromi satirically refers to as the

¹²² Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 273

¹²³ Keith Hitchins, “Saiido Nasafi, Mirobid,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2012, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/zarinaia> (accessed on 9 September 2014).

“August Conference,” he was able to exchange a few words with some of his former acquaintances, who had also been arrested.¹²⁴

While waiting to learn their fate, Ikromi talked to Bobojonov, the former director of the Lohuti theatre, Stalinobod’s main stage, and two recent former Ministers of Culture: the Pamiri Amir Niyozov – who bore the signs of prolonged torture – and the Khujandi Said Nosirov, about whom he has a telling observation. “Nosirov became Minister and head of the Writers’ Union at the same time. He was a serious, intelligent, kind man. Although he himself was from Khujand, he lacked even a trace of that small-city spirit or “*mahalchigi*”¹²⁵ (an adjective coined from mahal, or neighborhood).”¹²⁶ The norm evidently was, as I have argued elsewhere, for Khujandis to feel a strong communal identity, and to behave as though they their ties to one another outranked loyalties of other types.¹²⁷ While Ikromi exempts Nosirov from the charge of *mahalchigi*, it is clear from his memoir that he too, as a Bukharan, has certain expectations of fellow Bukharans regarding norms of conduct, and mutual obligations, that he manifestly does not have of all Tajiks, and still less of his Russian colleagues.

“There, I truly saw man debased”¹²⁸

Following the “August conference,” Ikromi was transferred together with many others to the general prison where, much to his horror, he found himself quartered with robbers and murderers, in an environment where bullying, thieving, corruption and violence were endemic. In the general prison, the guards spent the day sitting in the courtyard, rifles in hand while the

¹²⁴ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 273.

¹²⁵ As pointed out by Adeeb Khalid, *mahalchigi* would appear to be a calque from the Russian *zemliachestvo*.

¹²⁶ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 263

¹²⁷ Ikromi was probably not aware that Nosirov had joined in denouncing Hojiboev in the Communist Party Plenum of February 1936.

¹²⁸ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 274

supervision of prisoners was mostly delegated to other prisoners themselves, the majority of whom were criminals (mostly “Russians and Ossetians,” oddly). The threat of violence was thus ever present, and it is understandable that Ikromi looked back with some regret at the orderly conditions of the NKVD jail. Each of the seven large rooms had appointed their own leaders, all of whom were “master thieves,” with the singular exception of the biggest leader “with the rank of king” – who, greatly to Ikromi’s good fortune, was an acquaintance of his, Dr Usmonov, formerly of the state polyclinic.¹²⁹

The prisoners spent their days here chatting, playing chess, with pieces fashioned – very skillfully – from *mie de pain*, trading (bread for sugar, sugar for butter, and so on), and reading the Qur’an. Among the Muslims, in Ikromi’s recollection, religious observance was almost universal – perhaps because it was felt that they had nothing further to lose – and there were many who performed their five daily prayers, even making prayer beads out of *mie de pain*. The prisoners also stole, fought, and engaged in feats of strength, with no reaction from the guards. Meals were delivered at odd times, to those who happened to be awake and alert, without rhyme or reason; prisoners almost never had the chance to bathe and everyone was riddled with lice.¹³⁰

In this “unholy huddle” of humanity, Jalol Ikromi managed to find his means of protection, which lay in his talent for memorization and story-telling. Ikromi told Usmanov and a group of his helpers stories like that of the Four Dervishes, and related entire novels from memory. “People managed to forget their troubles, and while away an hour or two in my company, and I became the ‘court poet.’” In recognition of his status, apparently, Ikromi was assigned a servant – a small man who looked after him by fetching him tea, bread and food

¹²⁹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 275

¹³⁰ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 275-76

whenever such items were handed out.¹³¹ Not only then was Ikromi thus able to secure better treatment for himself from the other prisoners by means of his talent as a story teller, but, in his own account, his cultural capital can be said to have materially saved his life.

When Ikromi, along with many others, succumbed to dysentery in the overcrowded and fetid jail, his memoir credits two people, Dr Usmanov, and Yokub Ishakovich Kalontarov,¹³² for saving his life. While Dr Usmonov personally nursed him back to health by carefully drying out breadcrumbs in the sun feeding them to him with tea, allowing him no other food or drink, Kalontarov performed a yet more remarkable service for his fellow Bukharan intellectual. Kalontarov, in a different cell in the same prison, heard that Ikromi was sick and managed to arrange for penicillin and saccharine to be smuggled in to Ikromi, via another prisoner.

At crucial moments of his time in jail, particularly when he contracted dysentery, Jalol Ikromi's physical survival depended very heavily on the interpersonal relationships he had managed to form with other Tajiks of a similar literary and social milieu to himself. Evidently, he considered a fellowship or kinship based on a shared cultural heritage and norms, rather than mere geographic origin, was morally positive, and of a higher order altogether. Of course, from a Khujandi perspective, perhaps the two categories are not so easily distinguished.

September 1938 ended, October began, and finally a stirring of hope was felt within the prison walls. Rumors began to circulate concerning promising changes in the leadership of the NKVD, and in fact Lavrentii Beria had been appointed – initially as Yezhov's deputy – in August 1938, while in a secret report in November 1938, Stalin and Molotov would sharply

¹³¹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 277

¹³² Yokub Ishakovich Kalontarov (1903-87) was a Bukharan Jew: a linguist, ethnographer, linear descendent of the elder who founded Samarkand's Jewish community. Source: <http://www.asia-israel.co.il/Калонтаров-Якуб-Исхакович.html>

criticize the excesses of the NKVD under Yezhov, who was relieved of his duties at the NKVD at his own request on November 25. This Beria was rumored to be a cultured man, trustworthy and powerful, and he would – or so it was confided in whispers, and hoped – move quickly to release those wrongfully imprisoned.¹³³ Of more immediate significance to Ikromi, he received a newspaper cutting in October, which contained an article praising Sadriddin Aini fulsomely, and announcing that the Master had “recovered from his illness, and was working on a novel about the family of Faizullo Khojaev.”¹³⁴ As Ikromi recalls in his memoir:

This news made me very happy, because as I had been imprisoned on account of my relationship with Master Aini, now that my mentor was healthy and acknowledged to be blameless, I too must surely be freed and my innocence established.

In November, prisoners did begin to be freed from the general prison, and Zagvozdin himself, head of the Tajik NKVD, came to visit the jail, inquire into the condition of the prisoners, and receive their petitions regarding wrongful imprisonment. Such were the times that Zagvozdin himself, a Communist Party member since 1918, must have felt on thin ice – his current position was a demotion from his previous one at the head of the Uzbek NKVD, and he would spend less than a year and a half at the helm of the Tajik NKVD, before being arrested in Stalinobod in February 1939 and shot soon after (never to be rehabilitated).¹³⁵ Almost all the prisoners had written petitions to hand Zagvozdin, but not Ikromi, who stood waiting by the door to speak to him.

When Zagvozdin came up to me, he asked who I was and why I did not have a petition, I told him who I was, and said I had been arrested for being a follower of Aini’s. Zagvozdin said that Aini is a great writer. I said “I am innocent, and imprisoned on account of that very writer.” He assured me that they would come to a decision on my case in the near future. I said “I am ill with tuberculosis and I will be dead before you can

¹³³ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 280.

¹³⁴ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 280.

¹³⁵ Petrov N.V., Skorkin K.V., *Kto rukovodil NKVD 1934 – 1941* (Moscow, 1999).

reach a conclusion” “No, we will reach it shortly!” said Zagvozdin. He spoke the truth, for so it was.¹³⁶

In mid-December, Ikromi was called out of his cell, and met a joyous Kalontarov in the prison yard, who assured him they were about to be relieved. Along with two other prisoners, one of whom was also a writer known to Ikromi, a certain Navbari, they were led, far more gently than usual, to the bathhouse and told to wash. These ablutions were performed in preparation with another meeting with Zagvozdin, who questioned Ikromi alone in his office, sitting at his desk. The NKVD chief asked Ikromi whether he confessed to being a nationalist, to which Ikromi rather boldly replied that if he were a nationalist, as a writer his nationalism must needs be sought in his writing. “Where is it?” he asked “Find one sentence as proof!”

Zagvozdin laughed, got up from his seat and began pacing across the room. He said “You have been accused of many crimes, but we are now in a position to investigate them. “While you are investigating” I said “I will die of tuberculosis in prison.”¹³⁷

Ikromi was sent back to his cell, but finally released two days later, on December 20, 1938. On being released, he was addressed as comrade, and informed that he would regain all his former rights and privileges, without a stain on his character. “If anyone says anything” the deputy minister of Internal Affairs assured him “you can call me on the telephone! Here is my number, here is your letter of rehabilitation. Be well!”¹³⁸

Victims and their families

Meanwhile, once her husband had been arrested and imprisoned, Saodat Ikromi was also obliged to find out the hard way who her true friends were, and who would be too afraid to come

¹³⁶ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 280.

¹³⁷ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 281.

¹³⁸ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 282.

to her aid. The secretary of the Writers' Union, Mirsaid Mirshakar, lost no time in evicting Saodat, her mother and young children from the Writers' Union residence which they had occupied. She was given twenty-four hours to find new accommodation, but although she walked all over the city, all whom she approached inquired suspiciously as to her husband's whereabouts, and even when she lied – claiming her husband was dead – she was told that they were unable to house the wife of an enemy of the people. Soon after, Saodat lost her job at the Firdausi Library, and in the months that followed she was reduced to selling all their possessions. The family found temporary refuge, however, with the Mahmudov family – with the widowed mother of Muqaddas Mahmudov, who would grow up to be an actor, singer and director at Tojikfilm, and whose father had been arrested in 1933. She told Saodat candidly that it mattered little that her husband had been arrested, as hers had already been both arrested and killed. Both Saodat and her mother, however, were tormented by the gossip and mockery they suffered at the hands of the wives of those who had hitherto avoided arrest, and determined to move further from the center of the city and their former circle of acquaintances.¹³⁹

Eventually, thanks to a “fellow townsman,” they found a little hovel for sale in “International Alley,” which in spite of its name seems to have been as yet untouched by the modernizing fury engulfing the center of Soviet Stalinobod. There was a little ditch or stream running by the house, which had a *sandali*,¹⁴⁰ and best of all the neighbors were all “very good people, Muslims from Farghona, and there was also one akamullo from Bukhara, and his wife Poshsho-i Harir, who was the sister of Rahmon Hamidi's wife [an elite Bukharan family].”¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 248.

¹⁴⁰ A Central Asian space heating device, consisting of a brazier surmounted by a low table, covered by a thick cloth or carpet. Those sitting cross-legged at the table, with the carpet draped over their knees, are able to enjoy its warmth.

¹⁴¹ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 250.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, at the height of the Stalinist Purges, even for a Soviet writer of the establishment, Islamic observance is taken to be a key trait in “good people,” and the ability to live one’s life with minimal encroachment from the state something that inspires confidence. Saodat would not have been able to afford to buy even this marginal hovel without the help of her sister’s son, Sulaimonkhon Usmonov,¹⁴² who hastened down to Stalinobod to assist her as soon as he could. He not only brought Saodat bag of rice and one of flour, and put down half the money to buy the hovel, but he even stepped in to look after Saodat’s children and mother so that she could go off for a much needed vacation in Bukhara, where she saw her old school-friends and relatives, and was much feted. Indeed, like Penelope, Saodat had to fend off several suitors who assumed that Jalol Ikromi would never emerge from prison, and were reluctant to see “so beautiful a woman” left without a husband.¹⁴³

However hard the fourteen months of her husband’s imprisonment were for Saodat, how much harder, even deadly, might they have proved for herself and her young children, if the NKVD agents charged with the case had followed the protocol governing arrests of enemies of the people? The infamous NKVD order 00486 concerning “Family Members of Traitors of the Motherland,” was signed by Yezhov and dated 15 August 1937, but retrospectively governed all such arrests made since August 1, 1936. The order stipulated – with immediate effect – that wives of traitors were to be arrested alongside their husbands, and subject to terms of imprisonment of at least 5-8 years. Wives with breastfed children were not to be arrested, but their arrest was only to be postponed temporarily.¹⁴⁴ The children of enemies of the people were

¹⁴² Sulaimonkhon’s father, who was the son of mullo Burhoniddin, last qozi-kalon of Bukhara (and Jalol Ikromi’s father), had been shot by a revolutionary troika in the early 1920s.

¹⁴³ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 252.

¹⁴⁴ The text of NKVD order 00486 is available online here http://ru.wikisource.org/wiki/Приказ_НКВД_от_15.08.1937_№_00486

not to be entrusted to relatives, but were to be sent to be raised in state orphanages, which across the Soviet Union became very overcrowded during the Great Purges, and had a high mortality rate. For reasons that remain unclear, the law governing the treatment of the wives and children seems to have been implemented only sporadically in the Tajik SSR – an omission whose effects were significant and long-lasting.

Saodat was never arrested, or even questioned by the NKVD, and hers is far from an isolated case. Muharrama, the “intelligent and well-spoken” wife of writer Ma’ruf Rasuli (who died in 1937) was not arrested, and lived on to see her children married, and enjoying good positions in the service of the state. Nor was the wife of Abdul Hakim Qosimov, politics editor in the State Publishing House and translator of Lenin and Stalin, arrested with her husband.¹⁴⁵ Was it stretching the bounds of credulity too far to believe that Tajik women could have been plotting alongside their husbands? Did the children of enemies of the people arrested in Tajikistan not pose the same degree of threat as the young children of countless others arrested across the Soviet Union and sent to state orphanages, to be re-educated or die of neglect? The apparent failure to arrest the wives of a majority of Tajik purge victims must be a crucial factor in the ultimate survival of the children of the purged, and thus in the continuation of many elite intellectual lineages into the next generation, which is itself far more easily demonstrated.

Marianne Kamp has uncovered evidence of a handful of women who were purged on account of their own careers, but the women whose fates she describes were not executed. Sobira Xoldarova (born 1907 in Chust) was a regional first secretary in the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in the 1930s, who was married to a prominent Communist. She was arrested in 1937,

¹⁴⁵ Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 216.

raised a daughter in prison and in exile in Siberia, but survived and returned to Uzbekistan in the 1950s.¹⁴⁶ Saodat Shamsieva, also a Communist Party member, editor of a women's magazine who feared being branded as a boi's daughter was expelled from the Party in 1937, lost her position and suffered poverty and hunger, but was not arrested.¹⁴⁷ In 1956, when she was cleared for re-entry into the Party. "the clerk expressed surprise, because according to her record she had been sentenced to execution."¹⁴⁸ Somehow, that sentence was not carried out – if the lives of prominent female Party members were spared, it is perhaps less remarkable that non-Party Tajik wives were spared arrest.

The gender aspect of the Great Purges is an understudied topic, so my conclusions must be understood to be provisional, and based on rather sparse, largely anecdotal data. However, the data we do have is quite striking. When prominent Tajiks were arrested in Russia, such as Nusratullo Makhsum and Abdurahim Hojiboev, as we have seen their wives were arrested alongside their husbands, and each served terms of at least five years in labor camps.¹⁴⁹ So far, the only case I know of in which NKVD order 00486 applied to an arrest made in Tajikistan was the case of Khujandi author Hakim Karim, who in 1937 also lived in the very same Writers' Union housing as Jalol Ikromi. As Ikromi recalls:

He [Hakim Karim] had a wife called Bonukhon, with whom he was very happy. They had two sons. But in 1937, that fatal year, they arrested Hakim, and actually **even arrested his wife Bonukhon**. They took his older son from his mother and grandmother, brought him to an orphanage where he died soon after. They released Bonukhon after four or five months, but they released Hakim a week before me." [emphasis added]

¹⁴⁶ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity and Unveiling under Communism* (University of Washington Press, 2006), 101.

¹⁴⁷ Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, 128.

¹⁴⁸ Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan*, 274.

¹⁴⁹ See previous chapter for the purge of Tajikistan's political elite

Ikromi's wording makes clear that it was highly unusual in his experience for a wife to be arrested alongside her husband (indeed, hers is the only arrest of a woman recorded in his memoir), and Dodojoni Rajabi's investigation into the impact of the purges on the arts in Tajikistan, *Osmoni hamida*, includes not a single female victim other than Bonukhon. It seems clear that this had a positive effect on the odds of survival for the next generation, who were young children at the time of the arrests of 1933-1937. Thus it was that many traditional intellectual lineages not only survived the Purges physically, albeit in the person of prematurely orphaned children unable to benefit fully from their parents' education or cultural capital, but were able to recover much ground and partially reclaim their place in society, as the next chapters will show.

The purges of 1937-1938 proceeded, as in the rest of the Soviet Union, by institution. This meant that, in institutions where old elites were over-represented relative to the population, such as the Writers' Union and others pertaining to journalism and the press, many of those targeted belonged to the old elite. There does not appear to have been, however, any systematic attempt made in Stalinobod to hunt down the heirs of the ulama class, as there had been in the previous decade in Bukhara and Samarkand (or in 1936-38 in Khujand, as we saw in the previous chapter). This led to some surprising survivals, not least among them Bahoutdin Ikromi, Hakim Karim (who, however, died in WW2), and Jalol Ikromi himself. Several old elite members of the Writers' Union not living in Stalinobod – the Khujandis Muhiddin Aminzoda and Rahim Jalil, for instance, eluded arrest altogether. Conversely, despite being overrepresented in certain sectors, of course the old elites were not the only victims of purges in the arts and cultural institutions. Within the space of a decade, the same regime that had invested considerable resources into training a whole cohort of journalists and writers, had turned against

them, turned them against one another, and severely compromised the ability of their institutions to function with any semblance of normality. It is little wonder that the much-revised characteristics of “gruppirovshchina,” which the Purges set out to destroy, persisted on into the post-Stalin period.

When the Writers’ Union and the Lohuti Theater were purged, old elites were certainly targeted, although they were not the only victims. Furthermore, the Writers’ Union continued to welcome old elites into its ranks shortly after the Great Purges: Habib Yusufi, son of a Samarkandi *mudarris* (madrasa instructor), was admitted in 1939, as was Luftullo Obidkhojaev, from an ulama family in Uroteppa. By contrast, the first Central Asian woman – member of the supposed “surrogate proletariat”¹⁵⁰ of Central Asia – was admitted to the Writers’ Union only in 1944: Rozia Ozod was the mother of Bobojon Ghafurov, and perhaps not coincidentally was invited to join the Union the same year that her firstborn son became Second Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party.¹⁵¹ For those who survived the purges, there was work to be done.

Those who survived the Purges were expected to get right back to the business of creating literature as soon as they were released from prison. The Writers’ Union continued to organize trips for writers to observe and celebrate the achievements of socialist construction – in 1940, a posse of writers was sent to soak up the atmosphere of a canal building project to be named after Stalin.¹⁵² The Tajik Writers’ Union publishing plan for 1940 included various

¹⁵⁰ In 1974, political scientist Gregory Massell published a book dealing with Soviet policies towards women in Central Asia entitled *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton University Press, 1974).

¹⁵¹ In the postwar period, among the few Tajik women who joined the Writers’ Union were the daughter of Pairav Sulaimoni, Gulchehra Suleimanova in 1957, and Ozod Aminova, daughter of Muhiddin Aminzoda, in 1965. There were also a couple of Russian writers active in Tajikistan who had joined earlier: Mirra Mendeleeвна Yavich in 1947 and Marianna Fofanova in 1953.

¹⁵² *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 3 October 1940

classics in Tajik translation (or transliteration, in the case of Persian), as well as collections of poems by Lahuti, Dehoti, Tursunzoda, Rahimi; a novel, *Dokhunda*, and a novella, *Death of the usurer* (*Margi sudkhur*), by Sadriddin Aini. Jalol Ikromi's first novel, *Shodi*, was in the pipeline, as was an collection of short stories by Hakim Karim-zoda, Rahim Jalil's novel *Gulru*, and Ulughzoda's play *Shodmon*.¹⁵³ In the papers, it was almost as if the purges had never happened.

Nonetheless, the high mortality rate undoubtedly sustained by the traditional social elite of Bukhara and Samarkand, coupled with the increasing psychological distance between those two cities and the Tajik capital following the creation of union republics, laid the ground for the conspicuous and long-lived ascendancy of the Leninobodis (Khujandis) in the post-war period, which would last until the Civil War of 1992.

¹⁵³ "U pisatelei Tadzhiqistana," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, 15 December 1939, 1.

Chapter Six. Islam and the *Asilzodagon*: Wartime and Postwar Leninobod

“kamotun kamotun din pesh ba raft”

“little by little, faith increased”

Ona-khon, interviewed in Khujand July 2011

When the Great Patriotic War began for the Soviet Union in June 1941, several of the *asilzodagon* intellectuals encountered in previous chapters promptly enlisted as volunteers, eager for an opportunity to demonstrate their enduring loyalty to the regime. Hoji Sodiq, who had recently left the Komintern kolkhoz and become a Communist,¹ enlisted, as did all three adult sons of Saifiddin-khon Osimi, son of the scholar Osim-khon Makhsun “whose reputation in Khujand was great.”² The great-nephew of Bashir-khon Ishoqi, and son of Mu’min Khojaev’s former protégé, Zikrullo Khojaev, served throughout the war as a newly qualified surgeon. The impulsive Hakim Karim also enlisted, for all the efforts of Jalol Ikromi and others to dissuade him – travelling to a different office to sign up after he was rejected from the first on grounds of ill health. He had had but three years to recover since his prison ordeal.

Hakim Karim had been released from prison two weeks after his wife Bonukhon’s release, and shortly afterwards they had discovered that their son had died in an orphanage. They left Stalinobod for their native Leninobod in 1938 – thereafter, Hakim Karim would return to the capital only on brief visits. In April 1939, the Tajik Writers’ Union resolved to admit Hakim Karim once again into the fold, and in July, in a characteristically schizophrenic moment of

¹ See chapter 3.

² “obruī kalon dosht,” see *Chehrahōi notakror*, 82. There will be more on the fortunes of the Osimi/Asimov dynasty in the following chapter.

Stalinist benevolence, he and his wife Bonukhon were both sent to the spa town of Kislovodsk, in an attempt to recover their physical health after the ravages of life in an NKVD prison. In October 1939, their son Diloar was born, and in Bonukhon's memory, life passed pleasantly enough until 1941. Their family home in Leninobod, presided over by Hakim Karim's parents Abdukarim-podshoh and Saodat-bibi, received many literary visitors: most often his fellow Khujandi writers Hoji Sodiq (see chapter 3) and Muhiddin Aminzoda, but also Rahim Jalil and Lohuti. When war broke out, Hakim Karim went three times to the *voenkomat* in Leninobod, but was rejected, until finally he travelled to Stalinobod, and used his connections to override his medical ineligibility for combat. He was killed a few months later outside Leningrad.³

Even to those who did not enlist, the outbreak of war soon caused great hardship – particularly for those without valuable patronage networks. Food prices in the cities rose vertiginously, until “one loaf of bread cost one hundred sum or more.”⁴ Writers who remained in Stalinabad found that almost all the publishing houses closed, rendering it all but impossible to make a living by writing. As Ikromi recalls “All this brought terrible misfortune to myself and my family, and our first misfortune was hunger.”⁵ Fortunately for Ikromi, he still had some friends in high places. A fellow Bukharan and a close friend, Mir-khon, served as Tajik Minister of Finance during the war years, and he was “respected and influential.” Ikromi and Ulughzoda appealed to him “on behalf of all miserable writers,” and he immediately ordered his staff to send over “meat, rice, flour and other foodstuffs.” On a separate occasion, late in the winter of 1944, Ikromi and Ulughzoda took a truck to a village, in the company of an assistant from the

³ Dodojoni Rajabi, “Hakim Karimro chi kusht?” (Who killed Hakim Karim), in *Osmoni hamida* (The Commendable Sky), Khujand: 1998, 34-54. In this chapter, Dodojoni Rajabi cites long excerpts of interviews with Hakim Karim's widow Bonukhon, who outlived her husband and son by several decades.

⁴ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 220.

⁵ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 220.

finance department. “There we were well feasted, and they saw us off with three sacks of rice, flour, apples, meat (one sheep) and other food stuffs. We brought these things to the city, and divided them amongst the writers.”⁶ The war brought into sharp focus the gulf in opportunity that separated the well-connected who commanded respect from those without connections or patrons. A key to surviving the War was access to the countryside, which a surprising number of *asilzodagon* still had – particularly in Leninobod.

This chapter on the war and its legacy consists of two main sections: the first uses the particular set of circumstances created by the Second World War to explore the extent to which the first twenty years of Soviet rule had affected pre-existing structures of patronal politics, and succeeded in creating a new sense of Soviet citizenship. In the second section, I consider the status of Islam in the aftermath of the war in northern Tajikistan, with particular focus on the extent to which Islam was still, or once again, a constitutive element of *saidzodagon* identity.

A time for feasting? Autarky in the Tajik SSR at war

“We must understand that now is not the time for drunkenness or for big celebrations (*tui*). We must now make use of every hour, every minute, for serious and dedicated work”
- Petr Sergeevich Bulanov, First secretary of the Leninobod oblast committee, in a speech delivered on February 1, 1945⁷

Throughout the Second World War, the leadership of the Tajik Communist Party found itself waging an unanticipated battle against a series of lavish ritual celebrations (or *tui*) that involved whole communities, enormous expense, and lasted several days. I seek here to explain this apparent anomaly by exploring the set of conditions that the outbreak of war in the western

⁶ Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 103.

⁷ RGASPI, F. 17, op. 45, d. 1673, l. 41: Stenographic Report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held February 1-2, 1945

borderlands created in the distant southeastern corner of the USSR. The war would fundamentally alter the course on which the Tajik SSR was set, and several of the significant concessions to the population made in the extremity of war were not to be successfully retracted in peace time.

For the most part, scholarship on the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 combines to suggest that Bulanov's exhortation, as recorded above, should be unnecessary. The USSR, which lost a third of its workforce and 40% of its arable land in the first months of the war,⁸ only managed to reverse its fortunes through a gargantuan, desperate effort that mobilized the entire population, which suffered terrible hardships and deprivations over years of forced resettlement and forced labour, bombardments, occupation, disease and near starvation. While it is not of course my intention to challenge this overall picture, the fact remains that research into the social history of the Soviet Union during the war has been very unevenly distributed geographically.

There is an extensive literature on the siege of Leningrad, whose population's heroic sufferings and defence of their city are often considered emblematic for those of the Soviet people as a whole, there are works on the Soviet home front whose focus is on Russia, and there are works on the occupation and evacuation eastwards of people from the Western borderlands and the main urban centres of Russia. The war looks somewhat different from the small Tajik republic, which received far fewer evacuated people or factories than its larger Uzbek neighbour (though Stalinobod did play host to Mosfilm for the duration of the conflict). Although the war brought familiar wartime sufferings and deprivations to many in Tajikistan, for some, the war years do indeed seem to have been a time for feasting. This anomaly stems in part from the

⁸ William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR During World War II* (Cambridge University Press: 1990), 17.

increased difficulties, long recognized in the historiography, of maintaining control in the periphery, as “war greatly exacerbated the problems of translating Moscow’s will into action at the local level.”⁹

*“Hama chiz baroi front, hama chiz baroi ghalaba”*¹⁰

On paper, “everything for the front, everything for victory” was just as much the rallying cry in the Tajik SSR, that far southern and eastern corner of the USSR, as it was elsewhere in the Union, once its unwilling entry into the Second World War had been prompted by the German invasion of the Western borderlands. The Soviet leadership of Tajikistan had been under orders to place the economy on a wartime footing since 1939, and by some assessments much had already been achieved in this direction by the summer of 1941, when the cause of industrial and economic progress was further boosted by the evacuation of several industries and institutions from the West. If industrial progress in Tajikistan had been a focus before the German invasion, that goal became rather harder to maintain, however, once the attention of the centre was forcibly turned to the western front. Barber and Moskoff have both described how the entire capacity of the severely overloaded railroad network was taken up by military needs – bringing men, arms and supplies to the front, as well as assisting in the evacuation from the soon to be occupied territories (of goods and machinery primarily, rather than people).

As the war went on, such severe logistical and transportation problems, and the absolute priority accorded to military interests and to the transport of military personnel and supplies, were to have important and long-lasting consequences for the Tajik SSR. In the first few months – even weeks – of the war, the USSR suffered an unanticipated and severe decline in its capacity

⁹ John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-1945: a social and economic history of the USSR in World War II* (Longman: London and New York, 1991), 48.

¹⁰ “everything for the front, everything for victory” – Tajik propaganda slogan

to produce food, with the sudden loss of thousands of square miles of the best agricultural land, only partially and temporarily offset by the extraordinary effort to bring in the 1941 grain harvest before it was too late. This led to an intentional policy shift away from the centralized distribution of food, as Moscow ceded responsibility for maintaining food supply to the regions, on a local level. On July 19 1941, Pravda ran a front page article setting the goal of local autonomy in food production: “Each factory, each city – is its own food base... Now before the local organization stands an extremely important task: expand local food resources in every possible way.”¹¹ The scene had been set for ordinary Tajik citizens to reclaim the agency in food production that had been so unwillingly yielded to the state over the previous decade.

Soon, the only foodstuff which continued to be centrally distributed and rationed (with varying success) was bread.¹² Everything else was expected to be locally produced and consumed, and consumption of such foodstuffs as could not be produced locally declined sharply. This was true for the Tajik SSR as much as for the rest of the Union. The extent to which the official food supply chain broke down there in the course of the war years is suggested by January 1944 allegations that the canteens of Leninobod served no vegetables whatsoever.¹³ Surrounded as the town is by orchards and fields, vegetables were surely to be had for the right price, but evidently not via the state canteens’ usual channels. Even once the war had ended, it would take many years for basic food security to be restored to those living in urban or sub-urban settlements. Up into the 1950s, labour on household plots guaranteed better food security than even factory management roles, as the wife of a factory director in a small Ferghana Valley

¹¹ Pravda, July 19, 1941, p.1, quoted in William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR During World War II* (Cambridge University Press: 1990), 96.

¹² William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction*, 94.

¹³ RGASPI, F. 17, op.44, d. 1378, Leninobod CP biuro meeting minutes for January 4, 1944.

town recalled “if I had worked we would have surely starved because we lived off what my work on our plot and with the livestock gave us.”¹⁴ The exigencies of wartime brought about a pervasive logistical breakdown, whose wide-ranging social and cultural implications I examine here.

Scarcity affected food distribution, just as it affected the long list of non-food items on whose central distribution the Tajik SSR had hitherto relied, and as the war wore on, creative substitutions became the norm. Across the Soviet Union, tractors and trucks were requisitioned for use by the Red Army, and fuel for non-military purposes was in very short supply. Given the almost complete lack of fuel available in Tajikistan, the virtue of asses and camels for transportation, not long since rhetorically decried as symbols of Central Asia’s backward past, was rapidly reassessed by the non-local leadership. As the now-useless tractors and trucks rusted in the fields and MTS stations, new breeding centres for both donkeys and camels were set up in Leninobod oblast.¹⁵ The use of camels and asses for transportation increased exponentially, although it was clearly not always possible to replace the public transportation city workers had depended on with draft animals: some Leninobod workers had to walk eight kilometres to and from work daily.¹⁶ In another sign of local tastes and customs prevailing over central planning,

¹⁴ Marfua Tokhtakhodjaeva, translated by Sufian Aslam and edited by Cassandra Balchin, *Between the Slogans of Communism and the Laws of Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: Shirkat Gah Women’s Resource Centre, 1995), 174-175. In chapter six of this work, “History through the eyes of women in my family,” Tokhtakhodjaeva quotes extensively from interviews with members of her large extended family, and it the citation above is from her mother, Maksudakhon. Recalling her life in the early to mid 1950s, as the educated young wife of a factory director in a small Ferghana Valley town, she is cited as saying “In those days in the worker settlements, the barter system prevailed, Foodstuffs like bread, sugar and grain were rationed. The shops were bare and the people had to fend for themselves. [...] In worker settlements, the people had small tracts of land which they used to feed themselves and their children. Luckily the land was fertile Some had chicken, rabbits, sheep or cows. [...] My husband worked a lot; the factory was old and there was always some crisis [...] I wasn’t able to complete my studies; if I had worked we would have surely starved because we lived off what my work on our plot and with the livestock gave us.”

¹⁵ RGASPI, F.17, op.44, d.1378, l.24, Leninobod oblast Biuro meeting minutes from January 4, 1944

¹⁶ RGASPI F.17, op. 45, d.1673, l.37ob: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held February 1-2, 1945.

the local party organization finally received permission to wrap up their struggling and unpopular pig farming concerns (“in light of the [Muslim] population’s lack of interest in pig rearing”).¹⁷ In short, I argue that much of the northern Tajik oblast of Leninobod became an almost autarkic system during the war years.

The necessity of making do with as few imports as possible was felt even in Tashkent, that flagship of Soviet modernity in Central Asia. Paul Stronski has shown that the impossibility of importing steel, concrete and other necessary building materials led to a reassessment of traditional adobe building techniques on the part of European communist officials.¹⁸ In neighbouring Leninobod oblast, even more basic supplies were scarce. A severe shortage of paper for printing newspapers made itself felt as early as September 1941, when the party was obliged to enforce a tight economy on paper use, passing a resolution to lower the print runs for all newspapers and suspend printing of the Uzbek language press altogether.¹⁹ The implications of such scarcity for wartime propaganda, in a region where radios were still quite uncommon, were not dwelt upon at the time, but it is surely no coincidence that propaganda efforts were so often criticized thereafter, and teahouses (even of the “Red” variety) were so routinely denounced as hotbeds of gossip, wild rumours and speculators.²⁰ By war’s end, political education work even in Leninobod district itself (to say nothing of the more remote rural areas of the oblast) was so weak, that the shepherds of the Bolshevik kolkhoz (collective farm) were found in early July 1945 to be as yet unaware that the war had ended.²¹

¹⁷ RGASPI, F.17, op. 44, d. 1378, l.24: Leninobod obkom biuro meetings of January 4, 1944.

¹⁸ Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City: 1930-1966* (University of Pittsburgh Press: 2010), 99-100.

¹⁹ RGASPI F.17, op. 22, d. 2492

²⁰ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.81: stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945.

²¹ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1674, l.57

Just as would be expected, living standards in Leninobod city fell considerably during the war, but it was non-locals, and those who relied most heavily on public services and state support, who bore the brunt of the shortages. Meeting minutes of the Leninobod party organisation's inner circle paint a bleak picture of life in the city – but the emphasis is on public services, or the lack thereof. In the autumn of 1944, schools, communal apartments, medical facilities and crèches were all found – not for the first time – to be woefully underequipped to withstand cold weather.²² Few local families would have been directly affected by the dire conditions of the crèches, which entirely lacked sheets, mattresses and bedding, because they could not be persuaded to make use of them. The proportion of Tajik and Uzbek women in the workforce at this time was very low, and failed to make significant gains – other than on some kolkhozes – even during the wartime shortage of men. Likewise, the native population by and large successfully avoided communal housing. In other words, provision of public services is not necessarily a useful barometer for the actual living conditions of the local population.

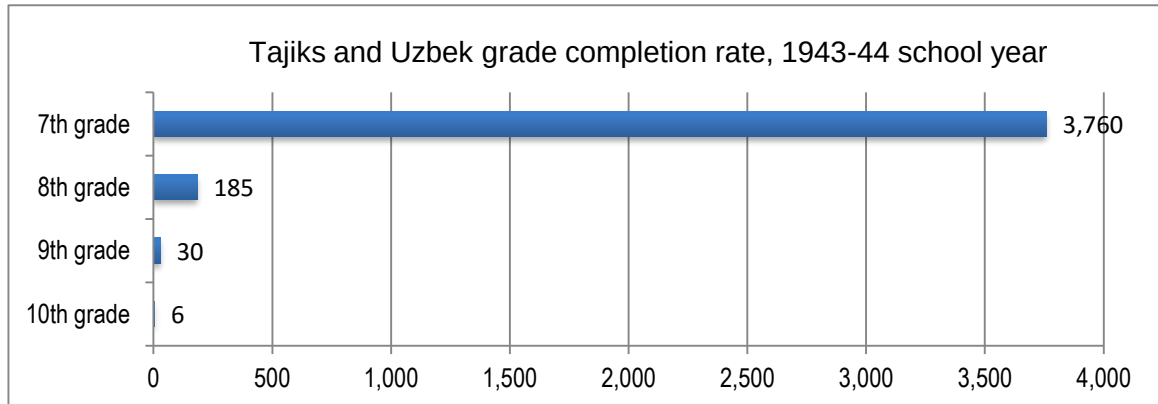
Throughout the war, the old complaints about the conditions prevailing in local schools continued. About 40% of schools in Leninobod province had no glass in the windows, and almost half of all the schoolchildren inspected were found to lack suitable shoes and clothes.²³ Here too, the response of the bulk of the local population seems to have been to disengage, and withdraw their children well before they completed middle school. The extremely high attrition rates of Tajik and Uzbek children – only six of whom completed 10th grade oblast wide in 1944, was a matter of some concern for party officials, as it posed a severe challenge to the development of the native intelligentsia. Such measures as are proposed aim to address

²² RGASPI, F.17.op44, d.1382, l.5

²³ RGASPI, F.17.op44, d.1382, l.5

perceived barriers to access to the BUZ for native population, but the cultural divide between the small Russian and European population and the locals is clearly vast, and it affected the way these populations experienced the war.

Table 6 – Wartime school absenteeism



On the question of schooling, there is some evidence to suggest that a portion of the local population, operating with a quite different understanding of the education required for the native intelligentsia, felt able during the war to pursue a traditional Islamic education for their children, received at the hands of a *qori* (a practice that had all but disappeared in the terror of the 1930s). In the educational sphere as in several others, we see that when the exigencies of war obliged the heavy hand of the state to draw back, the local population was left with greater opportunity to act as they wished.

By 1945, the myopia of state documents was providing a thoroughly dismal view of the abysmal physical infrastructure of Leninobod city. An exasperated party official exclaimed that conditions were surely better in the cities recently liberated from the Nazis:

How can one cope with a situation in which we sit for two and a half years in darkness, without bathhouses, without water? How can such a situation be faced calmly? In the districts freed by the German occupiers, even there the bathhouses are promptly reopened, and there they have schools, electricity, water. But with us, the population gets by with the dirty water of the Syr-Darya river.

[...] When, oh city soviet and city party organisation, will this routine come to an end? When will people be able to bathe in a bathhouse? ²⁴

The lack of electricity was due to problems with the city generator, which was in need of repairs and running well below capacity, generating only 150-170 kilowatts of the city's minimum, and very modest, electricity requirement of 500 kilowatts.

Beyond public services, state support and special provisions for vulnerable groups was also very inadequate. Living conditions of the families of soldiers serving in the front lines for the Red Army, supposedly a privileged category for state provisions and rations, were singled out for particular censure in internal party documents. Most such families were living in dwellings in need of urgent repairs, lacked fuel, and many of their children were found not to attend school for want of shoes.²⁵

Life in the city was undeniably very hard for the weak and vulnerable, but the picture presented in reports intended to shame those responsible for maintaining the public infrastructure in good working order does not tell the full story. The local population had not had long to become used to the convenience of electric street lighting or running water. On the other hand, many local legends and proverbs portray the water of the Syr Darya river that flows through the city as pure (even miraculously so), and quite good for drinking.²⁶ Lack of oversight into the daily life of the city and its agricultural hinterland had its positive side. Garden plots flourished, and the city markets did a brisk trade, fuelled in no small part by the illicit sale of collective farm property.

²⁴ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held February 1-2/2/1945

²⁵ RGASPI, F. 17, op.44, d.1378, meeting minutes of January 4, 1944.

²⁶ Orifjon Yahyozod Khujandi, *Khujandnoma yo qissaho az ta'rikhi Khujand va khujandiyon* [The Khujandnoma, or stories from the history of Khujand and Khujandis] (Khujand, 1994).

Overall, the situation created by the lack of imported resources and fuel was far more difficult in the few, small urban areas than in the rest of the predominantly rural, mountainous country. In fact, Leninobod oblast party documents combine to suggest – when read against the grain – that the north of Tajikistan may have gained rather more than was lost with the set of circumstances created by the distant war – particularly when compared to the desperate situations faced in Moscow and closer to the front elsewhere.

In the countryside of northern Tajikistan (Leninobod oblast), the situation was determined to a large extent by opposing tendencies generated by the exigencies of the war. On the one hand, central government stressed the need for the population's total dedication and commitment to the cause of victory, and rhetorical pressure on kolkhozes and state enterprises of every kind increased significantly. Each kolkhoz was expected to play its part, and the work norms to be fulfilled by every member of the kolkhoz were increased. On the other hand, actual pressure on the countryside was hard to maintain: even before the war, external supervision was very thinly spread in rural areas of Tajikistan (considered hardship posts by most non-local communists), to which were added the difficulties already mentioned with transportation and logistics. It became much more difficult to enforce work norms, or to oblige collective farms to deliver the set quotas of cotton and other agricultural produce. This led to a clear and massive shift in attention on the part of collective farm workers across Leninobod oblast away from cotton, the vast majority of which was not of course destined for local consumption, and towards the production of food, not only on individual plots but also, with a remarkable degree of impunity, on kolkhoz lands.

Cotton had, by the outbreak of war, been enshrined as the pre-eminent crop of Northern Tajikistan, and the delivery of cotton dwarfed in importance all other expectations set by the

centre for this periphery. The cotton plan for 1941, the last harvest that was tended to and gathered in before the outbreak of war, was exceeded in Leninobod district²⁷ by 131%. By the following year, the picture had already changed dramatically, and cotton targets were not met again for the next four years.²⁸ In 1942, Leninobod oblast as a whole met only 70% of its cotton quota.²⁹ In 1945, the Inqilob (Revolution) kolkhoz fulfilled under 7% of its cotton quota, while on the Voroshilov kolkhoz – the “millionaire kolkhoz” presided over by the larger than life Said-Khoja Urunkhojaev, only 60 out of 181 workers in fit condition were found to have picked any cotton at all.³⁰ Despite much handwringing in the course of Leninobod obkom meetings over these flagrant and persistent failures to fulfil the cotton quotas, there is little evidence that any punitive measures were taken, with the exception of certain cases where non-fulfilment of the cotton plan turned out to be the tip of the iceberg – the catalyst for an investigation that brought more serious infractions to light.

Tuis

Many wartime investigations into the management of collective farms were triggered by reports of lavish ritual celebrations, or *tuis*,³¹ being staged there. A tui is a Turkic word for a celebration marking a life cycle event: a wedding or circumcision (sometimes celebrated

²⁷ It should be noted that Leninobod district (*raion*) is the district within the Leninobod province (*oblast'*) that includes the city of Leninobod. Leninobod oblast encompassed other districts with their eponymous towns, such as Isfara, Konibodom, Uroteppa, Mastchoh and Penjikent.

²⁸ RGASPI, F. 17, op. 45, d.1673: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945

²⁹ RGASPI, F.17, op.43, d. 1857, l.25: Stenographic report of the plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held March 23 and 24,1943.

³⁰ RGASPI, F.17, op. 3, d. 1673: meeting minutes of the Leninobod Obkom plenum held 6-7/10/1945. “Inqilob,” or revolution in Persian, is spelled Inkilob in Russian-language documents.

³¹ I am using an anglicised plural for this untranslatable word, whose correct plural in Tajik would be *tuiho*, and in Uzbek *tuilar*. Incidentally, due to the various alphabet and transliteration systems in use in regions where *tuis* occur, the word can also be rendered in English as *tooi* or *toy*.

together). It is a community event, in the sense that the host is expected to invite everyone in his *mahalla* (urban neighbourhood) or village at the least. Tuis have long tended to be sites of conspicuous consumption, and have attracted criticism and even legal challenges on these grounds since at least the nineteenth century Jadid reform movement. In contemporary Tajikistan, a 2007 law limits the number of guests that may be invited to a *tui* to two hundred; but the law, though appreciated by some in the middle class as a means of limiting social pressure to overspend, is routinely flouted by the elite.³² Incurring years of debt for the sake of hosting a lavish *tui* was very common in Tajikistan, as it was and is in neighbouring Afghanistan and elsewhere in Central Asia.

The war-time explosion of lavish tuis astonished and exasperated state and party officials, but was not wholly without precedent. As relics of a superstitious and backward past, tuis were certainly frowned upon before the outbreak of war, and many cases of “religious tuis” were discussed in party meetings. Fuzail Avezov, a semi-literature collective farm worker, was expelled from the Party in September 1935 for organizing a *tui* for his son’s circumcision, which was attended by mullahs and eshons (Sufi leaders), and diverted scores of collective farm workers from their agricultural work.³³ The following month, Ismatboi Rustamov was likewise expelled from the Party for hosting a *tui*, which he allegedly organized “while under the influence of mullahs, together with the most backward elements of his *kolkhoz*,” luring other collective farm workers away from their work.³⁴ The pattern of expulsions from the party of communists who organised “religious tuis” continued over the next few years: in May 1940, the

³²Sophie Roche and Sophie Hohmann, “Wedding rituals and the struggle over national identities,” in John Heathershaw and Edmund Herzig (editors), *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood* (Routledge, UK: 2013), 127-142.

³³ RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.121, l.82

³⁴ RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.121, l. 109

vice-chairman of a kolkhoz in Isfara (Leninobod oblast) was expelled for organizing a “religious tui” for his son’s circumcision, attended by a hundred and sixty five people.³⁵ The cases recorded in the minutes of the Leninobod obkom biuro meetings must surely be the tip of the iceberg, as they concern only the small subset of tui thrown by party members that somehow caught the attention of higher ups. It is not clear that non- party members would necessarily have incurred any kind of punishment for holding a tui, unless embezzlement, underage marriage or some other crime were also involved.

Until the fateful summer of 1941, the organization and participation of tuis was routinely interpreted as a sign, usually one of many, of “backward” attitudes, and a culpable susceptibility to religious influence. Thus, hosting a tui was problematic in party members who also refused to unveil their wives, or in someone who was known to have invited mullahs to pray over the sick: such behaviours incurred censure in that they were considered to be “survivals of old customs” (*perezhitki starogo byta*). The hosting of a tui was considered reprehensible behaviour for a communist on a par with other public or semi-public manifestations of Islamic piety, such as hosting “readings of religious texts and prayers,” at large gatherings of women presided over by “an elderly female religious leader who had travelled thither from the city (Khujand).³⁶ The common denominator for all tuis that land communists in trouble before the outbreak of war is the explicit mention of the Islamic element. The provenance of the funds required to host such events is never discussed – until wartime conditions set in.

³⁵ RGASPI, F.17, op.22, d. 2483: Leninobod obkom biuro meeting minutes for 7/5/1940

³⁶ The party membership request of Madaib Vakhidov, an illiterate kolkhoz worker born in 1898, was refused on these grounds in October 1935, despite his having successfully maintained candidate member status since 1930. RGASPI, F.17, op.28, d.121, l.98

Once the USSR moved towards full mobilization for war, and had made such concessions to the religious feelings of the population as were deemed necessary to secure victory (to be discussed later in this chapter), both the nature of the phenomenon under observation and its interpretation by the non-local authorities in the party and NKVD underwent a striking change. Viewed from the perspective of Communist Party officials in Leninobod, the most worrisome aspects of the wartime tui efflorescence come across in a fairly typical report from early 1945:

In late 1944 there took place, mainly at the behest of kolkhoz chairmen, a series of very lavish tuis, even featuring buzhashi matches,³⁷ during which colossal sums of money were spent, and vast amounts of food were consumed. And behold – instead of acting to investigate and bring to light the means with which such tuis were hosted, and rallying public opinion against these practices, several leading party workers took part in these tuis. [...]

Kadyrov, the district plenipotentiary for the People's Commissar for Procurement in Ganchi [sic – hereafter Ghonchi], threw an extraordinarily lavish tui, featuring a buzhashi match, in honour of his wedding, which was attended even by party leaders from Ghonchi and Ura-Tiube [Tajik: Uroteppa] districts. During the buzhashi game, the wealthy groom handed out large sums of money to left and right. Where did he get that kind of money?

The chairman of the Madali kolkhoz in Asht district [...] threw a lavish tui on the occasion of his son's circumcision, again with a buzhashi match – and this match moreover lasted two days. Eminent (*krupnie*) religious figures were invited. For that tui also, large sums of money and great quantities of food were consumed – out of the collective farm's coffers. They consumed 5 camel [loads - *text corrupted*] of wheat, 50,000 roubles of cash, and 27 goats.

[...] I am not against native (*narodniy*) traditions, or religion, nor am I against breeding good horses, but I am against the crimes that are inevitably connected to the organization of such amusements. Because really, where did Kadyrov find the wherewithal to throw such a feast? He earns 1,000 roubles, as a salary from the kolkhoz, and he has a kitchen garden of 0,15 ha; he has a couple of sheep, one cow, in accordance with the regulations, and that's it. It is clear that he reached his hand into the coffers of the "Madali" kolkhoz, and crept into the kolkhoz storehouse.³⁸

³⁷ Buzhashi (lit. "goat grabbing"), sometimes referred to in Russian sources as *kozlodranie*, is a Central Asian game or sport somewhat comparable to polo, see the following section for details.

³⁸ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.56ob, stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945

In this account, several of the common traits uniting many similar such discussions can be seen: the hosts of lavish tuis tend to be kolkhoz chairmen, or others of similarly high social standing – and similarly good access to agricultural produce – in their communities. Such celebrations are understood to be taking place with the tacit approval, if not the active participation, of leading local Communist Party members. The traditional cultural elements of the event are noted – such as the buzhashi matches, as are its religious components (the mullahs on the guest list), but neither of these cause as much consternation as the flagrant expenditure of vast amounts of cash and assets, assumed to be state property.³⁹

We can live with the elitist, un-socialist nature of these traditional practices, the speaker's tone seems to imply, and with the backward religious beliefs that accompany them, but such flagrant thefts of state property are too much to bear. Noticeably, when the topics of tuis, “native traditions” or Islamic practice are introduced, all repartee and questions from the other meeting participants cease, and one can imagine the Tajiks and Uzbeks in the room avoiding eye contact while the outsider continues his diatribe without interruption or comment. No solutions are debated or proposed, and even the speaker (an ethnic Russian, in the secret police) seem to feel powerless to prevent the recurrence of these tuis, apparently limiting themselves to wishing these bouts of feasting were not quite so brash.

When a large scale semi-religious celebration takes place at the instigation of the kolkhoz chairman, who for many in the rural population effectively represents state power – it is clear that the Soviet state is not functioning as intended. When such celebrations involve the entire local community taking an unscheduled vacation from work to feast and make merry to mark a

³⁹ RGASPI, *ibid.*

circumcision, in itself a practice the Communist Party aspired until recently to stamp out altogether, Party officials tend to interpret this as a propaganda failure. When such tuis become routine, discussed at each and every wartime plenum of the Leninobod obkom, the enforcement of wartime economic and political goals is clearly a serious problem. If at such a time, the main concern of party officials is the embezzlement of state property that accompanies such goings on – rather than say, the religious element or its overtly anti-Soviet character – this should be seen as part of the major policy shift that took place during the war.

“With tuis things are going badly, particularly in Penjikent district [Leninobod oblast], which we might call the Country of the *Tui*.

There tuis are held every day and enormous sums of money are spent on them – up to twenty-five or even fifty thousand rubles⁴⁰ – as well as vast quantities of rice, mounds of bread. One court employee organized a tui in the very centre of Penjikent town, a tui that was attended by more than three thousand people over the course of three days. Even eshons from Ura-Tiube [Tajik: Uroteppa] district took part, as well as Com. Bagrov of the Ura-Tiube district committee. On the occasion of this tui, a *radiola* was brought out from the cinema, and the whole town joined in the festive mood. One must suppose that over the course of three days people chattered, milled about, and conducted their religious festival most thoroughly.”⁴¹

- Nikitin, Head of Leninobod oblast NKVD

The size and frequency of the wartime tuis are discussed as something new, something not previously seen on this scale. It is said that, whereas it used to be the case that games of buzkashi were held on occasion of circumcision rituals, recently “a new type of tui”⁴² has emerged, in which buzkashi matches are routinely organized to accompany wedding parties also.

The phenomenon of a kolkhoz chairman (generally but not necessarily a communist party member) hosting a lavish tui is clearly a complex one deserving of careful unpacking. What does the decision to host a tui and engage in conspicuous consumption mean, at a time of such severe

⁴⁰ In other words, 25 or 50 times the average salary of a kolkhoz chairman cited above.

⁴¹ RGASPI, F. 17, op. 43, d.1857, l.101-102, minutes of the Leninobod obkom plenum of 23-24 March 1943

⁴² RGASPI,

privation and national emergency, in wartime? What is the nature of the apparent correlation between lavish tuis and the war years? In what follows, various aspects of the tui will be considered in turn: buzhashi, gift exchanges, patronage networks, *khishenie* (embezzlement of state property), and the implications for wartime morale in Tajikistan. I will then consider to what extent tuis can be viewed as a manifestation of Islamic revival in the war years, and what links both these phenomena to the enduring relevance of *asilzodagon* lineages.

Buzhashi

It is impossible to ignore a marked tendency on the part of kolkhoz chairmen regarding this tradition called buzhashi (*kozlodranie*). It seems to me that now is not the time to occupy oneself with this business, for the simple reason above all that a lot of money is spent on this – at a time when in the collective farms there are so many who are needy.⁴³

Considering what is involved in organising a game of buzhashi, the tone of this criticism is strikingly mild, even hesitant (“it seems to me”). Buzhashi is a traditional game or sport of Central Asia, sometimes described as a form of polo, in that it involves riders on horseback competing for control of the carcass of a goat or calf (rather than a ball, as it were). In Tajikistan, unlike in other countries where versions of the game are popular, buzhashi is traditionally played not in teams, but rather each rider competes against all the others to win large, valuable prizes (today, a car or jeep perhaps). It is played in an open, unmarked field, preferably a valley whose slopes may provide a viewing area for spectators. The aim is to seize control of the carcass and to ride with it clear away from the mass of other players in any direction, before letting it fall uncontested to the ground, and thus scoring a point.

⁴³ RGASPI, f.17, op.45, d.1673, l.55ob, stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945.

By nature, buzkashi is a very elite form of play, sponsored generally by those who wield political as well as economic power. Buzkashi involves the deployment of well over a hundred horses – or several dozen at an absolute minimum – and these horses are specially bred for the purpose. A traditional buzkashi match requires a wealthy sponsor to host the game, as well as other sponsors who provide horses for individual riders competing on their behalf, and generally takes place on the occasion of a *tui*. Prior to the establishment of the Soviet Union, games of buzkashi in this region would have been hosted by local dignitaries, to enhance their own prestige and foster loyalty among their underlings.

An extended quotation from an American study of buzkashi based on field research in Northern Afghanistan in the 1970s (where the population, like that of Northern Tajikistan, is predominantly of Uzbek and Tajik ethnicity), gives a good sense of the thrill of buzkashi and the skill demanded of its players.

Unless the earth is still really moist, great clouds of dust hide much of the central action. Powerful men on powerful horses mass with one another in a mayhem of frantic movement: pushing and shoving and changing position and trying to grasp the carcass, headless and hoofless, from the ground. The men are now yelling past one another at the top of their lungs and now urging their horses onwards with an incongruously soft hiss. The horses respond: lurching and rearing, sometimes kicking and biting, and forcing their way towards the centre where the carcass lies. [...] In the midst of dust and noise and sweat, the calf comes underfoot. The horse, if well trained, feels the bulk below, braces for an instant, and drops its near shoulder. Clenching his whip between his teeth and cocking one foot behind the saddle, the rider leans and stretches an arm towards the ground. Metal stirrups graze his head, and unshod hooves batter his fingers. Lunging half blind in the melee, he manages to grab hold of the carcass briefly, but, as another saying goes, “Every calf has four legs” and other riders quickly wrench it away. Nothing stands still [...] Eventually, one horse and rider takes the carcass free and clear and let it fall in uncontested triumph.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ G. Whitney Azoy, *Buzkashi: Game and Power in Afghanistan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 1-2. The descriptions are useful, but the conceptual framework and sunny deployment of orientalist tropes leave much to be desired.

Playing buzkashi, in which the masculine cultural values of horsemanship, strength, courage and power are displayed to full advantage, can be seen as a fitting complement to the life cycle celebrations of circumcisions and weddings (the latter ceremony enshrining the ritual submission of bride to groom as a central trope). As elsewhere in Turko-Persian culture of the steppe, horse ownership and skill in horsemanship were crucial markers of social status (conversely, ownership of even a single horse could result in being classed as a kulak in the 1920s). Excellence in horsemanship has been demonstrated by Stephane Dudoignon to have also been an important attribute of many charismatic religious figures (or Soviet Muslim saints, in his terminology) of this period, as well as a “major symbolic attribute transmitted by pre-Soviet emirs and khans’ courts,” a precious heritage in difficult times.⁴⁵

A buzkashi match lasts for many hours, or even several days, and, by its nature, is a large-scale event that would be difficult, if not impossible, to conceal from anyone in the surrounding community, if even such concealment were desired. Hosting a game of buzkashi would confer great honour and renown upon the patron among his own people, and it seems plausible that there should have been competition between patrons vying to throw the most dazzling matches of buzkashi. It is the Khans (or lords) of Azoy’s northern Afghanistan who host games of buzkashi, and one could imagine it being a particular source of pride that, even in a greatly altered political and economic landscape, the heirs of the khans of Northern Tajikistan still could – in their new incarnation as kolkhoz chairmen – throw a good game of buzkashi.

That these games of buzkashi took place during the war would only seem to further heighten the stakes in the display of power they represent: in absence of direct evidence

⁴⁵ Stephane A. Dudoignon, “From revival to mutation: the religious personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from de-Stalinization to independence (1955-91),” in *Central Asian Survey* (2001), 30:1, 53-80.

regarding their motivation, my sense is that kolkhoz chairmen hosted buzhashi matches in wartime partly to show that they could. Horses, requisitioned in large quantities by the Red Army, had become extremely scarce across the interior of the Soviet Union, and were hardly used even as draft animals.⁴⁶ Meat was scarce, and yet a *tui* involving games of buzhashi could consume as many as twenty-seven goats over several days – recklessly torn apart by the players and trampled to a shapeless pulp into the dust, while hundreds or thousands of spectators looked on. These men had the power to display such wealth, and the consequences seem to have been slow in coming.



Figure 28: Scenes from a buzhashi match

ABOVE and LEFT: Images from a contemporary game of buzhashi in southern Tajikistan (near the capital, Dushanbe). All photographs by Theodore Kaye [<http://www.theodorekaye.com>]

The archival sources do not reveal which, if any, of those discovered to have hosted large *tuis* and *buzkashi* matches belonged to *asilzodagon* lineages. The ancestry of these flagrant embezzlers of state property was of no concern of the Party officials, for whom the war years were not a time to be looking for trouble that didn't come knocking. As I argued in chapter 3, the successful, award-winning kolkhozes in the environs of Leninobod city soon became places that

⁴⁶ Barber, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941-45*, 169.

—paradoxically in part because of their impeccable socialist credentials — proved markedly hospitable to many values, cultural practices and traditions of the pre-revolutionary period.

It should be clear by now that those *asilzodagon* families who did not flee the Soviet Union can be arranged along a spectrum roughly representing their attitude to the Soviet state — which was rarely static over the course of a lifetime — ranging from loyal Communists who believed in the ideals of socialism (albeit perhaps with serious reservations regarding practical implementation and the “excesses” of Stalinism), to devout Muslims who eschewed compromise with the regime as far as possible.⁴⁷ There were many points along this spectrum, and of course many for whom joining the Party to advance their careers was a more compelling reason than ideological conviction, and others who turned to Islam at the end of their “secular” careers, or when their secular careers did not seem fulfilling enough. *Asilzodagon* at both ends and all along this spectrum tended shared a discourse of great consciousness and pride in their lineage, and a professed commitment to honour the values and legacy of their ancestors.

The more “Sovietised” *asilzodagon* who pursued a secular higher education were not attracted, by and large, to the kolkhoz way of life⁴⁸ (except at certain times of need), but their tastes and values were not those of all *asilzodagon*. There were Sufis of illustrious lineages who sought anonymity from the state and a safe berth on a kolkhoz. There were, as we have seen, charismatic kolkhoz chairmen whose names and norms of behaviour hinted at an august lineage that may or may not have been theirs.

⁴⁷ If there were *asilzodagon* who rejected the Soviet social contract on grounds other than religious observance, I have found no trace of them.

⁴⁸ We will catch up with what the *asilzodagon* intelligentsia we have been following got up to during the war presently, both in this and in the next chapter.

Gift exchanges, solidarity networks

In Ura-Tiube [Uroteppa] district, the chairman of Andreev kolkhoz, Ma(k)hmudov, divorced his wife and married somebody else. On the occasion of this marriage he threw a large tui at which several poods of rice were consumed, [1 pood = 16,38 kg], then handed out *khalats* (robes) each worth 3,000 rubles. In total, fifty such robes were handed out, for a total value of 150,000 rubles – to say nothing of the cost of the foodstuff and the like.⁴⁹

The amount of rice consumed at Mahmudov's wedding celebration was enough to feed many hundreds of people (allowing for 8-10 people per kg), presumably including the whole kolkhoz, local authorities, as well as dignitaries and allies of the host visiting from further afield. There were fifty VIP guests who received a ceremonial robe – given their high cost (each one costing three times the kolkhoz chairman salary quoted above), these were probably made of hand-woven silk or a silk and cotton mix, heavily embroidered in silk/cotton, and possibly also silver or gold thread. These were not the kind of gifts likely to be handed out to fifty people without expecting from them something in return – whether loyalty, cooperation or something more tangible.

These guests included members of the nomenklatura who should have reported their host to the authorities – but instead, were later seen wearing their expensive *khalats*. One could say that the host was buying their silence, but it is likely that so expensive a gift bought rather more than silence. Gift exchanges at weddings are seen as a means of cementing relationships between the gifter and the giftee, and it is through invitations to tuis and exchanges of gifts that social networks are maintained.

By hosting a tui, open to all members of the rural community, the host is sharing the goods at his disposal, the goods of the kolkhoz, between all community members, albeit not as

⁴⁹ RGASPI F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.83

intended by the principles of collective farming. All take part in the communal meal, and perhaps all receive some gift from the host (dried fruits, or leftover bread/foodstuffs perhaps, or a kerchief) but the more valuable gifts are reserved for certain privileged guests. Large scale tuis suggest a (return to) an alternative means of sharing out the community's resources, that bypasses or substitutes the externally-imposed socialist method of distribution, always imperfectly applied in any case.

Khishenie and the management of kolkhozes

We must finish this kind of tui: This is just another kind of embezzlement of kolkhoz funds. How come kolkhoz chairmen are so rich? How come they have so much stuff and so much money?

We recently took an interest in such questions. It seems, that in several farms there is a fund set aside for the chairman of the kolkhoz or vice chair. There, 5-10 tonnes of surplus are stored, and this constitutes their own fund, from which they take as needed.⁵⁰

There are such funds in the Komintern,⁵¹ and Pravda kolkhozy, as well as others.

- Kholmatov, Leninobod oblast state prosecutor, speech delivered 2 February 1945

What were the economic factors that gave rise to the wartime efflorescence of tuis in Northern Tajikistan? Although of course the criminal aspects leading to prosperity on collective farms' are the focus of the investigations launched by state and party organs, there were also licit means through which collective farm workers could materially improve their lot. Since 1934, every member of a collective farm had access to a private lot on which to grow food both for her own household, and for sale on the collective farm market; during the war, restrictions on cultivating and selling private plot produce were tacitly dropped.⁵²

⁵⁰ RGASPI, F.17, op. 45, d. 1673, l.83: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held February 1-2, 1945

⁵¹ The Komintern kolkhoz was described in chapter 3 – it was founded by Pulod Bobokalonov, subsequently chaired by his brother Jura, and they both got into trouble in 1938 when irregularities were discovered in the cotton sowing figures submitted.

⁵² Moskoff, *Bread of Affliction*, 98-99.

Particularly in the conditions created by the disastrous disruptions to the centralised food supply, collective farm markets became crucial to the survival of Soviet citizens across the Union. Published Soviet sources gave the proportion of all food sales taking place on collective farm markets as 51% Union-wide in 1945, up from 20% in 1940.⁵³ Extremely steep price increases accompanied this shift. One of the reasons for the steep decline in the figures for cotton (both sowing and harvest) in Leninobod in the early 1940s is surely the increased attention being paid to private plots, as well as to food crops grown on kolkhoz lands.

As has already been suggested, in the war years appropriation and embezzlement of state funds and property appear to have been the norm on many Leninobod oblast kolkhozy, rather than the exception. Given the active struggle against collectivisation that lasted well into the 1930s, to say nothing (yet) of the wave of anti-collectivisation agitation allegedly conducted by religious leaders during the war, it seems fair to suggest that one man's embezzlement was another man's rightful share of his hard work. When the state failed to provide the collective farm workers with bread, they felt obliged, and perhaps entitled, to sell the kolkhoz butter to buy flour.⁵⁴

In the eyes of the state, economic crimes committed on collective farms took many forms, each amply attested during the war years, ranging from the rental or sale of kolkhoz lands, failing to fulfil one's quota work days (while often, instead, working one's private plot), selling kolkhoz produce and livestock on the open market. Further crimes attributed to collective farm chairmen include failure to pay their workers adequately,⁵⁵ under-reporting of their farm's

⁵³ A.N.Malafeev, *Istoriia tsenoobrazovaniia v SSSR, 1917-1963gg* (Moscow: 1964), 268-9, reproduced in Mosckoff, 153.

⁵⁴ RGASPI, F. 17, op. 45, d. 1674, l.57.

⁵⁵ One such case involved the Andreev kolkhoz, whose chairman lagged behind on paying his workers after hosting a tui. RGASPI, F.17, op. 45, d.1673, l. 83.

productivity, or harbouring a range of social parasites and Red Army deserters on the kolkhoz, while refusing to help evacuees. Under-reporting agricultural produce seems, indeed, to be a fair explanation for figures offered by kolkhozes such as six eggs laid per chicken over the course of seven months, or 230g of wool yielded per sheep.⁵⁶

The problem of work discipline was one which, though significant throughout the existence of collective farms, was exacerbated both by wartime conditions and the government's response to these. Conscription into the Red Army created a huge labour shortage across the interior of the Soviet Union, as young men vanished from the countryside and the rural working population decreased by at least a third Union-wide. This created a significant disincentive to enforcing punitive expulsions from the collective farms, where any labour lost would be hard to replace.

Data suggesting that by 1944, “able-bodied women outnumbered men in the interior regions by almost four to one”⁵⁷ incidentally only increases the wonder of the wartime buzhashi matches: another way in which patrons may have exerted and flaunted their power was perhaps by shielding talented players from conscription. There were indeed cases reported of kolkhoz chairmen abusing their positions by keeping family members out of the Red Army – including that of a rare female kolkhoz chair, Soro Domloeva, who was discovered to have shielded several deserters, appropriating extra bread ration cards for them, lying about their age and so on.⁵⁸

Each member of the collective was expected to accrue a certain number of work-points per year, with a work-point corresponding to a day's work of average intensity and length. Part

⁵⁶ RGASPI, F.17, op. 45, d. 1674, l.58

⁵⁷ Barber, *Soviet Home Front*, 149.

⁵⁸ RGASPI, F.17, op.44, d.1378, Leninobod obkom meeting minutes dated 16/01/1944.

of the reason for establishing minimum workdays was to ensure that kolkhozniks did not lavish too much of their time onto their private plots, which was a persistent trend. In return for fulfilling their workday obligations, each kolkhoznik received a share of the farm's income, which theoretically consisted in a combination of cash and in kind payments. Even before the war began, for reasons that are still unclear to me, kolkhozniks in the southern cotton belt, which includes much of Tajikistan, were required to fulfil a significantly higher number of workdays – 100 per year – than those in the more industrialised regions (60 days per year), or in the predominantly agricultural regions of Russia (80 days per year). Workday minima were then substantially increased in February 1942, and were set at 150 days for the southern cotton belt,⁵⁹ a decision which appears to disregard the seasonality of cotton cultivation, climactic conditions, and the scarce availability of alternative agricultural work in a region that Soviet policy had rendered a virtual cotton monoculture. It is no surprise then that members of many, if not the great majority, of collective farms in Northern Tajikistan failed spectacularly to meet their minimal workday requirements, through a combination of unrealistic benchmarks, ineffectual enforcement and competing priorities. The rewards of expanding food production on and beyond their own private plots clearly far outpaced the distant threat of retribution.

Illicit livestock sales were repeatedly described as rampant throughout Leninobod oblast, but it is hard to get a sense from the available data of the proportion of total livestock sales, or meat consumed, that such sales represent. Moskoff's account, which relies on official soviet publications which ignore the black market, presents overall data for the Soviet Union suggesting that while obligatory meat deliveries rose sharply between 1940 and 1943 for all kinds of

⁵⁹ See Barber, *Soviet Home Front*, 168.

livestock (e.g. of cattle, from 63% to 84% of the total), the proportion of meat sold (legally) on the collective farm market dropped (from 13% to 4% for cattle).⁶⁰ Such figures suggest that a black market for meat was a widespread wartime phenomenon beyond the Leninobod oblast.

At the plenum of February 1945, when the Leninobod obkom had to confront the reality of having failed to meet the cotton harvest target for the fourth year running, all present indulged in an unusually thorough session of breast-beating and *samokritika* (self-criticism), yielding abundant examples of “delinquent” kolkhozes.

There have been many cases of kolkhozes renting out lands. The Tel'man kolkhoz rented out apricot orchards with a projected harvest of 800 kg of apricots. But when the specialists determined the actual harvest of this orchard, it was found to amount to 3,000 kg of apricots – that is to say 800 kg to the kolkhoz, and 2,200kg the renter kept to himself. Similar cases occur in kolkhozes in many other districts, but the Raikoms and district executive committees (Raispolkom) simply do not react.⁶¹

Numerous cases were reported of kolkhoz lands not only being rented, but also sold outright, a trend which would appear to reflect a certain degree of confidence that collectivisation could or would be reversed – perhaps in the event of the Soviet Union losing the war, as some evidently hoped that it would.

At the February 1945 meeting, Kharchenko, representing the NKVD, estimated losses to the state due to embezzlement on state and collective farms at “tens of thousands of tons of produce, tens of millions of rubles of cash – and this at the very time when the country needs all its strength to help the Red Army defeat the fascist enemies...”⁶² His investigation into the widespread embezzlement and theft in Leninobod oblast led to the arrest of “around five hundred

⁶⁰ William Moskoff, *The Bread of Affliction: The Food Supply in the USSR During World War II* (Cambridge University Press: 1990), p. 100 table 5.3

⁶¹ RGASPI, F.17, op. 45, d. 1673, l.100ob: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held February 1-2, 1945

⁶² RGASPI, F.17, op. 45, d. 1673, l.102, as above.

people.”⁶³ Those who were found to be speculating or defrauding the motherland were not altogether invulnerable, therefore, particularly not once the fortunes of the Red Army improved and the war was drawing to a close, but the protection afforded by “the problem of cadres” was very significant.

The problem of cadres, as it is always referred to, had been severe in the Tajik SSR even before the war, when it became acute. Many of the first generation of leading local communists, of course, had perished in the Stalinist purges, while significant numbers of their less career-minded contemporaries had gradually been weeded out for persistent (Russian language) illiteracy, political ignorance and other failings. Many posts in the party and state administration remained vacant, as the proportion of women serving in leadership positions actually declined during the war years in Leninobod oblast. The story of the tui at the canning factory in Konibodom (an ancient but small town in Leninobod oblast) well illustrates the atmosphere of impunity in which the local notables operated.

Between December 1943 and January 1944 Arif Nematov, director of the Kirov Canning Factory in Konibodom, party member since 1929, and holder of various medals, was investigated twice in connection to a tui he had hosted in honour of his two sons. He was found to have hosted a large “religious” tui over four days in December (in keeping with the agricultural year, winter is the most popular time for tuis). He did not deny hosting this celebration, although the report wryly notes that the fact of his sons’ circumcision has not been verified. On the first day only VIPs were invited, including the second Raikom secretary, the Raikom secretary for cadres, and several other district-level dignitaries. The first Raikom secretary, Abdulin (not a local name,

⁶³ RGASPI, F.17, op. 45, d. 1673, l.103, as above.

it will be observed), was also invited, but instead of forbidding the event, he kept silent and feigned ignorance of goings on by taking himself off to a collective farm at that time. On the second day more people were invited – well over a hundred – including the canning factory employees and people from nearby villages. That same day, following a summons from the Raikom, Nematov showed in the office up drunk, and turned belligerent when “urged to have done with this tui.” On leaving, he declared “The Party here can do nothing, and I will do what Tajik [customary] law has decreed. I will not have my children be like Russians! The district party organisation can do nothing to me, because I have people who will protect me.” Nematov’s words of unrepentant defiance suggest a strong sense of identity founded in local traditions and customs (in an interpretation compatible with rather un-Islamic drunkenness), coupled with alienation from the Russians, and – perhaps – from “their” war. The tui then continued undisturbed for a third and final day, on which, in accordance with local custom, only women were invited.

The investigation found that Nematov had indeed taken advantage of his position and used state property for the tui (67 kg of flour, 10 kg of sugar, and 10kg of oil were taken from the canning factory), although it was conceded that he had also spent plenty of his “own” money. Once these facts were made known, Nematov returned 67kg of wheat in lieu of the flour consumed, and 10 kg of oil, to the district committee, and evidently expected the matter to end there. In apparent confirmation of Nematov’s boast, the Konibodom party organisation’s proposal to expel Nematov from the party was not upheld in Leninobod, although he was removed from his post. Instead, responsibility for preventing the tui was laid at the door of the

Raikom secretary, Abdulin, who was reprimanded and told, somewhat inconsequentially, to strengthen antireligious propaganda.⁶⁴

But to what extent did the efflorescence of wartime tuis represent a propaganda failure? What role was played by the relaxation of the anti-religious campaign during the war years? I will argue that the decision to allow greater religious freedom, while taken with the reasonable expectation that morale would thus be boosted, backfired to a certain extent due to the way in which communication regarding the issue was handled, and in fact botched.

Morale in wartime Tajikistan

There is some evidence that, from the government's perspective, wartime morale in Muslim Central Asia was a legitimate area of concern. In his history of Tashkent as a Soviet city, Paul Stronski gives accounts of defeatist attitudes towards the war among the native population, documented in archival sources originating with the NKVD. In some quarters of Tashkent, there was open speculation as to what the future of Central Asia would look like in the event of a Soviet defeat, accompanied by a sense that an improvement was likely. There were also hints of a deep socio-cultural cleavage between Russians/Europeans and the native population, expressed in ethnic slurs about the "barbarian" Uzbeks and their sharp knives, in European fears of an uprising in which "the Uzbeks will slit Russian throats," and in occasional dark threats made by Uzbeks to their Russian co-workers along the lines of "we will crush you all."⁶⁵ In Leninobod oblast, overtly anti-Soviet "propaganda" is attributed to Muslim leaders and to those in their thrall, who were found claiming "that Soviet power mocks the people, the successes of Soviet

⁶⁴ RGASPI, F. 17, op. 44, d.1378, l.122 Minutes of the Leninobod obkom meeting of 16 January 1944

⁶⁵ Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet city, 1930-1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 122.

power will soon come to naught and Germany will gain the upper hand.”⁶⁶ Though such sentiments were clearly of concern to the authorities, it is hard to gauge how widespread such attitudes were in practice.

Should we then interpret the episodes of lavish wartime feasting described above as designedly anti-Soviet activity intended, in part at least, to undermine the war effort? Not necessarily, it would seem. There were plenty of Tajiks, both notables and ordinary people, apparently keen to dispel the perception that their nation was anything less than completely loyal, as demonstrated most strikingly by a long and lyrical “Letter to the Tajik soldier from the Tajik people,” published in *Pravda* on March 20, 1943, and signed by an impressive cross-section of soviet society, from party bureaucrats, kolkhoz chairmen and poets to students, brigadier, stakhanovites and actors – for a total of 390,000 Tajik workers. The article is a textbook example of *druzhba narodov* (friendship of peoples) rhetoric:

“When we talk of our motherland [for whom you, Tajik soldier, are fighting], we think not only of the lush abundance of the Vakhsh valley,⁶⁷ not only of the apricot and apple orchards of Leninobod, not only of the ravines and peaks of the snowy Pamirs: our Motherland is also the green forests and wide rivers of Russia. The fertile fields of Ukraine, the picturesque shores of the Black Sea [...] and the cradle of revolution – the great city of Lenin.”

It should not, however, be surprising were one to learn that some of the kolkhoz chairmen among the signatories had also hosted a *tui* in the recent past, or were planning one for the coming winter. Willingness to sign an open letter to be published in *Pravda* was no more reliable a sign of complete loyalty to the regime than spending several thousand roubles of kolkhoz

⁶⁶ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.104: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945

⁶⁷ The “abundance” of the Vakhsh valley, such as it was, was due in large part to a recent concerted effort to open the area up for agriculture through canal digging and mass internal migration of agricultural labourers from elsewhere in Tajikistan (including several thousand from Leninobod district). Source: RGASPI F.62, op.2, d.3285, l.11ff

produce for a feast was the hallmark of a bitter enemy of the regime. I interpret both as signs that for the new Tajik rural elite, the relationship with the Soviet state was a matter of ongoing negotiation, a teetering balance of give and take – in which the war allowed a temporary, short-lived opportunity to take a little more.

With their open letter in *Pravda*, Tajiks demonstrated how well they had learned to use a strategy previously deployed to good effect by Abdurrahman Rasulev, the Mufti of the Central Spiritual Directorate of Muslims. In November 1942 Rasulev had published an open letter in *Pravda*, congratulating Stalin on the anniversary of the Revolution in the name of all Soviet Muslims, to whom he appealed to join him in praying to Allah for a swift victory.⁶⁸ The possibility that religious leaders could galvanize their constituencies into greater support for the Soviet war effort seems to have struck the Politburo as worth betting on, as a series of measures intended to shore up morale by loosening the stranglehold on religion in the public sphere were taken in the course of the war. An early step was the dissolution of Emelian Iaroslavskii's League of the Militant Godless – never a particularly effective propaganda tool in Central Asia.⁶⁹

Muslim leaders in Central Asia, taking their cue from Rasulev, then wrote to Kalinin, in his capacity of chair of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, to ask permission to establish a second spiritual directorate for Central Asia.⁷⁰ Permission was eventually given, and SADUM, the spiritual directorate for the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, was established in Tashkent in July 1943. For the remainder of the Soviet period, SADUM was led by successive generations of a Naqshbandi dynasty: the first Chairman and Mufti was Eshon Bobokhon ibn

⁶⁸ *Pravda*, 12 November 1942, 2..

⁶⁹ Ya'acov Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 36.

⁷⁰ Ya'acov Roi, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 102. See also: Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, Stefan Reichmuth (editors), *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, 248.

Abdul Majid-khon (1943-57), followed by his son Ziautdin Babakhanov (1957-82), and then his grandson Shamsiddin-khon Babakhanov (1982-89). The Babakhanovs had authority over the qozis appointed to each of the republics, and (theoretical) spiritual oversight over all Muslims in Central Asia.

In Tajikistan, one of the first appointees as qozi was Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi, who as we know, had memorised the Qur'an in childhood and studied for some years in a madrasa in Kokand before the Revolution. His ancestry, however, and his blameless record throughout the upheavals of Stalinism, were probably factors no less important behind his selection as a member of SADUM. Bashir-khon tura served as qozi for Tajikistan between 1948 and 1955, which obliged him to live in Stalinobod. He moved back to his hometown in 1955, and served as qozi of Leninobod until his death in 1961. SADUM provided an opportunity for the appointment of a very limited number of state-funded, state-sanctioned imams, and for limited religious activity to take place legally in Tajikistan after a long hiatus. Two madrasas, both in the Uzbek SSR (the Mir-i Arab in Bukhara and the Barak-Khan madrasa in Tashkent) were allowed to operate beginning in 1945, and had the task of training imams and qozis for all of the USSR.⁷¹ One of the first students of the reopened Mir-i Arab madrasa was Hoji Muslihiddin, a younger brother of Bashirkhon Ishoqi, who became the imam of the Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque, in whose mazar his father and grandfather were buried.

A procedure was established for requesting permission to (re-)open a limited number of mosques, and allowances were even made for the muezzins to make the call to prayer, from the roof of the mosque if necessary (given that many minarets had been destroyed in the 1920s and

⁷¹ Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, Stefan Reichmuth (editors), *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, 250-251.

30s). By 1953, SADUM had registered a total of 144 mosques and 8 mazars across Central Asia, of which 27 mosques and one mazar were in Tajikistan.⁷² The Friday Mosque in the centre of Leninobod, Shaikh Muslihiddin, received new formal registration as a “pre-existing” mosque on 26 May 1944. When a report on officially sanctioned mosques was compiled in 1953 for the Moscow-based Soviet on religious affairs at the USSR Council of Ministers (SovMin), the imam khatib of the Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque was recorded as one Gafar Gafurov, born in 1894. He was recorded as having the education of a khatib, but no secular (*svetskii*) education, and 100-150 people were estimated to visit on a regular weekday, 300-400 on Fridays, and 3000-4000 on religious holidays.⁷³ These numbers certainly understate the number of observant Muslims in the town by a wide margin, considering that women only rarely visited (and were confined to specific areas), and many people attended smaller local mosques, which also saw increased attendance on major holidays. Two other mosques were registered in the Leninobod area by 1953: the Mir Kalamboi and the Khojion mosque, located on the Lenin kolkhoz, both of these were staffed by men born in the 1880s with religious training as imams, but no secular education.⁷⁴ The mosques and religious activity of which SovMin was informed in such slight yearly reports was only the tip of the iceberg, however.

The wartime relaxation of the constraints on religion in the public sphere appears to have been interpreted far more expansively on the ground than had been contemplated by the centre, and the reactions from the population at large were not slow in coming. As we have seen, not only did those who felt so inclined necessarily refrain any longer from publicly marking religious life-cycle events such as weddings and circumcisions, but party authorities no longer considered

⁷² GARF, F.P6991, op.4, d.29, l.52

⁷³ GARF, F. P6991, op.4, d.29, l.50

⁷⁴ GARF, F. P6991, op.4, d.29, l.51

the religious dimension of such events reprehensible per se. To what extent, however, such concessions on the religious front were successful in their intent to shore up popular support for the war effort is less clear.

In considering how the war had affected the landscape of religious observance across Northern Tajikistan, the Leninobod Communist Party plenum held in February 1945 provides a useful benchmark. Some of the most striking developments reported on concern the reopening and restoration of a large number of mosques, the increased visibility and influence of religious authority figures, and widespread support of religious activity on the part of communists and state employees. In the city of Leninobod itself, where, it may be remembered, the supply of electricity was completely inadequate to the needs of an urban centre, the city's executive committee gave permission to have the Jum'a, or central, Friday mosque (Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque) connected to the grid and provided with illumination. The city's electricians had done as they were told, and wired up the mosque; instead, they turned out the lights in the city museum, adjacent to the mosque. Furthermore,

...for four months now an architect has been working in the oblast executive committee who has not raised a finger for any improvements in the city, but has been entirely taken up by the project to restore this [same] mosque.⁷⁵

"Unlimited" numbers of mosques had also opened up in kolkhozes and elsewhere without the proper permissions from the centre – although it is likely that kolkhoz chairmen were aware of these developments (though they may have turned a blind eye). Even Communist Party members were reported to have made large donations – 20,000 rubles in one case – to support the restoration of old mosques. In the words of the NKVD chief, "This party member ought to

⁷⁵ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.40: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945

have been asked why he did this, and where he got the money from”⁷⁶ – but local authorities appeared resigned to these developments, when they did not actively support them. By early 1945, there were over forty mosques functioning openly in just three districts of Leninobod oblast, up from zero in these same localities before the war.

The self-assured behaviour of those whom the NKVD obtusely refers to as clerics, or Muslim spiritual leaders, caused particular consternation.

With the establishment of SADU (the Central Asian spiritual/religious college) in Tashkent, the Muslim spiritual leaders (*dukhovniki*) have noticeably revived their reactionary activities, which influence the more backward collective farm workers. These spiritual leaders, who previously lay low, have come to the surface once again, and live off the backward part of the population, and off their disciples. They agitate against the Soviet system and in favour of disbanding the collective farms. [...] It is typical that in several districts, the kolkhoz activists actually help these religious leaders. To tell the truth, when it comes to Muslim clerics, there is no-one who stands against them. They serve as both propagandists and organizers. [...] The clerics raise their heads, behave arrogantly, and engage in wild, extravagant behaviour (*sumasbrodstvuiut*). For instance: a cleric needed to go from one kolkhoz to another. When they gave him a kolkhoz horse, he refused to mount it. Only once the chairman had presented him with his own private horse, did he consent to go.⁷⁷

The suggestion here is that some religious figures were reclaiming what they felt to be their rightful place in the leadership of their communities, and insisting once more on the deference and privileged position that had once been their due. Although these Russian language sources do not reveal whether the influence exerted by these “Muslim clerics” derives from their status as madrasa-trained scholars, or as charismatic Sufi leaders, the re-explosion of Islam in its many forms into the public sphere was clearly a major concern. Particularly so when religious figures were reported to be using their influence to campaign once again against collectivisation, as they had over a decade earlier. The lack of clear communication concerning the rationale and

⁷⁶ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.104: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945

⁷⁷ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.54-54ob, as above.

motivations behind the new atmosphere of increased religious freedom brought about some problems of its own, in that it left Tajiks and other believers across the Union free to speculate as to what might lie behind Stalin's apparent change of heart. Here is one theory that apparently circulated in Leninobod oblast:

“In Ghonchi and Ura-Tiube [Uroteppa] districts the clerics spread fabrications such as the claim that the Soviet Union is now under the influence of England, and that England has made four demands: to introduce epaulettes into the Red Army, to close all party organizations, disband the collective farms and reopen the mosques. Also, that after the war, due to England's influence on the USSR, the latter will be obliged to uphold private property, and that there's an opportunity to develop kulak households.”⁷⁸

Overestimates of British influence aside, it is notable that outside influence is credited for the change in religious policy, representing a missed opportunity for increasing loyalty to the regime. Misgivings about the wisdom of allowing imams and other charismatic Muslims to regain influence within their communities are palpable in this speech, which credits them with prompting a broad sweep of behaviours and attitudes.

The secretary of the Ura-Tiube komsomol secretary Husein Khojaev fulfils all his religious obligations, frequents the mosque and has told his wife not to remove her *paranja* [long covering for the whole body, with a horsehair mesh over the face]. There are many similar cases of communist officials who do not allow their wives to remove their *paranja*, such as the investigator of the Ura-Tiube procuracy, the RaiZo chair who prevented his daughter from attending 8th grade, the editor of the Ura-Tiube raikom newspaper and so on. No measures have been taken to address such behaviour. What kind of example can we set when Komsomol and Party leaders espouse such boi-feudal attitudes to women?⁷⁹

Strikingly, none of the speeches made criticising religiously coded behaviour from the February 1945 plenum excerpted above were made by locals,⁸⁰ and no response of any kind to these allegations was recorded. This is in stark contrast to the lively debates, and light badinage,

⁷⁸ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.104: Stenographic report of the 15th plenum of the Leninobod oblast party committee, held 1-2/2/1945

⁷⁹ RGASPI, F.17, op.45, d.1673, l.83ob, as above.

⁸⁰ Speeches were made by comrades Bulanov, Kharchenko and Kuz'min

engendered on the same occasion by the discussion of the quality of the canteens in Leninobod, or the lack of electricity in certain VIP apartments, but not in others. It seems that the local communists are being told nothing that they do not already know, and that they may have good reason not to wish to be drawn into this topic themselves.

Islam and the *asilzodagon* in post-war Leninobod

All Khujandi *asilzodagon* were at least nominally Muslim, of course, but beginning in the 1920s there began to be marked differences in the extent to which different individuals and families were prepared to seek compromise between their religious beliefs and the demands made by the Communist Party, and thus adapt to the mores and values of Soviet society. Throughout this dissertation, we have seen how tension between the dictates of the Party and local values, the interplay between continuity and rupture as it was experienced by a cohort of Khujandis whose experiences diverged increasingly. In spite of these divergences between roads taken, I argue that a set of factors, some of them due to features unique to Leninobod and its position within the Tajik SSR, and some applicable to other areas of Central Asia, allowed *asilzodagon* along the spectrum or more or less “Sovietised” and the more or less “traditional,” or “observant” ends of the *asilzodagon* not only to coexist, but often to support and reinforce each other’s claims to legitimacy.

Bashir-khon Ishoqi never joined the Communist Party, but he was one of the first teachers in Soviet schools, and schooled an impressive array of future luminaries of Soviet Tajikistan at the Behbudi internat.⁸¹ Bashir-khon tura had managed to avoid any negative

⁸¹ See chapter one.

attention being paid him during the Purges by removing himself with his family to Samarkand, a town where he was not without contacts (many descendants of the Makhdum-i A'zam, who is buried just outside Samarkand, continue to live in the area), but evidently felt safer there from malicious attempts to “unmask” him. In 1945, as official qozi for the Tajik SSR, Bashir-khon Ishoqi was able to join a contingent of Soviet Hajjis – a tiny group numbering no more than twenty, selected from across the Soviet Union, on an officially sanctioned journey to the holy cities of Islam which lasted three months.⁸² The first group of only six Soviet Hajjis had received permission to travel to Mecca and Medina in 1944, after a hiatus of almost two decades.⁸³ This was an extraordinary honour, which attests to the high regard still accorded to his august lineage by influential Tajiks – although his spotless record as a Soviet citizen was equally important in securing official sanction to travel. Although there is no direct evidence of this, it seems likely that the support of his former pupil Bobojon Ghafurov, who had become Second Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party in 1944, gave Bashir-khon tura greater weight within SADUM.

Soviet officials were disconcerted by the intense interest and excitement stirred up by news of the impending Hajj. CARC's upolnomochennyi in Tajikistan reported that when it was known that SADUM's qozi in that republic was going on hajj in 1945, “kolkhozniki came to his home with rice, flour money and presents, and upon his return he was visited even by high-ranking officials, and many non-believers invited him to their homes, feasted him and asked him to conduct readings from the Qur'an.”⁸⁴ It is not clear why those inviting the qozi into their

⁸² During our interview, his son Muboshir-khon Ishoqi told me that his father's Hajj had taken place between 20 October 1945 and 20 January 1946 (Khujand, 2011).

⁸³ Ya'acov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 172.

⁸⁴ Minutes, CARC session No.4, 29 January 1947, cited in Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, 172-173.

homes are described as non-believers, but there is little doubt that a broad cross-section of local society felt invested in these new developments.

The numbers of Soviet Hojis in the post-war period remained fairly constant, rarely exceeding 20-30 per year until the fall of the Soviet Union. This was in spite of considerable pressure not only from the tens of millions of Soviet Muslims, but also from some highly placed Party officials, who felt that the Hajj could be used as an effective propaganda tool, with which to improve the USSR's reputation in the Muslim world. Wooing the Third World was an important consideration for international relations under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and the carefully selected Soviet Hajjis, straining to convince their co-religionists abroad that the USSR was a haven of religious freedom, sometimes found themselves in the odd position of boasting that full-body female veils were "a common sight" in Central Asian cities.⁸⁵

The 1950s and 1960s also saw a renewed interest, partly at the insistence of the Uzbek First Secretary Sharaf Rashidov, who had been taking part in cultural diplomacy missions to Muslim lands since 1955, and had noted how widespread the reports of the persecution of Islam harmed the Soviet Union's reputation abroad.⁸⁶

Very few pious Muslims in the Tajik SSR could expect to receive permission to perform the Hajj, or even to make a living as an officially sanctioned religious functionary: it is clear that such positions went mainly to those who had not only prestigious pedigrees, but excellent connections. Far greater was the number of pious Muslims who spent their lives closer to the margins of Soviet society, however greatly they may have been respected by their neighbours and co-religionists. The lives of the Abdullokhojaev brothers seems typical of the career

⁸⁵ GARF, f.6991, Council for Religious Affairs.

⁸⁶ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1964," in *Ab Imperio* 2/2013, 191-222.

trajectory of a cohort of less upwardly mobile *asilzodagon*, too old to benefit from the Soviet schooling that rewarded cultural capital, but only in those young and nimble enough to transform.

In late-nineteenth century Yova, a village adjoining Khujand on the southern shore of the Syr-Darya, Ahmad-khoja ibn Ulugh-khoja, a Naqshbandi Sufi elder (*eshon*) who had evidently fallen on hard times, worked as a sharecropper to support himself. In spite of his poverty, the sharecropper Ahmad-khoja married Bijannat, the daughter of Mullo Bobo, a prominent mullah of Khujand, suggesting that, in times of social and economic instability such as that brought about by the recent Russian conquest, lineage could count for more than wealth in marriage matches. The couple had at least two sons: Ahmad-khoja, born in 1877, and Usmon-khuja, in 1885, who both eventually adopted the last name Abdullokhujayev. The children began their studies with the domullo of Kupriki Boland mahalla, Hoji Abdullo, and it was probably he who inspired their choice of last name. As has been observed before, poverty was not necessarily a barrier to higher education in pre-revolutionary Central Asia, and the two brothers continued their studies in a Khujand madrasa.

The Abdullokhujayev brothers then travelled to Bukhara to continue their studies in the madrasas there – presumably, they had patrons to support them as Sadriddin Aini did when he made the same journey. Ahmad-khoja returned home to Khujand after nine years of study in Bukhara, but then went on to study for a further three years in Tashkent around the time of the 1905 revolution – perhaps because a suitable position had not yet opened up for him in Khujand. Following his three years in Tashkent, Ahmad-khoja began work in the Mirzoyon mosque in Khujand, and later served as an imam in the mosques of Andarsoi and Mirishkori Bolo in upper Ghulakandoz.

His brother Usmon-khoja studied in Bukhara for fourteen years, returning to Khujand only in 1916, when the city was gripped by the uprising against the draft. During his time in Bukhara, Usmon-khoja took a challenging exam testing his mastery of the theological canon called the *dah-yak* (“tenth part”), administered by the qozi of Bukhara, the teachers and staff at his madrasa, for a total of ten examining scholars. The author of the biography explains for the benefit of his post-Soviet Tajik audience that passing the *dah-yak* is an achievement comparable to a red diploma in a secular university. Having passed the test, Usmon-khoja was invited to stay on at the madrasa in Bukhara, but he refused on account of his family situation (no further details were provided in the source). Back in Khujand, at the invitation of his former teacher Hoji Abdullo-domullo he took on the duties of imam in the mosque of Mirishkori. He stayed on as imam of the mosque after the revolution of 1916-18.

Later, both brothers were sent to settle the new agricultural lands in Simkhoz, Bekobod (quite possibly against their will), along with many other households, including many *asilzodagon*, sent to claim previous unirrigated steppe land for cotton cultivation. Despite being in his early 50s and a member of the ulama, who must have locally known as an imam, at the end of the 1920s Ahmad-khoja became an activist in the collectivisation drive. In 1935 he became a member of that same Komintern kolkhoz which features in chapter three, where he worked there until he reached pension age. Only then, at long last, did Ahmad-khoja feel at liberty to follow the calling for which he trained so long, and served as an imam in the mosque of the Qori Bobo mahalla until the end of his long life, in 1961.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, his brother Usmon-khoja had been able to return to Leninobod from Simkhoz in 1943, and had assumed responsibility for leading

⁸⁷ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (Khujand: 2010), 69.

gatherings for weddings, feasts and funerals in his native village of Yova. Until his death in 1973, he appears to have had no other profession.⁸⁸

These two brothers had no particularly startling accomplishments – held no high office, accomplished no stakhanovite feats of labour, published or invented nothing, but they were selected for inclusion in a volume of biographies entitled “Faces Never To Be Seen Again” (*Chehroi notakror*). The author, who may well have known them personally, evidently admired their hard-won pursuit of a full, traditional Islamic education in spite of their father’s poverty, and their steadfast adherence to the values with which they were raised throughout the birth pangs of socialism in their region, surviving purges and collectivisation (in which Ahmad-khoja even played a role as an activist) and remaining active in the religious realm until the end of their lives.⁸⁹ The same chapter, somewhat misleadingly dedicated to “working-class people,” also includes the biography of one Abdurauf Domullo-i Khujandi (1910-1990), an expert on fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) who led a long and varied life.⁹⁰

Abdurauf Domullo came from an ulama family: his father Ma’sumi Muhammad Hoji Sulton was among the pre-eminent mullahs of Khujand, author of more than two hundred articles of Islamic history and philosophy. His grandfather Abuabdullo Muhammad Urun had been among the wealthiest men in Khujand, and lived in Tubokhon mahalla (a contraction of

⁸⁸ Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror*, 70.

⁸⁹ The editorial choices of the author appear more curious yet when we consider that this volume is divided into five chapters: chapter one, “HEROES,” is dedicated to a Soviet interpretation of heroism: all entries are depicted with all their medals across their chests earned as heroes of labour or bravery in fields of cotton or battle. The second chapter is titled “Working-class people,” and it is here that the brothers Usmon-khoja and Ahmad-khoja are featured. The third chapter “Heirs of [Ali Ibn]Sino” provides biographies of the doctors and health care professionals that brought modern medicine to Tajikistan following the establishment of the medical university in 1939. This chapter is peculiarly comprehensive, including well over one hundred biographies ranged over rather an uncluttered field. The idiosyncrasy of the author reaches its acme with his fourth and final chapter, “Friends.”

⁹⁰ Hoji Bahrom Ali Ahmadzoda, *Chehrahoy notakror* (Khujand, 2010), 73-74.

Tugbuvkhon).⁹¹ Abdurauf's mother Binazira was also learned ("possessed the learning of our ancestors"), and shared her knowledge with many students in a home-based school. Her son Abdurauf's childhood coincided with the coming of the revolution to Khujand, so his entire education took place at home and privately, as he worked his way through his father's large collection of rare books. Abdurauf domullo continued to focus on his studies until 1931, when for reasons that can easily be imagined followed in the footsteps of his father, who had preceded him to Qashgar. There his father had become the *imam-khatib* of the largest mosque in the city; when Abdurauf domullo joined him he taught in a madrasa, and raised geese in his spare time, which reportedly was so successfully that he was able to spend liberally on public works.

Prompted by the spike in revolutionary activity in Qashgar in the late 1940s, his father set off for Saudi Arabia, where he remained for the rest of his life, but Abdurauf domullo returned to his native city of Leninobod only in 1962, after thirty one years in Qashgar. Although he returned too late to meet Bashir-khon tura Ishoqi (who had died in 1961), he had apparently long wished to do so, and the fact that Bashir-khon tura enjoyed official recognition as qozi was in part what prompted his return to the USSR.⁹² He married after his return to Khujand, and served until the end of his life as an advisor to the leadership of the Shaikh Muslihiddin mosque and to SADUM. Beyond these official, state-sanctioned appointments, I learned in conversation with Khujandis that Abdurauf domullo had also devoted considerable time and energy to teaching in

⁹¹ The name of the mahalla is supposed to derive from Tuva khan, otherwise known as Du'a Khan, a Chagatai Khan who reigned 1282-1306 and whose mazar is located here. See N. Tursunov and A. Mirboboev, "Tubokhon," in Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia, 743.

⁹² Mubashshir Ishoqi, *Avlodi Makhdumi A'zam, Pairav va vorinsoni Imomi A'zam, in Haqiqati Sughd*, 28 February 2009, 4.

the mosques of Qozi Luchchakon mahalla and Masjidi Surkh mahallas.⁹³ After his death in 1990, the city named a street in his memory (Abdurauf domullo).

While in private many of the more Sovietised *asilzodagon* may have appreciated the increased visibility and acceptability of Islam in the public sphere, it nonetheless continued to be incumbent upon Communists and Soviet intellectuals to ritually distance themselves from superstition and “remnants of the past” in public, and preferably in print. In the 1950s, the genre of the feuilleton passed from the Russian into the Tajik local press: these were often lively satirical pieces, humorously criticizing customs or practices deemed worthy of censure.⁹⁴ Several such feuilletons published in the local Leninobodi Pravda in the late 1950s gently lampooned pilgrimages to “holy places” (in scare quotes in the original) and the trust that the masses continued to place in faith healers, quacks, and Sufi elders.⁹⁵

“Rumour of the “miracles” performed by Kutbiddin eshon are spreading around the village of Isfisor,⁹⁶ and even to the mahallas outside the village. These days numerous “acolytes” cluster, one after the other, around the threshold of the door of the “blessed” Eshon. Those of “pure stock” [in other words, of august lineage] are received sooner, and others later. [...]. “Ilohim! Oh, teacher receive me too, please do! I have come from a long way off” pleaded one of the new acolytes – who had for long hours staked out a spot by the Eshon’s front door. - No, it was impolite of you to barge in, you must now ask forgiveness from God [literally “say ‘aztaghfirullo”]. You should have said “Shumo,” it’s not done otherwise.”⁹⁷

In order for this piece to make sense as satire, the situation and verbal exchanges described need to strike the reader as familiar, albeit exaggerated or distorted for comical effect –

⁹³ Interview conducted with the rais of Qozi Luchchakon mahalla, July 2011.

⁹⁴ [Anna Tumarkin](#) wrote a 2009 dissertation on the feuilleton: “A matter of fact: The generic evolution of the Soviet feuilleton” (University of Wisconsin-Madison, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation)

⁹⁵ See for example B. Haidarov, “Fel’eton ‘Firebkhaltai Olimov’,” in *Haqiqati Leninobod*, 27 September 1959, and

⁹⁶ Ispisor is a village about 10 km from Khujand/Leninobod. It is the birthplace of Bobojon Ghafurov, and was renamed Ghafurov in his honour.

⁹⁷ Mirshohid, ““Karomot’-hoi Qutbiddin eshon validi Hoji-khon-tura” (“The ‘miracles’ of Qutbiddin eshon son of Holikhontura,” *Haqiqati Leninobod*, January 1958, 26 January 1958, 3.

or perhaps, for educational effect. The formality of address demanded by the *eshon* in this vignette is reminiscent of the “arrogant” mullahs in the 1945 report, who insist on being given the best available horse upon visiting the *kolkhoz*. Also, the practice of receiving visitors to the *Eshon* in order of

A significant number of the concerns that people brought to Sufi elders and other faith healers in the post-war period were health-related – the “miracles” referred to in the *feuilleton* are cures, and, as we will see in the next chapter, biomedicine was new to Tajikistan in the 1950s. There were still very few doctors who spoke Tajik or Uzbek, particularly in rural areas, which made it difficult and unlikely that many would feel comfortable approaching medical staff, particularly with sensitive issues such as those related to fertility or mental health.

Conclusion

The flowering of *tuis* and bouts of lavish consumption in wartime Tajikistan, which at first appear highly anomalous, can be explained by the unique set of circumstances created by the outbreak of war. Living conditions were certainly fairly miserable for many in Leninobod city during the war, and the wartime memories of elderly *Khujandis* interviewed in 2011 include being obliged to dig around under the snow looking for grass to eat, and wanting for tea from one year to the next. Those who lacked access to a garden plot or relatives who farmed suffered, and those who depended heavily on state support for meeting their basic needs, particularly female-headed households, war widows and orphans, the disabled, evacuees and recent arrivals fared very badly. For those whose local networks and connections to the countryside were well-established, however, the relaxed supervision from the centre as a consequence of military priorities, personnel shortages and transport difficulties could prove a considerable boon. Those

who had oversight over food production, or access to agricultural land on which food could be grown, could do very well indeed, for a time.

The need to boost the morale of the population at a time of crisis led to a decision to relax the restrictions on religious observance that did not, in fact, necessarily translate to increased loyalty to the regime. The newly acquired – or seized – freedom of religious practice was interpreted by non-local authorities as ‘anti-Soviet’ behaviour, and by many locals as a sign of the regime’s weakness.

Weak propaganda was often named in conjunction with the flowering of *tuis* and public expressions of piety, and poor communication does seem to have been partly to blame. Rather than ineffectual propaganda, there seems to have been a deliberate obfuscation and lack of clarity on the status of religious worship that proved detrimental to the regime’s interests in the region. Party officials were directed both to “promote a materialist view of life” and to oversee the opening of new mosques in accordance with the established procedure. The reasons behind the new stance on religion were never communicated clearly on the ground – presumably because it was, in effect, a strategic retreat intended to be of short duration – which allowed the citizens of the Tajik SSR to interpret it as a sign of weakness.

To reach an explanation for the wartime *tui* boom, one might ask how else the competitive advantage of *kolkhoz* chairmen and others with access to agricultural produce (such as the people’s commissar for procurement mentioned above) could have been exploited. How else might a *kolkhoz* chairman capitalise on his position of privileged access to significant stockpiles of food, and cash obtained by selling food, in an economic system poor in long-term investment options? Perhaps an investment in people – or in intangibles such as the prestige and loyalty of one’s community that the *tui* might represent, is not a bad choice. A rise in lavish *tuis*

signals surplus wealth in the system, and may also be the most logical means of its expression. It is also a sign that the traditional means of expressing status and power, one that had so riled the Jadids two generations prior, have not been superseded by two decades of Soviet power. The war could not last forever, and might well be followed by a period of greater upheaval and stress such as that which had preceded it – meanwhile, it was just as important as ever it was that those with power enact conspicuous displays of consumption and dole out largesse to their protégés and allies.

While the initial reasons for relaxing the prohibitions against expressions of Islamic piety in the public sphere were dictated by the exigencies of war, in the post-war global order that emerged, new justifications were found to maintain and even expand upon the wartime concessions. In spite of the greatly impoverished curriculum offered at the heavily monitored two madrasas allowed to operate, in spite of the massive losses sustained during the Stalinist purges, it is fairly clear that the *asilzodagon* as a group benefited from the increased visibility of Islam. In as much as their prestige was based upon their ancestry rather than a specific body of knowledge or even set norms of behaviours, *asilzodagon* began to be less secretive about their backgrounds, and the boundaries between “Communist” and “Muslim” codes of conduct became more porous than ever.

Chapter Seven. The Leninobodi Elite in the Postwar Period

Both the end of the War, followed by the survivors' return home, and the death of Stalin, followed by the GULAG survivors' return home, were pivotal moments for the people of Leninobod, which set the stage for many crucial developments of the decades to come. As we saw in the preceding chapter, for many non-combatants, particularly in rural areas, the war meant a suspension of the intense pressure from above, significantly reduced levels of state intrusion in the daily lives of agricultural communities, and a rapid and vigorous re-emersion of Islam into the public sphere – and even once the war ended, some of those gains would prove hard for the Party to roll back. For some Khujandis in exile, the outbreak of war offered a chance to return home, whereas for others, that chance came in 1953, after Stalin's death, with the systematic release of millions from the forced labor camps. The widely diverging experiences and attitudes with which former combatants and former exiles returned home would be mirrored by two sharply distinct paths trodden by *asilzodagon* in the more peaceful postwar decades.

For many in the Ferghana Valley, the economic privations of the immediate postwar years led to a boom period in the later 1950s and 1960s, a time of expanding opportunities, and increased leisure and consumption – and “a kind of golden age for the Ferghana elites.”¹ Many *asilzodagon* who had participated in the war, such as Zikrullo Khojaev and Muhammad Osimi,²

¹ Ravshan Nazarov and Pulat Shozimov, “The Ferghana Valley in the Eras of Khrushchev and Brezhnev,” in Frederick Starr (editor), *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia* (M.E. Sharpe, 2011), 140.

² Another career trajectory that fits into this group – the veterans' group – is that of Najmiddin Khoja Abdullaev (1917-82), who joined the party during the war, and began climbing the rungs of the nomenklatura soon after being discharged, following injuries, in 1944. He joined the Central Committee of the CP of Tajikistan in 1946, and between 1949 and 1962 he headed the party organisations of Gharm and then Leninobod districts (as first secretary of the ObCom). His son, the historian Kamoliddin Abdullaev, writes “His [Najmiddin Abdullaev's] rapid professional rise was abruptly ended in 1963 (at the age of 46) by first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPT Jabbor Rasulov, on false charges of ‘incorrect selection of cadres.’” See Kamoliddin Abdullaev's account of

returned home not only with a fresh sense of themselves as loyal, and – finally – trusted, Soviet citizens, but also with greatly improved odds of being able to join the Party and look forward to a satisfying career within its close embrace. Two sectors that were particularly hospitable to the more Sovietized *asilzodagon* were, as we shall see, healthcare and academia. There were other *asilzodagon*, however, like Muhammadalikhon Homidkhonzoda, for whom wartime service did not outweigh or compensate for their family's experience of exile or death at the hands of the state, who felt increasingly marginalized by a new (relative) prosperity and opportunities that seemed designed to exclude them. They were more likely to find solace and meaning in older forms of socialization and in religion, at a time when outward manifestations of Islamic piety were disapproved of and intermittently punished, but no longer deadly. These two groups were not always as far apart as it might seem, and the boundaries between them, which often traversed extended families, remained porous.

The children of the purged who could not, or did not, turn their backs on Soviet society constitute a third, “mixed,” category, sharing some elements with both previously described groups. Born in the late 1920s or 1930s, they had seen the Stalinist regime at its worst, but had also been exposed to a thoroughly Soviet education, and in some cases upbringing (in the case of those institutionalized as children). The rise to public respect and recognition, even prominence, of the children of the purged, like Muhiddin Khojazod, born to an exiled mudarris in the North Caucasus, who became a writer, or the daughter of Abdurahim Khojiboev, who became an academic (and mother to an academic) is one of the most striking phenomena in the postwar period.

his family history on his personal website <http://kamolkhon.com/life-story/>, which also gives the history of his maternal line, a tura family of Kokand descended from the shaikh-ul-islam of the Yasavi shrine in Turkistan.

The generation born to *asilzodagon* purged in the 1930s, whose fathers had fled, been exiled, imprisoned or executed, managed nonetheless – with striking regularity – to overcome these personal tragedies and lead successful, prestigious careers – predominantly in academia, medicine, or the arts. As a group, this new generation of *asilzodagon* seem to have weathered the challenges of childhood trauma, being raised in female-headed households, often in extremely straitened and stressful circumstances, and surged forward to assume what even they may have been taught to believe was their rightful place in society.

In this chapter, by charting the fortunes of several *asilzodagon* lineages whose members made widely divergent life choices, I explore what aspects of the *asilzodagon* sense of identity had endured and what had been lost. In terms of the self-image of the *asilzodagon*, the main pillar that emerged from the furnace of Stalinism was the commitment to education, and to self-improvement in the service of the community. In practice, the most significant outcome of the pre-revolutionary *asilzodagon*'s great social and cultural capital, their wealth, influence and sense of noblesse oblige, was an impressive cohort of academics and doctors who felt that the pursuit of learning and public service for the good of the people were part of their heritage. Again and again, in interviews and self-published family memoirs, the heirs of the revolutionary generation of *asilzodagon* – those born in the 1930s, who had no direct experience outside of the Soviet sphere, stress their particular calling (almost a birthright) to pursue high education, and prestigious careers in academia, law or medicine as a way of serving the people.

For this Soviet generation of more “assimilated” *asilzodagon*, Islam was still a component of their identity, but in a very muted form. Where once the *asilzodagon* had acted as Islamic stewards of the community, upholding shariah, the Sufi tradition and the veneration of local saints, those born in the 1930s circumcised their sons, discreetly marked the major Muslim

holidays in many cases, but had rarely been taught how to pray. Islamic observance had been delegated in many cases to women, and to the elderly – both groups considered less vulnerable to retaliation from the state.

Before following the various professional paths trodden by the most successful *asilzodagon* of Khujand, we will review the unique features of their upbringing, in order to assess the extent to which their ancestral cultural capital was still giving them an advantage over their peers from less privileged backgrounds. A related question concerns the extent to which networks of solidarity and patronage facilitated the rise of these *asilzodagon* relative to their less well-connected peers.

Growing up as an *asilzoda* in postwar Leninobod

Asilzodagon families placed a great emphasis on the transmission of learning, from generation to generation, and also developed, in the course of the twentieth century, high expectations regarding their own, and their children's, academic performance in secular Soviet schools. This expectation was conceptualized in the late Soviet period and early 21st century by many *asilzodagon* as a logical extension of their ancestral dedication to the pursuit of knowledge qua *ziyo* (or learned) families, but there is clearly nothing inevitable about a longstanding commitment to the social reproduction of Islamic legal knowledge in madrasas translating seamlessly to staunch support of secular, ostensibly democratic and atheist, Soviet education. In fact, there seem to be good grounds for considering the "tradition" of learning among Soviet *asilzodagon* as a dynamic, adaptive strategy, seeking to preserve social cohesion within their

bounded social group. This would be a “tradition” in the sense employed by Hobsbawm: a set of practices “invented” in the recent past, productive of symbolic normative power.³

It will also become clear that the *asilzodagon* embrace of Soviet education, viewed in part as a means of securing their rightful place in society and honoring their ancestral legacy, was qualified in important ways, and there were definite limits to the extent and type of Soviet values that such families were prepared to accept as their own. *Asilzodagon* statements regarding their understanding of their place in society and the emphasis place on upholding their family honour (understood to include previous generations) make clear that theirs is a collectivist rather than individualist ethic, whereas modern schools generally rely on a certain amount of competition and individual motivation to succeed.

Paul diMaggio proposes a synthesis of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital and Weber’s theory of status culture which he uses to interpret patterns in the grades of US high school students, but which I find useful in thinking about the ways that *asilzodagon* families are acculturated over the generations to retain their privileged position, even during phases of pronounced social upheaval. The *asilzodagon* look a lot like an elite status group as defined by Weber: a collective “bound by personal ties and a common sense of honour.” As such, we can expect them to generate – or appropriate – distinctive cultural traits, tastes and styles. This allows elite status groups to identify and reinforce the boundaries between who does and does not belong, and thus to monopolize for the benefit of the group “scarce social, economic, and cultural resources.”⁴

³ Eric Hobsbawm, introductory essay in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (editors), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge University Press: 1983), discussed by Colette Harris, in *Muslim Youth: Tensions and Transitions in Tajikistan* (Westview case Studies in Anthropology: 2006), 44.

⁴ Paul DiMaggio, “Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students,” in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Apr., 1982), 189-201.

The following assessment of the self-image and socio-cultural practices of members of *asilzodagon* families in Khujand is based almost entirely on post-Soviet sources, primarily self-published memoirs, biographical and autobiographical narratives published in the press, supplemented by interviews conducted in Khujand in 2011.⁵ This is because, even in the post-Stalin period, members of sacred lineages did not publicly identify themselves as such (quite the contrary), nor did they discuss their moral code, or explain their behavior, by reference to their ancestry. As the memoirs make clear, however, such discussions were frequent and regular in private. Furthermore, for a Tajik audience – particularly a Khujandi one, drawing attention to their ancestry in any obvious way was unnecessary, because people were either aware of each other's ancestry, or felt free to make enquiries in the course of making a new acquaintance. Other than during the darkest days of the Stalinist purges, inquiring into the family background and forebears was a routine aspect of getting to know someone.⁶

The collectivist emphasis of the *asilzodagon* aligns broadly with what anthropologists have found to be true of Tajik society more broadly, although there are also significant ways in which *asilzodagon* group identity and attitude to education differs from that described by scholars working with ordinary Tajik citizens in other regions of the country. Following extensive fieldwork conducted in the 1990s and early 2000s primarily in Dushanbe and Khatlon province (but not in the Leninobod region), Colette Harris found that “it is rare for Tajik parents to encourage their children to excel at school.”⁷ This is hardly surprising, since their collectivist

⁵ As far as I am aware, the autobiographical and biographical sources I use in this chapter (*Teghi Sinoi ba dast*, *Piri Tariqat*, *Mardi neksirisht*) have not been previously discussed or used as sources for scholarship in any language. Most of these self-published memoirs have extremely limited local circulation and are not available for sale.

⁶ This was a point repeatedly made by multiple interview respondents in Khujand in the summer of 2011.

⁷ The early withdrawal from school of a majority of female students was a persistent problem which the Tajik SSR had not solved by the fall of the Soviet Union: beginning in second grade, the class size shrank with every passing grade, and particularly sharply in the teen years. However, there is plenty of statistical evidence showing that

outlook means they do not value those who stand out from the crowd, and therefore rarely prize personal achievements in their children. [...] Moreover, people in Tajikistan do not necessarily believe academic achievements are meaningful, especially for females.”⁸ Making due allowances for the radically different landscape of post-Soviet Tajikistan, where academic exertions demonstrably do not guarantee career or even academic success in the absence of connections and bribery, the attitudes Harris describes find no echo in my observations of *asilzodagon* raised in the Soviet or post-Soviet periods. Furthermore, Harris characterizes those families encountered who did value academic excellence as “relatively individualistic,” whereas it is my contention here that the *asilzodagon* emphasized academic performance in part out of a collectivist regard for the *avlod* (past and present).

Children born in the 1930s and 1940s were told, as previous generations had been told, the stories of their ancestors – miraculous stories of Sufi saints whose cradles descended from the heavens, who dyed mosques blood red on the Day of Sacrifice (Eid-i Qurbon), or more commonplace stories of noble deeds and lofty goals. “Time and again” recounts Akramkhon Akbarov, born 1936 “my mother told me how my maternal grandfather Said Usmon-khon Tura had completed the pilgrimage to the house of God twice. He had also written an exegesis on the Holy Qur’an, which had even been printed in Kazan and in Holy Mecca” (To their sorrow, the family no longer has a copy of this book). Baroat Khojibaeva, who accompanied her father Abdurahim to Moscow when he was sent there to further his studies,⁹ recalls watching out with

significant numbers of boys also failed to complete school. In a report submitted on Leninobod district in 1940, many children were found who had never enrolled in school (200 children aged 8-12 were found not to be attending school just in the village of Qistaquz, which is on the outskirts of Leninobod. RGANI, F.6, op.6, d.606, l.170

⁸ Colette Harris, in *Muslim Youth: Tensions and Transitions in Tajikistan* (Westview case Studies in Anthropology: 2006), 91-94.

⁹ For an account of Abdurahim Khojiboev’s career, see chapter 4

her sister for evenings when her father was not too busy in his office, and asking to be told stories about “our native Khujand, about our grandfather and grandmother.” The children “listened with bated breath to his inspiring stories about the great Kamoli Khujandi, and the matchless moon-faced beauty of the poetess Mahasti.”¹⁰ Stories of their forebears and of the greatness of their native city were told with a clear didactic purpose, as spelled out by the maxim “If you want your father’s legacy, acquire your father’s knowledge.”¹¹

Children were urged to memorize their “haft pusht,” the seven generations in their father’s line, counting backwards from themselves – which, considering the number of progeny for each generation, made for impressive feats of memorization. With their heritage came great responsibility, they were told. Akramkhon Akbarov’s mother always emphasized “that we have great ancestors (*guzashtagoni buzurg*), and deceitful words and impure actions do not befit us. ‘You must always be truthful and keep your promises’ she would say.”¹² In self-presentation, the *asilzodagon* professed to hold themselves to a higher moral standard than did their “commoner” neighbors, and knowledge of their family history was considered key to maintaining those high standards.

Akramkhon Akbarov (born in 1936) offers a particularly arresting – post-Soviet – account of the connection between the awareness of one’s family name and personal achievements:

“Perhaps it was our celebrated name and memory of our ancestry that instructed us in modesty (*khoksori*) and working-class values (*mehnatqarini*), as we reached so high a stage of humanity... For all that I was an ordinary doctor and head of department and did not hold high office, my dignity of spirit is great, for all the honour and respect accorded

¹⁰ B.A. Khodzhibaeva, *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev: Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni. Kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 7.

¹¹ Saidkarim Valizoda, *Yode az guzashta*, l.13.

¹² Ahmadjoni Rahmatzod, Niyat Haiot and A’zamkhon Akbarov, *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (“[Abu Ali ibn] Sino’s scalpel in hand”) Khujand, Khuroson:2006), 22. One hundred and fifty copies of this book were produced, for circulation among friends and family only (not for sale).

me comes from my work and profession...Indeed, it is only the name and ancestry of our honoured and noble ancestors, that restrains one from the path of error and bad actions.”¹³

The implication here seems to be that although awareness of his august ancestry was determinant in shaping his work ethic and consequent successful career, this ancestry plays no part in shaping the behavior of others towards him; on the contrary, all honours bestowed and respect garnered are due entirely to his own professional activities. Other elements in his biography, however, suggest that not all those around him were blind to his family background.

Many *asilzodagon* families thought of themselves as model citizens of the Soviet state partly because of their innate human qualities, moral code and particular devotion to public service which nature and nurture had bestowed upon them, but they knew better than to draw attention to these forms of privilege openly. Quite the contrary: in writing about themselves, the *asilzodagon* acquired the Soviet practice of using the “good” class labels – most often “worker,” “poor peasant,” (more unusually “employee”) to describe themselves. This habit, which began with the biographical forms and official autobiographies required by the Party from the early 1920s, often endure into post-Soviet publications. Thus, Akramkhon Akbarovich Akbarov is introduced as “born into the family of a worker”¹⁴ on page 3 of his self-published biography, while page 10 has a section devoted to the explication of his family tree (“Shajara”), and page 12 informs the reader that “today Akramkhon Akbarovich is proud that his highly respected ancestors belong to the honored sayyid-zodagon of Khujand, of the lineage descended from the saintly Abduljalil-bobo.”¹⁵

¹³ These musing are attributed to Akramkhon Akbarov in Rahmatzod, Haiot and Akbarov, *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (“[Abu Ali ibn] Sino’s scalpel in hand”), Khujand, Khuroson: 2006, 13.

¹⁴ In fact, Akramkhon’s father Akbarkhon, together with his own father, joined the kolkhoz that was formed through the confiscation of his own land, as we learn on p.22.

¹⁵ Rahmatzod, Haiot and Akbarov, *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (Khujand, Khuroson: 2006), 3-12.

Of course, in some cases it was indeed the case that an individual both had a *shajara* attesting to an elite descent line and was classified as a worker, in that he or she was employed in a factory. One of the children produced by the marriage of the noble poet Toshkhoja Asiri's son to his niece worked at the Khujand Silk Combine, while one of the poet's many, many great-grandchildren became the director of the Abreshim factory.¹⁶ More menial positions in industry or agriculture were more common, as we will see, for those who did not identify with socialist values, who did their best to keep at arms' length from the state, or were themselves marginalized by the state. Thus, for example, the Naqshbandi Sufi shaikh of the *qalandarkhona* (house of dervishes) in Khujand, which, by his own account, remained in operation throughout the Soviet period, found paid employment as a clerk in a shoe shop for many years,¹⁷ while the thirteen-year-old daughter of the purged Yusuf-khon tura was obliged by desperate poverty to seek work in the Khujand silk combine, where she worked for many years. In other words, by the postwar period, working class status was considered fully compatible with *asilzodagon* status – at least in the eyes of the *asilzodagon* themselves.

The more Soviet-oriented of the *asilzodagon* – those who we might consider to have adapted more successfully to prevailing conditions, and thus at greater liberty to determine their own path, did not display much interest in the industrial sector, although they considered themselves no less loyal or true Soviet citizens for that.

¹⁶ The family tree of Toshkhoja Asiri, available upon request, was drawn in consultation with one of his granddaughters.

¹⁷ Muhammadalikhon Homidkhonzoda, *Piri Tariqat*, Khujand, 2010

The importance of exemplary performance in Soviet schools was emphasized by many *asilzodagon* families, who expected their children to live up to the example set by their scholarly forebears even – or particularly – in the profoundly altered educational landscape of the Tajik SSR. “My father demanded that we love Soviet schools, and accepted only excellent marks from us,” the daughter of a long-serving head of the cultural department in Leninobod hukumat recalled in conversation.

Fortunately for the children of the *asilzodagon*, the atmosphere in Soviet schools was conducive to their success. Ethnographers have found that social status

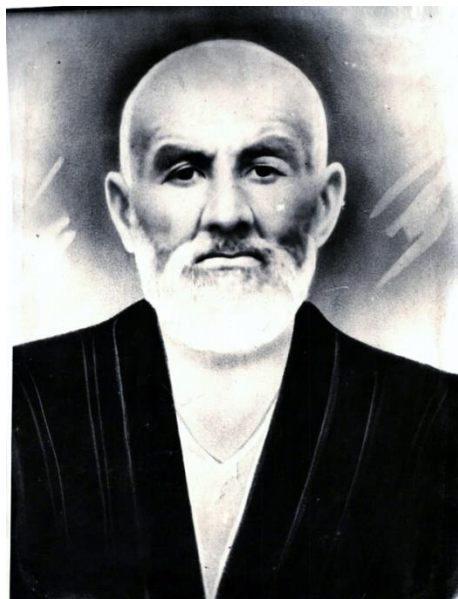


Figure 29- Saifiddin Osimi

plays an important role in school performance and broader educational outcomes. In the US, the ability of elite status groups to outperform their peers in school has been shown to transcend factors such as the head of household’s income and father’s educational accomplishments, as it is linked instead to less tangible markers of status and cultural style.

For *asilzodagon* families in Khujand in the postwar period, getting a good education in Soviet schools was important, but the education received at home, in *adab* (the correct standards of behavior and morality) and Perso-Tajik literature, was at least as important. One family who exemplifies the synergy between the modern, secular education received in the public sphere and the traditional learning and mental habitus instilled at home is that of Saifiddin Osimi. Saifiddin and his wife had five children who lived to adulthood, spread over nineteen years between 1914, when their first son Zainitdin was born, and the birth of their fourth son Asliddin in 1933. Their three older sons were young adults by the time the Second World War broke out. The third son,

Mohammad, was the first to enlist as a volunteer, but he was soon followed by his elder two brothers. The departure for the front of all three of his adult sons proved too much for their father Saifiddin, who went into a rapid decline and died in 1943. His death left his wife – who, like many women in Leninobod, had hitherto never worked outside the home – in charge of the household. Apart from her own two youngest children, both under ten years old, she also had two daughters in law living in the house (Monand-khon and Toji-khon), while her third daughter in law, Musallam-khon, lived nearby with her four young children. The responsibility for instilling tarbiya fell heavily on Saifiddin's widow's shoulders.

As the youngest of Saifiddin's children, Bashorat-khon recalled, the war years were extraordinarily hard for her family, and particularly for her mother:

Fortunately Mother was a strong woman, she was highly educated, and knew the Holy Qur'an very well, as well as the classic works of Perso-Tajik literature. For us, Mama was always the epitome of womanhood, beauty, elegance and grace. She brought us up to respect one another, to understand and help one another, and to unfailingly show respect to the elderly, and to people in general.¹⁸

It is telling that her mother's strength is implicitly linked to her level of knowledge and learning, both Islamic and secular. Bashoratkhon uses an anecdote from the war years to illustrate the values that the family sought to reinforce in one another. Her mother, having first sold her jewelry and other valuables, began to bake bread for sale in the bazaar as a means of survival. She would then send her young son to the nearby Panjshanbe bazaar to sell her *lipioshki*, and sometimes his younger sister (from whose perspective we hear the story) would accompany him. One day, when the little girl was standing by her family wares at the bazaar, she saw a haggard, gaunt, starving man approach her pile of *lipioshki*, and screamed out in fright

¹⁸ B. Asimova, "Sviashchennyi dolg chelovecheskoi dushi" ("The sacred duty of a humane soul"), *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 23 January 2013, 4-6.

when he seized two of the rounds of bread. Bystanders were swift to intervene, and set upon the man, beating him. Her brother pleaded with the crowd, *very* politely, to leave the man alone as he was clearly starving, and the boy wished him to have the breads. By allowing a starving man to eat some of the wares his mother had baked to sell, and imperiously refusing a stranger's offer to compensate him for his monetary loss, in the eyes of his sister Asliddin perfectly modelled the nobility of spirit, indifference to material wealth and discomfort with trade (only to be attempted in cases of dire need!) that *asilzodagon* were apparently expected to exhibit at all times. The stranger who had proffered the money to Asliddin was also impressed, reportedly, and walked off saying to himself "Well, well! An interesting boy. Young, and yet of such character!"¹⁹

Another sayyid and academic, a distant cousin of the Osimis whom I interviewed in 2011, described being similarly brought up hold herself above petty monetary concerns and to despise trade:

Our *avlod* (lineage, family group) cannot bring themselves to sell things or to engage in trade. Our father was a Hukumat employee, but he never made any extra money through business. He did what he could for his children himself. Papa would ask us [satirically, if we showed signs of wishing to sell anything]: "So you're a speculator, are you? Off to the bazaar? Have you become a merchant? (*Tu spekulant-mi? bozorba merid? savdogar mi tu?*)"

It is a shame for my father and for my family to engage in trade. There is a proverb: "May I have respect, respect is priceless" (*Bo obru bosham, obru qimmat meguftand*).²⁰

The implication that respect of one's peers would somehow be lost by engaging in trade is not further explained, but trade was apparently considered demeaning. The satirical accusation of being a speculator has a clear echo in the widespread preoccupation with speculators shared by Soviet state and society during the 1920s. The old injunction against trade had been given

¹⁹ B. Asimova, "Sviashchennyi dolg chelovecheskoi dushi" ("The sacred duty of a humane soul"), *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 23 January 2013, 4-6.

²⁰ Interview with M.M.Yu., Khujand, July 2011.

new force by use of the pejorative Russian term “*spekulant*,” as the pre-revolutionary moral code of the *turaho* was overlaid with Soviet morality. This is an example of the ways in which the values of *asilzodagon* families were shaped by the Soviet experience, whilst also displaying some continuity with the past.

Following their father’s death in 1943, their older brother Mohammad Osimi played an important role in bringing up Asliddin and Bashoratkhon. Mohammad’s return from the front in 1946 was a cause for much rejoicing, and his younger brother felt with particular keenness the relief of being released from the burden of being the “man of the house.” His elder brother Zainiddin was killed in action in 1944, so Mohammad also took upon himself the responsibility for overseeing the education of his brother’s four children, as well as that of his own children and younger siblings. Decades later, his sister recalled:

Even in those hard postwar years, Mohammad strove to introduce us to art, to get us reading literature. He would bring us reproductions of world famous paintings, recordings of music by the world’s most famous composers, and the classics of Russian and world literature: Hafez, Sa’adi, Khayyam, Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoy, Hugo, London and others. How can he have managed this, given our straitened financial circumstances, when it was hard enough to keep body and soul together?²¹

The enriching educational experiences that Mohammad took some pains to procure for his young relations are not those of a traditional Islamic education, and certainly differ in emphasis from the education Mohammad himself received from his father in the pre-war years. His exertions to expose his young charges to masterpieces of the Western canon – a Soviet version of that canon clearly, in which Jack London occupies a peculiarly elevated position – were intended to supplement the perceived deficiencies not of a traditional Islamic education, but

²¹ B. Asimova, “Sviashchennyi dolg chelovecheskoi dushi” (“The sacred duty of a humane soul”), *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 23 January 2013, 4-6.

of the contemporary Soviet schools that his siblings attended. Mohammad Osimi's educational endeavours here are a textbook illustration of what Bourdieu means by cultural capital, namely a familiarity with subjects that schools do not do a good job of teaching but which elites, nonetheless, value.

From the time he was released from the army at the age of 26, Mohammad Osimi took active part in shaping his younger relatives' educational paths, taking on the role of the head of the family. It was on his older brother Mohammad's advice that Asliddin enrolled in the medical training school in Leninobod, which produced feldshers who went straight on to work as healthcare professionals in rural areas, but also functioned as a feeder for the Medical Institute in Stalinabad. Asliddin studied hard, and joined the Komsomol, which led him to take part in expeditions to vaccinate villagers in the remote mountainous area of Mastchoh, to the south of Khujand. Having graduated from the medical technicum, Asliddin enrolled in the medical institute in Dushanbe in 1952, and again "our elder brother watched carefully over his studies."²²

Throughout the postwar period, *asilzodagon* families continued to arrange marriages for their children, quite often to cousins or more distant relatives. In 1957, two years before Asliddin finished his studies in Dushanbe, his elders arranged his marriage with Tuti-khon Jalolova Buzrukova, who was a fellow student of his younger sister Bashorat-khon at the Tajik National University (TGU) in Leninobod. As Bashorat-khon recalled, "We were close friends, and she often came to our house. Apart from that, she was our relative, and uncommonly bright and intelligent for a young girl."²³ Siblings often helped scout out suitable marriage partners, as part of a general practice of careful scrutiny on the part of parents and elders of all company kept by

²² B. Asimova, "Sviashchennyi dolg chelovecheskoi dushi" ("The sacred duty of a humane soul"), *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 23 January 2013, 4-6.

²³ B. Asimova, *ibid.*

young people, and by young women in particular. As my interview respondent cited earlier explained “My father did not permit us to choose our friends, or strike up acquaintances randomly (*tasodufi*): we had to choose our friends carefully. ‘Tell me your friend, I will tell you who you are’ he would say. [...] He always asked me who are you walking to school with? Who are you going to the theater with?”²⁴ While close relationships with outsiders – with people whose *avlod* was unknown – continued to be strictly monitored, particularly for women, a high premium was placed on loyalty and mutual support within members of the *avlod*.

There is an important truth in the family maxim I heard from the granddaughter of Toshkhoja Asiri, who recited her family tree for me and explained their family connections to the Osimi, Khojaev and Ishoqi families. “We may not have land (*zamin*), but we have learning (*ilm*)” – with the significant qualifier that in the course of the Soviet period, learning turned out to be easier to acquire and hang on to than land.

²⁴ Interview with M.M.Yu., Khujand, July 2011.

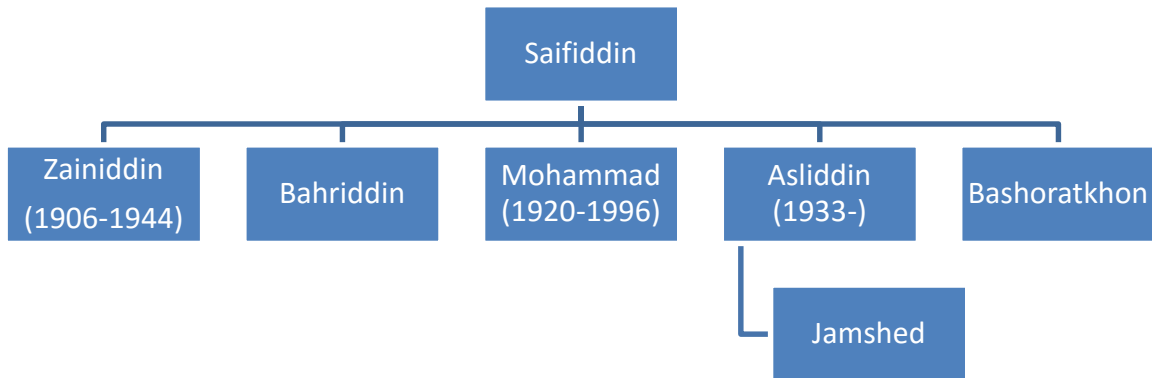


Figure 30: Partial family tree of the Osimi family

The weight of things not carried

No less significant than the precepts, moral tales and injunctions that the *asilzodagon* did pass on to their children, was the knowledge that was passed over in silence, and which in some cases died with them. Many children born in the 1930s recalled in conversation that their parents were too afraid to teach them how to pray, or anything other than the barest rudiments of Islam. The father of Kelin-posho, from a tura lineage related to Toshkhoja Asiri, was a member of the ulama, who supported the Hujum and wrote a book (subsequently lost) about how the women and girls of the region gained their freedom. He was too afraid, however, to instruct his children born in the 1930s on religious matters. “We did begin each meal with the words ‘Bismillo al-rahman al-raheem,’ but that was the only prayer we kept together as a family,” his daughter

recalled.²⁵ Ona-khon's father was a mudarris renowned across the Ferghana Valley, and her mother was a bibiotun who had up to forty students at a time, but she did not teach her own daughter. Ona-khon's father was taken away in a black car when she was five years old, and her mother taught no one after that. "This was the time when tura were being caught. You could not even say bismillo, it was a terrible time, so I was not taught."²⁶

Many women from *asilzodagon* did their best in adulthood, after Stalin's death, to make up for the Islamic education lost in childhood. Although – as Kelin-posho herself phrased it – she was married to a Communist and sent her children to Russian-language crèches and schools, Kelin-posho herself learned to pray in her late twenties, after her father's death, and as an adult she unfailingly observed the Ramadan fast. Ona-khon too observed the Ramadan fast, despite being frequently harangued and tempted by her Russian boss at the silk factory, who would pop candies in her mouth and attempt to feed her grapes during Ramadan. Later, Ona-khon became a bibiotun, by means of a purely oral, and female, chain of transmission, and now recites prayers over newborns and newlyweds, and performs apotropaic and fertility rituals associated with Bibi Seshanbe.²⁷ She cannot, however, read or write Arabic as both her parents could, and expressed a keen awareness of the knowledge that had been lost with their deaths.

²⁵ The name Kelin-posho does not identify her, as the title is used to address many tura women once they are married and living in their husband's home (a literal translation might be "Bride-Princess"). Daughters-in law of non-elite families are addressed or referred to simply as Kelin (bride). The conversation with Kelin-posho took place in Khujand in July, 2011

²⁶ Conversation with Ona-khon, Khujand, May 2011. Her title does not identify her: Ona-khon, which might be translated as 'respected grandmother,' is the tura version of "Ona-jon," used by non-elite Khujandis to address their paternal grandmother.

²⁷ "*Man-am nasiba giftegi, odamoi mekhonam megardonam gohru mebandam.*" ("I too received my share [of transmitted knowledge], I read [prayers] over people, I ward off [evil spirits] and I bind cradles [in an apotropaic ritual for newborns on their fortieth day of life]"). Conversation with Ona-khon, 21 May 2011.

Return of the purged

The exiled, the imprisoned and the children of those purged began to drift back into Leninobod during the war. It is unclear to what extent this was part of a broader phenomenon, but in 1944, just as the Crimean Tatars and the Chechens were being exiled to Central Asia, Khujandis who had been exiled during the 1930s began to return home.

Olimkhon Makhdom-i Khujandi was a prominent mudarris who was sent to the North Caucasus on the special train for former kulaks (*eschelon raskulachennikh*) which left Khujand in February 1931. He was somehow able to return to Khujand on the eve of the war, leaving his wife Bibihamroh and son Muhiddin to experience the Nazi occupation of the Caucasus. Once his son Muhiddin was able to return to Central Asia, he settled in Dushanbe with his new family at the invitation of none other than Sadriddin Aini, who had, it seems, long been a friend of Olimkhon Makhdom, and who had recently been nominated as Director of the newly founded Academy of Sciences.²⁸

Following persistent inquiries, Leninobodi relatives were able to locate the daughters of Abdurahim Khojibaev in a Russian orphanage, and in 1944 were able to secure both the necessary permissions and to send the girls money, with which to travel back to Tajikistan. Thus Rafoat and Baroat returned to their native city they had come to know mostly through her father's bedtime stories, and were joined there by their mother in 1946. By 1946, the atmosphere of terror had dissipated to the point that the Hojiboev network rallied around the girls and their widowed²⁹ mother from the start. As Baroat recalls, her mother had been in Leninobod only a

²⁸ Inom Usmanov, "Istinno narodnyi pisatel'," *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 4 November 2013 (<http://www.sogd-pravda.tj>).

²⁹ Although she was certainly a widow by 1946, the family was not actually informed of Hojiboev's death until they received notice of his posthumous rehabilitation, in the autumn of 1957. See: Khodzhibaeva (Hojiboeva), *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 165.

couple of days before she was received a visit from Mu'min Khojaev's wife Shafarat-khon, who had also survived the persecution of her husband. Shafarat-khon offered her a job working in the sewing artel' which she was then managing – this was a precious lifeline given the grim living conditions in Leninobod in the immediate postwar period. Their close and distant relatives, and several of Abdurahim Hojiboev's former colleagues in Leninobod, likewise came forward to offer assistance. Baroat gratefully remembers being brought bags of flour, a stove, an electricity hook up – gifts these from relatives with both distinctly *asilzodagon*-sounding names, like Adbukadyr-khoja Mansurkhojaev and Qori-podshoh Domullojon, and also good Soviet connections: one was the father of a university rector, another the father of a construction engineer.³⁰

As the years went by, Baroat recalls receiving many heartfelt testimonies from those who had known her father, and went out of their way to pay him their respects through his daughter. In 1967 she travelled to Moscow with her life-long friend and academic collaborator Mavjuda Muminovna Abdualieva, the daughter of her father's schoolmate and friend Mu'min Khojaev: the two of them were pursuing graduate studies and had been sent to Moscow to research the works of the prominent orientalist Braginskii.³¹ Braginskii, who had spent several years in Stalinobod in the 1930s, was reportedly much affected on learning whose daughters his visitors

³⁰ Khodzhibaeva, *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*, 154-156.

³¹ Braginskii was interested in Tajik folk poetry, and published on the folk epic Gurugli – see for instance *Gurugli: Tadjikskii narodnyi epos* (Gurugli, the Tajik national epic), introduced and translated by Iosif Samuilovich Braginskii. Braginskii also contributed to raising the profile of the XIV century Sufi poet Kamoli Khujandi, in whose work he found folk influences and a critique of the ulama, which was so often key to finding favour in the Soviet canon. See Jan Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, 262-63. Braginskii, incidentally, was reviled by Jalol Ikromi for having weighed in on the impassioned debates raging in the 1930s on the standards for literary Tajik on the side of those who felt that “the literary language must be brought closer to that of the spoken language.” Source: Jalol Ikromi, *On chi az sar guzasht*, 176.

were, as promptly offered to serve on the committee of Baroat-khon's dissertation, on the pedagogy of poetry in Tajik schools.³²

The occasion of Baroat Hojiboeva's dissertation defense, held in Moscow in 1968, powerfully underscored the extent to which, in the minds of the Tajik intelligentsia if not of Communist officialdom, her father's reputation had been not only restored, but had perhaps even grown posthumously, in the years since the XXth Party Congress. Mirzo Tursunzade, leading Tajik poet and secretary of the USSR Writers' Union, who had just then returned from a trip to India to receive a Nehru prize, came to congratulate her on the day of her dissertation defense. The President of the Tajik Academy of Sciences, and fellow Leninobodi *asilzodagon*, Mohammad Osimi, also joined the celebration, with his wife Monadniso. The Tajik vice minister of Education, Kandil Juraev paid his respects that day, as did the Tajik permanent representative to Moscow, Hotam Solibaev, who presented her with an enormous bouquet. Mirzo-Tursunzade, Mohammad Osimi and Kandil Juraev all recited classical Persian *rubaiyat* and other verses to mark the occasion with suitable solemnity.³³ The fact that her father had been Tajikistan's first SovNarKom chair surely carried more weight that day than the rather less immediate fact of Baroat-khon's khoja ancestry. The academic success being celebrated that day was a thoroughly Soviet success, celebrated by a group of Tajik *intelligenty* who identified to a considerable extent with the values and norms of Soviet society.

Baroat Hojiboeva became a professor of Russian literature at Leninobod State University; of her two daughters, one is also a professor of Russian literature and vice-rector of the same institution, the other is a talented poet whose work has been published in Iran as well as

³² Khodzhibaeva, Baroat. *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 169.

³³ Khodzhibaeva, Baroat. *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 170.

Tajikistan. In a pattern common to many *asilzodagon* families of the postwar period, none of Abdurahim Hojiboev's six grandchildren joined the Party or pursued a career in politics; but they all received higher education, and five of them made careers for themselves in academia or education.³⁴

A Soviet Sufi

The biography of Muhammadalikhon Homidkhonzoda given here provides a counterpoint to the bulk of *asilzodagon* life trajectories given in this chapter: the successful doctors, academicians and university rectors who (somewhat complacently, it would seem), express their gratitude to the Communist Party, and, more privately, to their families and ancestral legacy, for the opportunities afforded them to advance their careers, and thus to benefit humanity. The elder of the Sufi tariqat came from a similarly prominent *asilzodagon* family to the other protagonists in this chapter: like many of them, he can produce an impressive shajara attesting to many generations of transmitted spiritual charisma. Like many of them, he lost his father at an early age to the Stalinist purges. He does not, however, appear to have benefitted in his youth from an alternate father figure within his family network, capable of guiding him through Soviet education – instead, as a teenager he enrolled in a trade technicum at the suggestion of a Russian school friend called Kostia. Despite enlisting in the Red Army, joining the Komsomol and seeking higher education, he failed to advance in his career, and evidently grew increasingly frustrated.

³⁴ Khodzhibaeva, Baroat. *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse* (Khujand, 2000), 170.

Although his career in Soviet trade may not have been what he would have wished, his life trajectory provides a very different, but equally clear, illustration of the role of the enduring social value of ancestry in the postwar moral economy of Tajikistan. Muhammadalikhon Homidkhonzoda made connections with GULAG returnees who had been exiled for their faith and Islamic learning, and laid claim to his ancestral charisma by leading a Sufi circle and what he described as a healing center (kalandarkhona) in his native Leninobod. His position at the head of the kalandarkhona attracted negative attention from Soviet authorities, leading to his arrest and imprisonment in the 1980s, but also earned him considerable respect and protection from some highly placed clients. He spent the latter decades of his life in the attempt to recover and rebuild his family's Sufi legacy, struggling to overcome the tragedy of the loss of his father and the concomitant loss of religious knowledge and experience of Sufi practices. As his autobiography shows, however, Homidkhontura's rejection of the values of Soviet society was not complete or definitive, but rather seems to have been the product of a complex journey, and only after significant emotional and ideological investment into the regime. He emphasizes as a point of pride in his autobiography that he was never been unemployed, but always actively sought and maintained employment within the Soviet state. As a child, he had close friends who were Russian, Uzbek and Tajik, and learned to speak all three languages fluently. It was a Russian friend who suggested that he join him in enrolling at the Trade Technicum in Leninobod after graduating from seven years of primary education.

At the trade technikum, which offered four years of vocational training without precluding the possibility of pursuing higher education, Homidkhontura studied accountancy, merchandising of industrial and food products, marketing state goods to the public, and elements of jurisprudence and legislation. Upon graduation in 1950, he describes being assigned to various

positions within the Consumers' Union and promotion to managing positions in various state-run retail outlets. When describing his interactions with the state – largely in the form of the professional and educational opportunities that came his way, his agency is oddly absent, and he appears to characterize himself as the somewhat passive recipient of various opportunities apparently thrust upon him. This is in striking contrast to his assertive, even defiant mode when he is swimming against the current.

When I was called to military service, my brother Said-ahmad-khon was already doing military service. People turned up who advised me not to go to the Army. They told me that my brother is already doing military service, so you are able not to join the Army. But I considered service to the Motherland as the duty of a patriot, and rejected their advice. At that moment in history, the tense geopolitical situation decided matters.³⁵

It seems that the Suez Crisis – during which Khrushchev rashly threatened to unleash nuclear warfare in Egypt's defense – was an important factor in Homidkhontura's commitment to the Red Army. From his perspective, this was a way for Soviet citizens, under the leadership of the "obstinate and fearless" Khrushchev to support Arab countries against "the Americans," who had, in Muhammadali-khon's understanding, filled the canal with their warships. Khrushchev's attempts to cast himself as the protector of non-allied – and, in this case, Muslim – nations of the Third World seems to have made more an impression on the young Muhammadali-khon than the renewed antireligious campaign which also marked his term in office.

Muhammadali-khon was one of a group of thirty-four young men from Leninobod who enlisted in response to Khrushchev's call – in solidarity with their Muslim brothers, as they saw it – and he recorded only happy memories of his time of the Army. He formed a dance troop,

³⁵ Muhammadalikhon Homidkhonzoda, *Piri Tariqat*, privately published in Khujand, 2010.

through which he learned the tango and waltz, and also gave performances of traditional Central Asian dances and songs. During his time in the Red Army, he was elected secretary of his Komsomol cell, and appears to have been on friendly terms with all those around him. He applied to continue his studies at the Plekhanov Economics University in Moscow institution, and was “boundlessly happy” when his application was accepted.³⁶ Up until this point, Muhammadalikhon’s life trajectory had much in common with those *asilzodagon* at the more “Sovietised” end of the spectrum.

Following his return to Khujand after leaving the Red Army and completing higher education, he began to find for the first time that “my knowledge had attracted the jealousy of others,”³⁷ and it was from this point forward that his secular career began to falter and his sense of frustration to increase. His career began to sputter and enter a long downward spiral beginning in the 1960s, a development he attributes to the fact that he never joined the Communist Party. In the decade between 1963 and 1973, he worked as manager of five shops in succession, not staying longer than three years in any one position. After 1973, he continued to change positions more or less as frequently until the early 1990s, but he was never again able to work in the sector his education had prepared him for, instead finding employment in a bicycle repair shop attached to a shoe factory, and later as a nightwatchman, and gardener. Unlike locals who had Russian wives, or who were prepared to give and take bribes, he was repeatedly passed over for promotion.

“Having faith in God and his Prophet, reading the Qur’an and the like were disapproved of. Praying and fasting were categorically forbidden by the state at that time. For all that I had three diplomas, after graduating from universities in Moscow and Dushanbe, certification of my merchandising qualification and a lot of experience in trade, I finished

³⁶ *Piri tariqat*, 89.

³⁷ *Piri tariqat*, 111.

my position for the sake of my conscience, and this was not pleasing to the leaders of local commerce.”³⁸

It is not entirely clear at what point Homidkhontura began to turn to Islam, but within the narrative arc of his autobiography, it is notable that the description of his active pursuit of an Islamic education in adulthood immediately follows on from that of his faltering secular career, as if he himself saw a causal connection between these two developments. It seems that his apparent inability to advance his career despite his qualifications and apparently diligent work caused him to become disaffected, to feel increasingly alienated from the regime, and thus to seek out an alternative source of recognition and self-worth.

There seems to have been absolutely no love lost between the soviet intelligentsia and the Sufis, even when these were heirs of the very same genealogies to which the intelligentsia might also belong. Members of the Soviet intelligentsia like Zarif Rajabov were pleased to downplay the role that their own cultural capital and connections – products of their ancestry – had played in their own success, while disowning Sufi shaikhs as fanatics.³⁹

In the 1980s, his activities in the Kalandarkhona were followed closely by the police, and it is Muhammadali-khon's belief that two of the several dozen people who came to him in 1986 for assistance with fertility problems were spies sent by the police. He was arrested, and questioned closely for almost two weeks, by police investigators keen to ascertain the whereabouts of the “gold and priceless pearls” that were allegedly hidden in the courtyard of the Qalandarkhona, according to an anonymous tip off received by the prosecutor's office.⁴⁰ In his autobiography, he professes himself amazed at these allegations. He was sentenced to a five

³⁸ *Piri tariqat*, 96.

³⁹ Zarif Radzhabov (Rajabov), *Stranitsy proshlogo: iz vospominanii veteran kul'turnogo stroitel'stvo v Tadzhikskoi SSR* [Pages from the past: from the memoirs of a veteran of cultural construction in the Tajik SSR] (Dushanbe, 1986), 14 and passim.

⁴⁰ *Piri tariqat*, 135.

year prison term in November 1986, following a trial organized by enemies whom he describes as “well-connected and rich people, far from the rulings of the Shariah, from learning and faith.”⁴¹ The trial was led by the prosecutor Turakhojaev, and thirty-two of the people who had turned to the Kalandarkhona for assistance with their fertility problems had been invited to attend the trial.

Upon his release from prison, Muhammadalikhon made his way straight to Dushanbe, where he demanded an audience with the First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party, judging this the most effective means of securing the return of his valuable collection of Islamic books and manuscripts that had been confiscated when his house was searched at the time of his arrest. Having requested to see Makhamov, the Sufi Shaikh was initially ushered in to see Ergash Saidovich Qurbonov, head of the Security Committee (*Kumitai Behatari*). Qurbonov addressed the Shaikh politely, perhaps breezily, as “Comrade Homidov” and used the polite “shumo” form (corresponding to *vy* in Russian). Muhammadalikhon claims that he replied as follows “you (*tu*), Ergash Saidovich stay in your seat and keep quiet. I will speak not to you, but to your boss (*dar joiat shinu khomush bosh. Man bo tu ne, balki bo rohbari tu harf mezanam*).” This strikingly bold approach apparently secured the prompt return of his complete collection.⁴²

The production of knowledge

[following the purges of 1936-37] “...The subsequent formation of the Tajik intelligentsia largely rejected the old cultural tradition. It consisted mainly of newcomers from the peasantry, often the products of children’s homes and boarding schools to whom Soviet rule had given everything and for whom a totalitarian regime was a familiar and accustomed reality. The new intelligentsia was not only formed by the authorities, it was

⁴¹ *Piri tariqat*, 150-156.

⁴² *Piri tariqat*, 204-205.

also tied to representatives of the structures of power by close, almost literally kinship bonds”⁴³

Writing in 1993, Olimov and Olimova find that the contemporary Tajik intelligentsia effectively has no roots in the traditional culture of the region. It is not my intention to argue against the perception, articulated by Muhammad Shakuri and others, that the effect of the first decades of Soviet rule (which saw the major centers of Tajik/Persian-language culture assigned to the Uzbek SSR) amounted to nothing less than the spiritual annihilation of the Tajik people.⁴⁴ Such deeply felt conclusions are based on decades of lived experiences I do not share, and cannot but respect. Muhammad Shakuri’s father, Sadr-i Ziyō, had died in prison in 1932, his father in law Jalol Ikromi had also been imprisoned, as had many members of both their families. The pessimistic views cited above were also surely shaped in part by the experience of the Tajik Civil War (1992-1997), which exacted a further, heavy, toll on the country’s intelligentsia. By charting the physical survival into the late Soviet period of certain lineages of *asilzodagon*, a subset of the intelligentsia, my intention is not to rebut these findings, but rather to show the ways in which the endurance of hybrid kinship and solidarity networks shaped many Tajik institutions – albeit in a profoundly altered social and cultural landscape.

Abashin offers a fascinating analysis of a debate between Shakuri and Tabarov, which sheds light on the continued relevance of elite (or “saintly,” in Abashin’s terminology) lineages in post-Soviet Tajikistan. Shakuri, who aligns himself with the urban Tajiks, of which

⁴³ S. Olimova and M. Olimov, ‘The Educated Class of Tajikistan in the Upheavals of the Twentieth Century’, *Russian Politics and Law*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (1993), p. 44.

⁴⁴ Muhammadjon Shakuri Bukhara’i, *The Imperialist Revolution in Bukhara* (Dushanbe, Shujaihan: 2013), originally published in 2010 as *Fitnai Inqilob dar Bukhoro*. Similar views were also expressed in his 1999 book entitled *Independence and social-spiritual consciousness* (1999), referenced by Sergei Abashin (translated by Caroline Humphrey), in “[Gellner, the ‘Saints’ and Central Asia: between Islam and Nationalism](#),” *Inner Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Dedicated to Andre Grunder Frank (1929-2005) (2005), 79.

Khujandi/Leninobodis are the only representatives within the borders of Tajikistan, presented a damning portrayal of the “village intelligentsia,” descended from the provincial “workers and peasants” supported by Soviet power, which he perceived as dominating cultural life in independent Tajikistan. His portrayal met with a striking and telling riposte from Tabarov, who conversely identifies with the southern Tajiks, and argued in an injured tone, contra Shakuri, that “knowledge or not of one’s genealogy cannot be a basis for defining whether someone is a genuine intellectual...” Despite apparently arguing that personal credentials should suffice, regardless of whether ones ‘father or grandfather had also been intellectuals’ – as, of course, Shakuri’s father and grandfather, both qozi-kalon (leading Islamic judge) in Bukhara, had been. Curiously, Tabarov was apparently not content with this line of attack, and went on to produce his own genealogy, which – it turns out – he considered to be no less saintly or august than that of Shakuri.⁴⁵

Production of knowledge under the aegis of Bobojon Ghafurov

The end of the Second World War in 1945 and the outbreak of the Tajik Civil War in 1992 bookend the period of the greatest ascendancy of the Leninobodi elite. During this half-century, men from the northern district of Leninobod – from the city formerly known as Khujand and its immediate environs – dominated the political life of the country as a whole. Leninobodis

⁴⁵ Abashin writes: “It appeared that his [Tabarov’s] family, which came from a Kulyab settlement called Khoja-Imam in Dashtijum District, traced its genealogy back to Mavlono Nuriddin Jafar Badakhshi (d. 1394/5). He, according to Tabarov, was the author of the Sufi tract ‘The sum of living’. He was also the pupil of Sayyid Amir Hamadani himself (d. 1385), who belonged to the well known Sufi Kubraviyya brotherhood and was ‘head’ of the sacred Kulyab. True, the author admitted, ‘...the whole life of my parents’ generation was tied to farming, rearing livestock, keeping orchards, sharecropping and various kinds of artisan work, even though they were descendants of Mavlono Nuriddin Jafar Badakhshi himself...” Source: Sergei Abashin, translated by Caroline Humphrey, “[Gellner, the ‘Saints’ and Central Asia: between Islam and Nationalism](#),” *Inner Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Dedicated to Andre Grunder Frank (1929-2005) (2005), 80.

were also overrepresented, as we shall see, in professions, including academia, medicine and the arts. This preeminence in the political sphere, led, as one might well imagine, to the Leninobod oblast being favoured in terms of investment in industry and social infrastructure also, including education and healthcare. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, well over three quarters of the total number of factories in Tajikistan were located in Leninobod oblast (616 out of a total of 733 factories). It was also the most densely populated part of the country, with a population in excess of 1.5 million, of which over a third was categorized as urban, out of a total population of just over five million.⁴⁶

Table 7 - The Leninobodi Elite in Politics, 1940s-1980s

Tajik CP First Secretary	1946- May 1956	Bobojon Ghafurov (1909-1977)	Isfisor, Leninobod district
	May 1956 – April 1961	Tursunboi Uljaboev	Quruq, Leninobod district
	1961-1982	Jabbor Rasulov (1913-1982)	Khujand/Leninobod
	1982-1986	Rahmon Nabiev (1930-1993)	Shaikhburkhon, Leninobod district
	1985-1991	Qahhor Mahkhamov (1932-)	Khujand/Leninobod
Chair of SovNarKom / SovMin of Tajik SSR	1946-55	Jabbor Rasulov	
	1955-56	Tursunboi Uljaboev	
		<i>Dodkhudoev</i>	Pamiri
		Abdulahad Qahhorov (1913-84)	Konibodom, Leninobod oblast
	1973-82	Rahmon Nabiev	
	1982-85 (was vice-chair 1963-82)	Qahhor Mahkhamov	

⁴⁶ Kirill Nourzhanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (Australian National University E Press, 2013), 94.

Between 1946 and 1992, each of the five successive first secretaries of the Tajik Communist Party was from Leninobod province. Over the same time period, each Chairman of Tajik SovNarKom (later SovMin) also hailed from Leninobod oblast, with the single exception of the Pamiri Dodkhudoev, whose tenure as Chairman of SovMin overlapped exactly with that of his close friend Uljaboev as First Secretary.

On the whole, however, the *asilzodagon* families of Khujand did not seek high political office, or to climb the Party ranks, after the great purges of the 1930s. Instead, their influence on the fortunes of the country was exerted through their leading positions in academia, medicine and public health, and the arts. What was, then, the relationship between the entrenched regional-based political elite of the postwar period and the genealogically defined *asilzodagon* of Khujand? As I will show, even where career politicians did not hail from conspicuously elite families, they still displayed a marked tendency to promote those within their networks, which were tightly interwoven with those of the *asilzodagon* families of Khujand.

As previous chapters have shown, given the influential roles in education occupied by *asilzodagon* in the early years of Soviet power, Khujandi *asilzodagon* found themselves in a position to shape the educational outcomes of the next generation, provide opportunities for advancement to those pupils of whom they approved, and thus earn their gratitude and loyalty. Studies of cultural capital conducted in different societies and time periods have shown this to be the way things work: educators reward those whom they perceive to be promising and talented, and those pupils tend to be those whose social and cultural backgrounds look most like their own. Later, although this is hard to prove conclusively, it seems that the ability to bestow patronage on members of *asilzodagon* families was seen to burnish the prestige of “commoners” once they reached positions of power.

As an elite status group in Weber's definition, the *asilzodagon* were able to identify and reinforce the boundaries between who does and does not belong, and thus to monopolize for the benefit of the group "scarce social, economic, and cultural resources by providing coherence to existing social networks and facilitating the development of co-membership, respect, and affection out of which new networks are constructed."⁴⁷ This provides a possible model for interpreting instances in which powerful Party members of apparently non-elite status – such as Bobojon Ghafurov – seem to have been accepted for membership into an elite patronage and solidarity network through which he himself was benefitted, and benefitted others.

Although the political ascendancy of what have sometimes been referred to as Leninobodi "clans" in the postwar period has often been noted before, even in the relatively sparse Western literature on the region, no in depth studies of the phenomenon have been conducted, and analysis has been quite perfunctory. What the mechanisms were whereby power was enabled to pass from one Leninobodi incumbent to the next without noticeable opposition remain to be studied. In the political and social history of Tajikistan compiled by Kirill Nourjanov and Christian Bleuer, the authors quote a 1995 newspaper article by Akbar Tursunov to advance the theory that in order to retain their grip on power, Leninobodis "adopted a truly Machiavellian tactic" consisting in ensuring that non-Northerners who were permitted to rise to positions of authority were all nincompoops or "marginals" chosen to make the Southern *nomenklatura* look bad. This is an intriguing theory, but hard to prove, and unfortunately no evidence is provided.⁴⁸ In their survey of Northern solidarity networks, Bleuer and Nourzhanov

⁴⁷ Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students," in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Apr., 1982), 189-201.

⁴⁸ Kirill Nourzhanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History* (Australian National University E Press, 2013), 96.

mention the Osimov-Olimov family agglomeration in Khujand as having “viable ties in the religious establishment throughout central Asia,” but again, no further details are offered.

I conjecture firstly that the one – the traditional cultural capital and social standing of the *asilzodagon* – paved the way for the other. In other words, the ascendancy of the *asilzodagon* during previous generations had created the conditions that allowed other Leninobodis, not necessarily themselves of elite social background, to join the club and cement the ascendancy of Khujand within the republic.

Following brief biographical cameos of each of the most highly placed Leninobodis of the postwar period, focusing on their networks, I will then look in detail at some of the institutions founded under Ghafurov’s watch, which also became bastions of Leninobodi influence. I will trace the role of the *asilzodagon* of Khujand in shaping academia and medical science in the Tajik republic. The length of the shadow left by Bobojon Ghafurov, the first postwar First Secretary, across Tajik culture is second only to that of Sadriddin Aini. A vast amount of scholarship – constituting the academic subfield of Ghafurovedenie – concerning his life and legacy continues to grow, and it would be rash to venture into this crowded field without good reason. For the purpose of the present chapter, the bare outlines of Bobojon Ghafurov’s life will suffice to illustrate the influence that he was able to wield not only during his tenure as First Secretary, but throughout his life.

The ancestry of Bobojon Ghafurov is not clear to me at this point, as any discussion of his ancestry in his biographies is apparently – perhaps deliberately – crowded out by descriptions of his many personal achievements. We do know Bobojon Ghafurov was born in 1908 or 1909 in Ispisor, a village just a short distance from Khujand, and that the story as commonly told is one of rags to riches, or rather “from batrak to academician.” His mother, Roziia Ozod (1893-1957),

was fifteen years old when she married her first cousin, a silk weaver, who was then aged 44; their first son, Bobojon, was born the following year. He enrolled in the nearby Soviet school at the age of 7, but soon transferred to the Behbudi internat, where he was taught by several *asilzodagon* teachers including Bashirkhon Ishoqi (see chapter one), with whom he would also subsequently work in the agitprop department. The young Ghafurov's family may indeed have been struggling financially when the decision was taken to enroll him in the Behbudi internat, but he certainly did not lack for cultural capital. His mother was locally renowned and respected both as a *bibiotun*, a female religious teacher, and for her talent in reciting classical poetry. In a recent account by the Russian writer Kaledin of his conversations with Bobojon's younger brother Omin Ghafurov, Omin says that their mother took great pride in her family's alleged descent from the 15th century Sufi poet (sometimes also described as a saint) Kamol-i Khujandi, who though born in Khujand, spent much of his life in Tabriz, Iran.⁴⁹ The Ghafurov household had a collection of old books, which Rozia was able to save by burying them in 1937, when someone tipped off the secret police to search their property.⁵⁰ A relative of the Osimi family recalls that Bobojan Ghafurov and his mother were frequent guests at their home. Whatever the *asilzodagon* of Khujand made of the pedigree of the Ghafurov family, they seem to have welcomed them into their social circle and extend him their patronage, favours he was later in an excellent position to return.

⁴⁹ Sergei Kaledin, "Tolmach" (The interpreter), published in *Ogonek* N.25, 28 June 2010, 46.

⁵⁰ Alim Ghafurov, younger brother of Bobojon, recalls that though the police left their mother alone, Bobojon was questioned. Alim is quoted as giving this rather chilling end to the anecdote "My brother got out of it, and later figured out who had informed against him, and took his revenge on this vermin for his whole life, helping him and his family" ("Брат отвертелся, со временем узнал, кто донес, и всю жизнь мстил гаду, помогая ему и его семье"). Source: Nurali Davlat "Sovetskii ideolog, sovershivshii khadzhi," *Charkhi gardun*, 5 July 2012 (accessed online at <http://gazeta.tj/dp/5102-sovetskij-ideolog-sovershivshij-xadzh.html>).

After studying law in Samarkand (1928-1930), he began working as a government official in Dushanbe in 1930, but in 1931 left for Moscow to study journalism at the All-Union institute of Journalism, graduating in 1935. While in Moscow, he joined the Communist Party (1932). On returning to Tajikistan, he worked in propaganda department and was a member of the Tajik Central Committee during the worst years of the Stalinist purges, between 1935 and 1938. He then moved on to history (1938-41), graduating with a thesis on the history of the Ismaili sect from the Institute of History at the Soviet Academy of Sciences in 1941. He returned to Stalinabad, and continued his rapid rise through the Party ranks: central committee secretary during the war (1941-44), Second Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party from 1944,⁵¹ and First Secretary between 1944 and 1956. His concise history of the Tajik people, for which he was awarded a doctorate, was published in 1947.



Figure 31 - Bobojon Ghafurov.

In this photograph, Bobojon Ghafurov is seated, wearing a light coloured jacket and Tajik national hat, surrounded by his relatives.

⁵¹ That same year, as mentioned in chapter five, his mother Roziia Ozod became the first female member of the Tajik Writers' Union

The Tashkent-born archaeologist Boris Litvinskii (1923-2010) caused great offense in Tajikistan shortly before his death by claiming that he and his wife Elena Davidovich, a specialist in Islamic numismatics, had written most of Ghafurov's seminal work on the history of the Tajik people, while providing, for good measure, an unflattering physical description of the "great and terrible" man.⁵² Among others who leapt to the defense of Ghafurov's reputation was the son of Jalol Ikromi, Jonon, who vehemently proffered many anecdotes attesting to the munificence and scholarship of Bobojon Ghafurov, and pointing out that nobody else ("none of the thousands who worked for him") had ever been so coarse as to mention his limp in print before. For all the difference in perspective between these two authors, the impression they create of the authority and power wielded by Bobojon Ghafurov – both formally and informally – is absolutely consistent.

During his tenure as First Secretary, Ghafurov had established himself as an energetic and purposeful advocate for the development of the Tajik republic, with a particularly keen interest in recruiting cadres and lobbying for resources to develop the cultural institutions which most other Union republics already had. Ghafurov is widely credited with bringing about the establishment of both the Tajik State University, in 1948, and the Tajik Academy of Sciences, in 1951 (he himself became a member of the Tajik Academy of Sciences from the time it was founded).⁵³

When Bobojon Ghafurov founded the Tajik State University (TGU) in 1948, he appointed as rector his fellow Leninobodi and former classmate from the Behbudi internat, the

⁵² Mariia Ianovskaia, *Boris Litvinskii: Bobodzhan Gafurov, velikii i uzhasnyi (vospominaniia istorika)*, 20 March 2009, Fergana.ru

⁵³ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, "Not Some British Colony In Africa: The politics of decolonization and modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1964," in *Ab Imperio* 2/2013, 191-222.

historian Zarif Sharipovich Rajabov (1906-1990). For an avowedly staunch Stalinist, Ghafurov displayed quite admirable pragmatism in staffing his fledgling institution, by inviting a crowd of august but beleaguered professors from Leningrad and Moscow, many of them Jewish and suffering from accusations of cosmopolitanism, to join him in Stalinabad. Zarif Rajabov served as rector between 1948 and 1954, before moving on to be the head of the history of the USSR department at the same institution, until 1959. In 1959, he moved over to the Academy of Sciences, the other major cultural institution brought into being through the energy of Bobojon Ghafurov. Zarif's younger cousin Soleh became rector of TGU after him, serving between 1956 and 1971.

The Rajabovs were one of a number of powerful Khujandi academic families, and they were also khojas. This we learn from the Akramov family, which was connected to the Rajabovs by marriage when Salomatkhon Rajabova, sister of Soleh and cousin to Zarif, was married to the son of Mansurkhon-tura Akramov (the tura chief of Police in Khujand who perished in 1937, see chapter one).⁵⁴ Zarif Rajabov, and his cousins Soleh and Dado Rajabov, who would later become dean and provost at the Uzbek State University in Tashkent, all attended the Behbudi internat beginning in 1920, where they were schooled alongside their future patrons and close contemporaries, Bobojon Ghafurov and Jabbor Rasulov.

The Rajabov siblings Dado, Salomat, Soleh and Marhamat were the children of Ashur-khoja Rajabov and Bifazilat, the literate Khujandi shoemaker and bibiotun encountered in chapter one. Through his school, Soleh became the leader of a newly formed Pioneer brigade in 1925, and soon afterwards joined the Komsomol. At the age of 14, he continued his studies in a

⁵⁴ Norinisoi Alimuhammad and Hotami Homid, *Mardi neksirisht* (Nashrieti Ejod, Dushanbe:2006).

boarding school (*internat*) in Tashkent, where he continued to be active in the Komsomol cell, taking a leading role in various literacy campaigns.⁵⁵

As one of the best students in the internat, he was sent on to the Pedagogical Technicum in Tashkent. While there, he was elected Komsomol secretary several times, and by virtue of having been categorized as the son of an artisan, Soleh Ashurkhojaevich benefitted from the ongoing nativisation (*korenizatsiia*) campaigns and was promoted to various positions within the Komsomol (presumably replacing ethnic Russians): by 1931, he was working for the central committee of the Komsomol in Tashkent.⁵⁶ While it was indeed true that Soleh's father Ashurkhoja was a shoemaker, he was also a well-educated man, a sayyid, a Russian speaker, and the owner of a workshop that employed several apprentices. Like other multilingual Khujandi *asilzodagon*, his children were remarkably successful in navigating higher educational institutions both in the Uzbek and in the Tajik SSRs.

Another remarkably successful academic family was that of the descendants of Osimkhon Makhsum, known as the Osimis, or in Russianised form as the Asimov family, none of whom were more brilliant than Mohammad Osimi, third son of Saifiddin-khon.⁵⁷ We have already noted Mohammad Osimi's exertions to educate his younger siblings and orphaned nieces and nephews, in addition to educating his own numerous children – none of which prevented him from

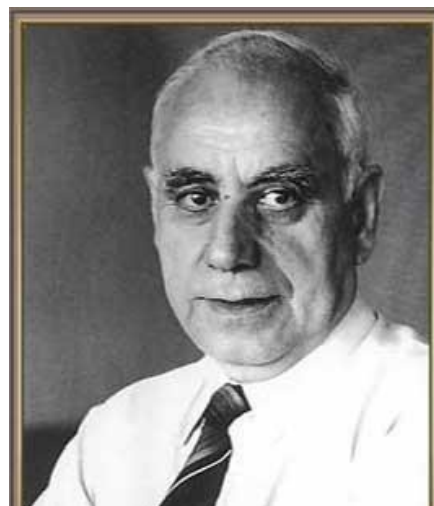


Figure 32: Mohammad Osimi

⁵⁵ Jabborov, dissertation, p.32.

⁵⁶ <http://ia-centr.ru/expert/2533/>

⁵⁷ The tura teacher from chapter one, Kulikhon Osimi, is also almost certainly a number of the same Osimi avlod descended from Osim-khon.

pursuing his own scholarship. Before joining the Red Army, Mohammad Osimi (1920-1996) had received a degree in physics and mathematics from Samarkand State University. Having joined the Party in 1945 and returned from the war, he soon began teaching physics at the Leninobod state pedagogical institute (which would subsequently evolve into Leninobod State University). Within a short space of time, he was promoted to chair the physics department, and then to vice-director of the same institute. He left for Moscow in 1952 to pursue graduate studies in the philosophy department at the Academy of Social Sciences of the CPSU Central Committee, a relatively new institution founded in 1946 to educate future Party leaders. The dissertation (*aspirantura*) he submitted in 1955 was on “Space and Time as the main forms of existence of matter.” On his return to Tajikistan, Osimi was appointed rector of the newly founded Tajik Polytechnic University in 1956, probably on Bobojon Ghafurov’s initiative.

Osimi left his position as rector only to begin a more intense stint in the political limelight, when he was appointed Minister of Education in February 1962. That same year, he also became a member of the Central Committee of the Tajik CP. Between 1962 and 1965 he also served as secretary of the Central Committee, working alongside his fellow Leninobodi Jabbor Rasulov, as vice chair of SovMin, and as chair of the committee of Party State Control: the problem of cadres was evidently still quite severe. In 1965 he left politics to take the position of President of the Tajik Academy of Sciences, which he would direct until 1988.

Although a small appendix of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR had been established in 1933, focused on natural sciences like geology and botany, it was not until April 1951 that the Academy of Sciences of the Tajik SSR was founded as an autonomous entity. Sadriddin Aini, the father of Tajik literature, was appointed to head it, which he did, until his death in 1954. The previous president of the Tajik Academy of Sciences, Sultan Umarov, had

died in office, in 1964, and the post had been vacant for some months before Mohammad Osimi was offered the position. Sultan Umarov was also a Leninobodi, born in 1908, and he was teaching in the mathematics and physics department at Samarkand State University between 1936 and 1941, when Mohammad Osimi was studying there. There seems to have been some resentment when Osimi was appointed President, as he did not yet have a doctorate (*doktorskaia*), and had only just been made an Academician,⁵⁸ but there is no doubt that over the next two decades he worked tirelessly to increase the profile of scholarship in and concerning Tajikistan and the broader region.

The Academy of Sciences was a popular roosting place for scions of *asilzodagon* families: Sadr-i Ziyo's son Muhammadjon Shakuri Bukhara'i was an academician, married to Jalol Ikromi's daughter Dilafruz. The son of Said Nosirov, the Khujandi tura and Minister of culture who was pugged in 1937, was Yusuf Saidovich, a biologist whose life-long association with the Academy began in 1960 at the age of 28. Yusuf Nosirov was seven years old when he lost his father, but became a brilliant student and the youngest PhD holder in Tajikistan, after completing a biochemistry dissertation on the photosynthesis of cotton in 1954.⁵⁹

Several of Mohammad Osimi's relatives also became eminent public figures during the postwar period. One of his brothers,⁶⁰ as we will see shortly, became the country's head urologist, while his sister Bashorat became a philologist, and professor of Russian as a foreign language at Leninobod state University. A cousin, Qosim Osimi (1921-) was a mathematician

⁵⁸ See for example E. Khasanov, *Istoriia tadzhikov i ee sovremennye fal'sifikatory*, in TsentAziia, 9 February 2010 (retrieved at <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1265669040>) for the suggestion that Osimi was appointed basically on account of his Leninobodi patronage network.

⁵⁹ Hafiz Mu'minjonov, *Tabiatro chu modar dust medosht* (He loved nature as a mother), in *Sadoi Mardum* №24 (3009) 28 February 2013. Available online at <http://sadoimardum.tj/maorif/tabiatro-chu-modar-d-st-medosht/>

⁶⁰ Mohammad's eldest brother was killed in combat outside Leningrad during the Second World war.

who became vice-rector of the Stalinobod Pedagogical Institute. Another member of the Osimi clan was the novelist Muhiddin Khojazod,⁶¹ son of the exiled mudarris, Olimkhon Makhdum-i Khujandi. Muhiddin was born in exile in Nikolo-Aleksandrovscoe, Stavropol krai, but nonetheless was educated in a Tajik-language school, alongside the other children of kulaks, by a Khujandi teacher by the name of Khojaev. When he finally arrived in Central Asia, Muhiddin settled in Dushanbe, with his parents, at the invitation of Sadriddin Aini, who had long been a friend of his father Olimkhon Makhdum.⁶² In 1956 Khojazod enrolled in the department of Russian philology at the Tajik State University, but after a year switched over to the Tajik philology department. Upon hearing the young student read aloud from his first story, “Beauty,” our Bukharan novelist from chapter four, Jalol Ikromi, and the poet Mirzo Tursunzade warmly welcomed him into their literary fold. Khojazod was invited by them to join the staff of the only literary journal in the country, *Sharq-i Surkh* (The Red East) – in the drama and art section. He continued his studies alongside his work for the journal, and wrote a thesis on Bedil. Thanks to the benevolent patronage of Jalol Ikromi and Mirzo Tursunzoda, Muhiddin Khojazod became a member of the Writers’ Union before his first book was even published. His first collection of stories, introduced by another son of the ulama, Jalol Ikromi, was published in 1961.

Again on Tursunzoda’s recommendation, Khojazod enrolled in a scriptwriting course at GosKino, thereafter splitting his working time between *Sado-i Sharq* (the Voice of the East, as the “Red East” had been renamed) and TajikFilm. Khojazod also secured Tursunzoda’s blessing

⁶¹ It was in conversation with the rais of Qozi Lucchakon mahalla, in July 2011, that I learned that Mohammad Osimi is related to Muhiddin Khojazod.

⁶² Inom Usmanov, “Istinno narodnyi pisatel’,” *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 14 November 2013. Accessed online at <http://www.sogd-pravda.tj>. Inom Sulton (Usmoni/Usmanov) is a scholar and author of a monograph on Khojazod entitled *Rohi ejodii Muhiddin Khojazod* (“The creative development of Muhiddin Khojazod”), Dushanbe, Noshir: 2014.

for his project to work on the grandiose Nurek dam project then underway, and for over a year worked as a labourer at the construction site, mixing concrete. This period of communion with the working class yielded his major success, the novel *Ob-rushnoi* (“Bright Water,” published in 1978), which was translated into Russian (*Voda k dobru snitsia*) and various other languages of the USSR. He also wrote the scripts for several films that earned Union-wide distribution.⁶³

After Ghafurov

When Ghafurov resigned as First Secretary in 1956 and left for Moscow in the wake of the XXth Party Congress, he does not seem to have left under the same kind of cloud that had followed the likes of Abdullo Rahimboev and Abdurahim Khojiboev on their similar journeys more than twenty years earlier. He was leaving – as the central committee representative sent to attend Ghafurov’s last plenum explained – simply because he was needed in Moscow. It is, in fact, quite likely that Khrushchev preferred to substitute the staunchly Stalinist Ghafurov with someone more amenable to the then current de-Stalinisation endeavors. Whatever the main motivations for Ghafurov’s transfer to Moscow, it is undeniable that he continued to exert a powerful influence in his home region, as well as taking charge of Soviet oriental studies and developing the academic expertise necessary for Soviet foreign policy in the Muslim world.⁶⁴

In terms of elite perpetuation and Leninobodi patronage networks, the course set by Bobojon Ghafurov was not perceptibly altered during the relatively brief interlude of Tursunboi Uljabaev’s (1916-1988) tenure as first secretary – a man ushered onto the national stage, and just

⁶³ Minel’ Iosifovich Levin, *Pisateli Tadzhikistana*, 408

⁶⁴ The important role Bobojon Ghafurov played in shaping Soviet cultural diplomacy with the Muslim world, working in close association with his long-term friend the poet Mirzo Tursunzoda, has been described by Masha Kirasirova in “‘Sons of Muslims’ in Moscow: Soviet Central Asian Mediators to the Foreign East, 1955–1962,” *Ab Imperio*, 4/2011, 106-132.

as suddenly swept off it, by Nikita Khrushchev. Like many others of his generation, Tursunboi Uljabaev rose up through the ranks of the Komsomol, culminating in his tenure as first secretary of the Tajik Komsomol between 1943 and 1947. He was “acting as Ghafurov’s main troubleshooter” by the time of Stalin’s death, having served as first secretary of the Leninobod region since 1950.⁶⁵ In 1955, he was chairman of the Council of Ministers, and thus poised to take over from Ghafurov when he was called to Moscow in 1956. Artemy Kalinovsky has described how Khrushchev supported and gave new prominence to Central Asian leaders such as Mukhitdinov, Uljaboev and Razzakov.⁶⁶ Accelerating the pace of industrialization in Central Asia, Kalinovsky argues, was a way to prove to the world that to Moscow, the region was not a colonial backwater and that the Soviet economic model worked.⁶⁷

In return, Uljaboev – together with Ghafurov, Razzakov and the Uzbek Muhitdinov – stood up for Khrushchev in 1957, when Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich sought to oust him (the so called “anti-party group”). Khrushchev had visited Tajikistan several times, toured state and collective farms, and took innovations being developed there seriously. However, the intense pressure exerted by Khrushchev on the agricultural sector in his impatience to outpace the USA heightened the temptation to falsify the harvest reports. The practice of consistently over-reporting the harvest gathered in seems to have begun at the kolkhoz level, with the figures that kolkhoz chairmen submitted to district secretaries, who in turn might inflate the figures somewhat more before passing them up the chain. Kolkhozes received large cash bonuses for exceeding their targets, and for several years, there appeared to be no negative consequences for

⁶⁵ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, “Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955-1964,” *Ab Imperio* (2/2013), 191-222.

⁶⁶ Kalinovsky, “Not Some British Colony in Africa, 191-222.

⁶⁷ Artemy M. Kalinovsky, “Not Some British Colony in Africa: The Politics of Decolonization and Modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955-1964,” *Ab Imperio* (2/2013), 202.

doing so.⁶⁸ Then, suddenly, the Tajik Cotton Scandal erupted in April 1961, and Tursunboi Uljaboev was fired, as were over two hundred members of the Tajik Communist Party.⁶⁹

The Leninobodi elite, however, persisted in its dominant position even after the Cotton Scandal and subsequent shake up: Tursunboi Uljaboev of Khujand was replaced as First Secretary by Jabbor Rasulov, also of Khujand. Rasulov had been Chairman of SovNarKom, and concurrently Minister of Foreign Affairs, throughout most of Bobojon Ghafurov's tenure as First Secretary. Jabbor Rasulov had then been promoted by Khrushchev to an unusually elevated position – for a Tajik – becoming deputy minister of Agriculture for the USSR as a whole. Jabbor Rasulov, like Bobojon Ghafurov who was four years his senior, had been educated in the Behbudi internat. The two men worked very closely during Ghafurov's tenure as First Secretary, and some have suggested that credit for the creation of the Tajik State University and the Academy of Sciences should rightfully be shared with Rasulov.⁷⁰

Noble doctors of the Tajik SSR

The very first cohort of medical doctors to be trained in Tajikistan were able to graduate just in time to serve in the front lines of the Great Patriotic War; many other medical students interrupted their studies in order to sign up. Those that returned from the war, returned with vastly increased practical experience and a renewed sense of themselves as Soviet citizens. Their loyalty firmly established, they were able to join the party.

Medicine was thus a new field for Tajiks in the postwar period, and one to which *asilzodagon* flocked in significant numbers, much as they had to teaching during the first years

⁶⁸ Kalinovsky, 216.

⁶⁹ On the Cotton Scandal and its fallout, see also Salimi Aiubzod, *Tojikon dar qarni bistum* (Prague: Post Scriptum Imprimatur, 2002), 191-94.

⁷⁰ Salomiddin Mirzorahmatov, "Geroi-sozidatel'," *Aziia-Plus*, 6 June 2013.

of Soviet power. In embracing biomedicine, Tajik doctors defined themselves in part against the practices of local traditional healers, the tabibs, and the Sufi eshons (like Muhammadalikhon-tura) who provided treatments for mental health and fertility problems. As educated men of science, they laid claim instead to the heritage of the eleventh century polymath Abu Ali ibn Sino, born near Bukhara under Samanid rule, whose medical texts were used in medieval universities for several centuries.⁷¹ The attitude of elite Tajiks entering the field of medicine towards the figure of the tabib is reminiscent of that towards the domullo held by the *asilzodagon* who embraced who the cause of public education in the Soviet model in earlier decades. The attraction of medicine as a profession was surely similar for *asilzodagon* as for others, but as in other fields of human endeavor, their cultural capital and elite group-ness allowed them to succeed and climb to the highest ranks in their respective fields at a rather higher rate than that enjoyed by healthcare professionals from non-elite backgrounds.

Before 1950, the medical institute in Stalinabad was headed by Russians or Europeans, as the first Tajik doctors did not begin to gain doctorates and professorships before the 1950s. The first local rector of the Medical Institute, who served in that position between 1957 and 1965, was known to Russian-speakers as Zakir Pachaevich Khodzhaev (1916-1974). In his hometown of Khujand, however, he was also known as Eshoni Saiid Zikrullokhkhoa ibni Podshohkhoa, son of the last Mufti of Khujand – the very same who, under the protection of his Communist relative Mu'min Khojaev, had been allowed to serve for several years as judge in a Soviet court (although he later emigrated to Saudi Arabia). In 1975, Zikrullo-khoa's nephew Yusuf Ishoqi, son of Bashkirkhon Ishoqi and great-nephew of the Khan of Kokand, was appointed rector of the

⁷¹ The Tajik Medical University in Stalinobod/Dushanbe is named after Ibn Sino,

same institute, a position he held until his death by assassination in 1996.⁷² Zikrullo Khojaev helped to advance the career of his fellow *asilzodagon* of Khujand, the urologist Asliddin Osimi, younger brother of Mohammad Osimi, philosopher, academician and director of the Tajik Academy of Sciences. Asliddin Osimi, in turn, was the patron of another tura doctor, the urologist Akram-khon Akbarov.⁷³

The last Mufti of Khujand, referred to as Eshon Mufti Podshoh-khoja, from the lineage of Juibori khojas,⁷⁴ left his young children behind when he undertook the difficult journey to Afghanistan to escape persecution in the late 1920s.⁷⁵ He died in the holy city of Mecca in 1953, but not before being reunited with his son Zikrullo (1916-1973), who had by then become a doctor, and whom the former Mufti recognized only after protracted questioning regarding his *avlod* (lineage, kinship group, ancestors).⁷⁶ Eshoni Saiid Zikrullokhkhoja ibni Podshohkhkhoja (aka

⁷² In between the rectorships of the *asilzodagon* Khujandis Khojaev and Ishoqi, the rector of the Medical Institute in Dushanbe was one Komil Tojiev (1965-73), from Uzbekistan. A memoir by a Russian doctor, Shapiro, who studied at the Dushanbe Medical institute relates that Tojiev was a poor student and an incompetent surgeon who had been promoted far beyond his capacity due to cronyism. "Following the defense of his doctorate, Tadzhiev [Tojiev] became Rector of the institute, Academician, and was heaped with all possible honors, whilst not improving at all as a surgeon. It ended sadly, when he operated on the Tajik Minister of Trade for acute appendicitis. A few days after the operation, the patient died. This made things very difficult for Tojiev, as the deceased was a representative of the powerful Leninobod clan, which held all key positions in the republic. Kamil Tajievich, who did not belong to this clan, was dismissed from all his posts. He grieved his dismissal, fell ill and died" (Iurii Shapiro, "Tadzhikskii meditsinskii"). Tojiev's vacant chair, and the position of rector of the Institute, were then passed on to Yusufkhon Ishoqi who, in the relatively dispassionate, outsider opinion of Shapiro, was a far better surgeon and academic than Tojiev had been. Sources: Iurii Shapiro, "Tadzhikskii meditsinskii" in *Zdravyy smysl*, Spring 2005, N2 (35), accessed at <http://razumru.ru/humanism/journal/35/shapiro.htm> and *Chehrahoi notakror*, 20.

⁷³ Ahmadjoni Rahmatzod, Niyat Haiot and A'zamkhon Akbarov, *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* ("[Abu Ali ibn] Sino's scalpel in hand") Khujand, Khuroson:2006),

⁷⁴ The common ancestor claimed by the Juibori Khojas is Muhammad Hoja Islomi Juibori of Bukhara

⁷⁵ The Mufti's other two sons who survived to adulthood were Saiid Rahmatulloh-khoja and Qori Shukrulloh-khoja. The honorific Qori is not hereditary, like 'mir,' or conferred at birth, as 'Hoji' can be, and therefore suggests that the Mufti's son, and Soviet doctor's brother, did in fact memorize the Qur'an.

⁷⁶ Unfortunately I do not have the full details of the meeting between Zikrullo Khojaev and his father. Given that Podshoh-khoja died in Mecca in 1953 at the age of 93, and that he is unlikely to have travelled back to the Soviet Union in the last years of his life, the meeting is likely to have taken place in Saudi Arabia. My guess is that this means Zikrullo Khojaev too, like his relative Bashir-khon Ishoqi, must have received permission to perform the Hajj in the late Stalin period.

Zakir Pachaevich Khodzhaev),⁷⁷ whom I will refer to as Zikrullo Khojaev, belonged to the first generation of Soviet-trained doctors in Tajikistan.

To mark his 70th anniversary – posthumously – the Tajik Ministry of Health published a volume to celebrate the life and deeds of Zikrullo Khojaev. The events of his life are woven in with a rehearsal of the uplifting canonical story of the valiant, hard-working Tajik people rising up against the oppression of bois and mullahs with the help of their Russian brothers, to vanquish the basmachis waging “holy war” (in scare quotes in the original).⁷⁸

The first task was a program of cultural revolution, and specifically, the liquidation of illiteracy. But literate people able to teach were few, there were not enough textbooks,[..] nor even suitable locations for schools. The clergy was inimical to the new state, and cursed the new teachers, health institutions and doctors. It was necessary to wage a bitter struggle against the religious and cultural (*bytovymi*) prejudices accumulated over centuries.⁷⁹

This might seem an odd way to begin a biography of a neurosurgeon whose father had been a prominent a mudarris and Mufti, who had uncles and cousins who were both members of the ulama *and* progressive-minded supporters of Soviet education such as Bashirkhon Ishoqi and Hoji-khon Umarov. It seems likely, however, that contemporary readers would have become inured to such rhetorical framing, even while Dr Khojaev’s background was clearly no secret – even his Russian Jewish student Yurii Shapiro was aware of it. Zikrullo’s father is briefly quoted in a conversation with his son about when he would be allowed to start school (“not until you turn 7”), but no mention is made of his background, occupation, or subsequent emigration.

⁷⁷ This and other similar widely divergent forms and orthographies for personal names help to explain why membership of *asilzodagon* lineages is often so hard to ascertain conclusively by reference to official Soviet publications and archival documents.

⁷⁸ S.I.Iskhakov, I.I.Lipattsev, A.A. Tiuriaev, Z.P. Khodzhaev: *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost'* (Dushanbe, Irfon:1986), 4-5.

⁷⁹ S.I.Iskhakov, I.I.Lipattsev, A.A. Tiuriaev, Z.P. Khodzhaev: *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost'* (Dushanbe, Irfon:1986), 6.

The doctor's festschrift provides anecdotes to establish both the young Khojaev's revolutionary credentials, and the early onset of his medical vocation. The former anecdote is from his school days in a Soviet school, when his teacher announced – in a voice choked by emotion – that a dear friend and fellow teacher had been killed while teaching in a village in the mountains by “clergy” (“*delo ruk dukhovenstva*”) participating in the Basmachi insurgency. He and his classmates were urged never to forget the name of this martyr to education. Not long afterwards, Zikrullo was inspired to become a doctor when as a young teenager he witnessed a boy collapse in the street in great pain. The boy failed to recover when an elderly woman fumigated him with herbs, but made a swift recovery once he was taken to the hospital and treated for acute appendicitis. Thus, despite his unfavourable class origin tactfully papered over in the official biography, Zikrullo Khojaev's path as a pro-Soviet doctor was set from an early age.

In 1932, Zikrullo was among the first to enroll in the newly opened medical training school in Leninobod, where everyone who could read and write their native language, and knew basic arithmetic, was admitted. As one of the school's best students, he was sent the following year to the newly opened medical BUZ in Stalinabad. It had been decided to transfer the most promising of the Leninobodi students to Stalinobod without waiting for them to graduate in order to ensure the presence of at least some local students in the first cohort there. There were as yet no available secondary school graduates from among the local population, and indeed there were no secondary schools offering a general (non-specialised or technical) education in the country. For some years then, the Leninobodi medical training school was the principal feeder for what would eventually become the Stalinobod Medical institute, with predictable results for the preponderance of elite Leninobodis in the medical field.

Creating a Medical University from scratch, in a country with only a small number of western-trained doctors of its own proved rather an arduous undertaking. There was a false start: when the Tajik medical institute first opened its doors, following a resolution of the Tajik SovNarKom in 1933, it lasted only two years. The quality of instruction was severely hampered by a lack of qualified teaching staff and suitable teaching materials, despite the willingness of Zikrullo Khojaev to provide simultaneous translation into Tajik of the lectures delivered in Russian by the sole professor, Tikhonovich. Zikrullo also set up an evening *kruzhok* for Uzbek- and Tajik-speaking students to practice conversational Russian by debating medical topics. When the Stalinabad institute shuttered, these students were offered the opportunity to transfer to Tashkent in 1935, which was at least closer to home for this Khujandi cohort.⁸⁰

These early medical students in the 1930s were expected to work alongside their studies, playing their part in building up the country's epidemiological capability. Indeed, there were frequent outbreaks of water-borne disease, malaria and tuberculosis in the Tajik capital, which lacked a modern water supply system, but also the capillary system of carefully maintained water channels and reservoirs of more established urban centres like Khujand/Leninobod.⁸¹ Between lessons, study groups, work brigades and their dormitory accommodations, the students effectively spent all their time in each other's company, such that it is no wonder that close bonds developed between them. Given the relative rarity of even ambitious Khujandis making careers for themselves outside of their native city, bonds formed in early life endured.⁸²

⁸⁰ Source: <http://tajmedun.tj/index.php/universitet/istoriya>.

⁸¹ S.I.Iskhakov, I.I.Lipattsev, A.A. Tiuriaev, Z.P. Khodzhaev: *Zhizn' i deiatel'nost'* (Dushanbe, Irfon:1986), 8.

⁸² Given the warm climate in Dushanbe, I cannot but wonder how the bodies used for dissection were procured and stored, in the days before electricity-fueled refrigeration was possible.

After the Stalinabad medical training institute closed its doors in 1935, Zikrullo transferred to Tashkent, but “the city seemed alien to him, as he had no friends or relatives there.” Once again, language difficulties loomed large, and students from elsewhere in Central Asia were obliged to make heavy use of dictionaries, and fill exercise books with medical terminology in several languages (the medical students were also taught Latin). But Zikrullo apparently took these challenges in his stride and continued to look after his friends who had followed him from Dushanbe (*kurirovat’ svoikh rebiat iz Dushanbe*), leading them in study groups and review sessions. Zikrullo discovered a passion for anatomy, and in conversation with his students in the 1960s, credited his skill as a surgeon to the long hours spent in the dissecting room, practicing on cadavers.⁸³

Doctors like Zikrullo had good grounds for seeing themselves as pioneers in the struggle to better lives in their communities, which, as I argue, was becoming a crucial component of the *asilzodagon* self-image. After his third year, in the summer of 1937, Zikrullo went to the Ferghana Valley to tackle malaria. The mosquitoes that caused malaria were “more dangerous than the bands of Basmachis,” causing communities to succumb to panic, fearing a scourge from God. In many rural communities, especially in rice-growing areas, malaria and parasites (*rishta*) were endemic, and severely taxed villagers’ ability to carry out agricultural work. He returned to his studies in September of 1937 full of admiration for the feldshers and doctors from across the Soviet Union whom he met volunteering their time to fight malaria.

Zikrullo Khojaev returned to Stalinobod when he graduated in 1939, and began working as a house-surgeon [*ordinator*] in the Republican clinical hospital – for a while, he was the only

⁸³ Iskhakov, et al, *Z.P. Khodzhaev*, 10.

Tajik doctor on staff. This was the first and only site where modern surgeries were being carried out for well over a hundred miles in any direction, and along with the huge need, there was also considerable apprehension to be overcome among the local population, who had no experience or understanding of anesthetic. Demand for treatment soon outstripped the supply of beds however, and the types of surgeries to be performed were as diverse as one might expect: suppurating wounds, swollen tumours, hernias, obstetric fistulas, and goiters.⁸⁴ As well as working in the hospital, the Ministry of Health periodically organised expeditions to various remote districts in the country, on which Zikrullo as surgeon would join other specialists including gynecologists, ophthalmologists, and dentists in bringing healthcare to underserved rural population with no previous experience of biomedicine.

In 1939, the Medical Institute in Stalinobod reopened for the second time, with 20 Tajikistani students enrolled out of a total intake of 97. Of these, only four (A. Kalonov, KK Karimova, SM Hakimova and M.Ia Rasuli) were able to finish their course of studies at the VUZ before being drafted into the Red Army and sent to the front. Zikrullo Khojaev, who was then 25 years old, also applied to join the Red Army, and was enrolled at the end of July 1941.⁸⁵ By October 1942, he was in a field hospital at Stalingrad, struggling to save lives in almost unendurable conditions. He survived the war and returned to Tajikistan having considerably honed his skills as a surgeon, and with a new interest in cranial injuries and brain trauma, which eventually led him to pursue a specialisation in neurosurgery in Moscow⁸⁶ and lobby the Party for the resources to found a neurosurgery unit in Dushanbe. This was an ambitious path for the

⁸⁴ Iskhakov, et al, *Z.P. Khodzhaev*, 15.

⁸⁵ Other Tajikistani doctors who served during WW2 – some without having quite completed their course of studies – included Tajiev, Kh.I. Shapirov, K.Iu. Ahmedov, I. A. Bobokhojaev.

⁸⁶ He defended his *kandidatskaia* thesis in 1955, followed by his doctoral (*doktorskaia*) thesis in 1970. Iskhakov, et al, *Z.P. Khodzhaev*, 27, 32.

young doctor to tread: neurosurgery was a young, highly specialized field in the USSR, and Tajikistan was still in dire need of basic general healthcare.



Figure 33: The Tajik State Medical Institute, Spring of 1949

Inscriptions in Russian and Tajik are visible on the frieze and pediment respectively. SOURCE: Ghafur Shermatov, “Znakomstvo s drugim Dushanbe,” published in *Azia-Plus*, 12/11/2014. Stable URL: <http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/znakomstvo-s-drugim-dushanbe-0>

A 2005 Russian memoir offers an interesting perspective on the social dynamics at work in the Medical Institute during the last years of Stalin’s life. Iurii Shapiro enrolled in the Stalinabad institute in 1948 after failing to gain a place at a Moscow medical institute, where the competition was rather fiercer (17 applicants per spot). The director of the Stalinabad medical

institute, however, personally invited all those who had not secured a spot in Moscow to follow him to Tajikistan. As an outsider, Shapiro was able to make his own observations about interactions he observed between his Tajik peers and supervisors, unencumbered by much nuanced understanding of local codes of conduct or social norms. He was also able to write without fear of offending many people, given that his account appeared in print half a century after his graduation from the Tajik medical institute. Shapiro's account dwells on the travails of the life sciences under Stalin, the local repercussions of the doctors' plot, and a climate of antisemitism which other memoirs and biographies I have seen pass over in silence.⁸⁷

Almost a decade after the institute first opened, most of the teaching staff and well over half of the enrolled students came to Stalinabad from Russia or elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The Tajik students – who were almost all male – were distributed among the Russian language groups, so that the Russian speakers could help those whose Russian was not yet up to the standard required. Although generally unimpressed by the educational level of his Tajik classmates and teaching staff, Shapiro does single out a couple of Tajiks for particular praise: “among them were some very gifted students – Yusuf Ishoqi, who became an ear, nose and throat specialist, and Amanullo Aripov who inherited the chair of his former teacher Prof. I. B. Likhtsier.” Shapiro observes, however, that most Tajik students were enrolled without their middle school diploma in hand: in other words, their previous formal schooling had insufficiently prepared them for the more demanding curriculum at the Medical institute. This circumstance would have made successful completion of the Medical Institute far harder for

⁸⁷ Iurii Shapiro, “Tadzhikskii meditsinskii” in *Zdravyi smysl*, Spring 2005, N2 (35), accessed at <http://razumru.ru/humanism/journal/35/shapiro.htm>

those that did not already have excellent connections and solid cultural capital acquired beyond the classroom.

Shapiro was taught by Zikrullo Khojaev, and recalls him as follows:

He was one of my first surgery teachers. He spent the whole war at the front, and became a first class surgeon. He was the uncle of my friend Yusuf Ishoqi, and he came from a renowned religious family, his father fled to Afghanistan after the establishment of Soviet power in Tajikistan. But Zakir [Zikrullo] and Yusuf were forgiven – as representatives of the emerging Tajik intelligentsia, they were nurtured and promoted.

Zakir Pachaevich was learned, an intellectual. He knew Tajik poetry so well – the poems of Firdausi and Nizami sounded like music on his lips, he knew them by heart and recited them to me during our shifts. We were often on duty together, he behaved very kindly towards me, and my first experiences as an assistant in the clinic were when he was operating. He was a cheerful, benevolent man, who generously shared of his rich experience, and he was genuinely well liked.

Once, during our shift at the hospital, they brought in a patient from the Pamirs, with what looked like burns and sores all over his body. Seeing him, Zakir Pachaevich lit a cigarette and quietly touched the body of the patient with it. He did not move. Zakir Pachaevich immediately seized my hand and yanked me right out of the casualty ward. "Leprosy" he replied to my query, and we ran back to our office to shower and change our scrubs.⁸⁸

Shapiro was not alone in admiring Zikrullo Khojaev's learning and broad intellectual interests: although he loved to recite the Persian literary classics (Sa'adi, Omar Khayyam and Kamoli Khujandi were also among his favorites), he also followed developments in Soviet Tajik literature closely. He particularly loved contemporary fiction and love poetry, and formed a close friendship with the poet Mirzo Tursunzoda.⁸⁹ If his familiarity with Persian poetry impressed his Russian Jewish student Shapiro, it is not hard to imagine that he would also have earned the respect of other Tajiks who placed a premium on high culture – like Bobojon Ghafurov, for

⁸⁸ Iurii Shapiro, "Tadzhikskii meditsinskii" in *Zdravyi smysl*, Spring 2005, N2 (35), accessed at <http://razumru.ru/humanism/journal/35/shapiro.htm>

⁸⁹ 44.

instance, whose mother was a poet. Zikrullo's star continued to shine brightly in the years to come, and he was now in a position to promote others who struck him as meretorious.

Akram-khon, the young man whose mother was wont to admonish him that his ancestry forbad him from engaging in deceit or evil deeds, completed his seven-year school in 1950. He then enrolled in the medical secondary school (*omuzishgohi tibbi*) in Leninobod previously attended by Zikrullo Khojaev, and where Asliddin Osimi was also a student. Both Akram-khon and Asliddin Osimi then enrolled in the Abuali ibn Sino Medical Institute in Stalinobod in the mid 1950s. Akram-khon graduated in 1960, and on August 1 of that year began working in the urology department of the Leninobod (later, Sughd) regional hospital, where he would remain for over forty years. He soon became head of the urology department, and eventually encouraged his wife to pursue medical studies, so that she might join him in working at the hospital – for several decades she worked in a hospital lab, testing blood.⁹⁰ Akram-khon also persuaded his younger bother Safo-khon, who had previously intended to go to business school, to enroll in his own almat mater, the Medical Institute instead. In his submission to the celebratory edited volume in honour of Akram-khon, Safo-khon gratefully acknowledges the considerable help his brother gave him both in gaining admission to the Medical Institute, and in completing his studies there. such expressions of gratitude are surely canonical to the genre, but also allow one to imagine that the help given exceeded that normally extended to medical school applicants whose older brothers were not well-connected doctors themselves.

The younger brother Safo-khon, who became the head of the Leninobod region health department in the 1980s, shares an affecting anecdote illustrative of the benevolent patronage

⁹⁰ Niyat Hayot, "Mehri Dil" in *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (Khujand: Khuroson, 2006), 115-120.

extended by his brother to some beyond the immediate family circle. He was talking to Mansab-shoh, the former head of the Badakhshon health department, when the latter asked him, upon returning to Leninobod, to convey his greetings to his “sworn brother” (*barodarkhond*) Akram-khon, without realizing that he was addressing his brother. “Please do convey my gratitude” he said “I received a lot of help from him, he made me what I am (literally, “made me a ‘mullo’ – *moro* “mullo” *kardagi hamon odam*). When Mansab-shoh realizes he is talking to his benefactor’s younger brother, he hugs him and “cries tears of joy,” but we learn no further details of how Akbar-khon’s benevolence manifested itself.⁹¹

During his studies at the Medical Institute, Asliddin Osimi’s progress was solicitously monitored by his older brother Mohammad, who was then serving as the rector of the newly founded Polytechnic University in Stalinabad (1956-62).⁹² In Asliddin Osimi’s third year as a medical student, he began to specialize in urology. In 1959 he graduated and returned to his native Leninobod, where he began work in the surgery department of the first city hospital. After three years working there, he received a visit from Zikrullo Khojaev, who by then was the rector of the Medical Institute and a fellow *asilzodagon* of Khujand, in town to “check up on the work of the urology department in the city hospital.”⁹³ Although some twenty years’ Asliddin’s senior, Zikrullo Khojaev must have known the Osimi family quite well – by that time, Mohammad Osimi had become the country’s Minister for Education and was living in Dushanbe. The upshot of Zikrullo’s visit was that Asliddin was invited to return to Dushanbe, where his career as urologist, researcher and professor went from strength to strength.

⁹¹ Safo-khon Abdulloev, “Orzui dili padar” in *Teghi Sinoi ba dast* (Khujand: Khuroson, 2006), 122.

⁹² Habib Borjian, “Mohammad Asemi,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, accessed online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/asemi-mohammad-tajik-educator>.

⁹³ B.Asimova, “Sviashchennyi dolg chelovecheskoi dushi” (“The sacred duty of a humane soul”), *Sogdiiskaia Pravda*, 23 January 2013, 4-6.

On the occasion of his 50th birthday in 1983, Asliddin Osimi received the “Honorable Doctor of the Tajik SSR” award – and he was one of at least fifty-six doctors from Khujand to receive this award between 1942 and 1988.⁹⁴ His only son, Jamshed, also became a urologist, and the father and son team often performed operations together. Just as his own brother had guided his education and early career, Dr Asliddin made sure to launch the careers not only of his own children, all of whom pursued higher education, but of his wife’s younger siblings: two of them became doctors, one an economist, and one an ecologist. In recent, and generally post-Soviet, publications such exertions on behalf of one’s relatives and broader solidarity network are celebrated with great pride, and testaments to the benevolence and concern of the patron. The shadow of nepotism is nowhere to be seen.

In less than 20 years between Khojaev’s specialisation as a neurosurgeon in 1955 and his death in 1973, more than 1500 brain surgeries were undertaken by his unit,⁹⁵ and a second neurosurgical unit was opened in his native town Leninobod in the year of his death. During his tenure as rector of the Medical Institute, the number of students enrolled almost doubled. Khojaev supervised nine candidate and doctoral theses during his tenure at the Medical Institute, and several of his former students secured academic chairs themselves, including fellow Khujandis Asliddin Saifiddinovich Asimov (Osimi, brother of Mohammad) and Askar Turaev, author of the book written in Khojaev’s honour (he was probably, but not certainly, a tura). His student G.K.Pulatov became the health minister of Tajik SSR.⁹⁶ His students praised his skills as

⁹⁴ There is a list of the awardees of the “Zasluzhennyi vrach Tadzh. SSR” award in *Khudzhand: Entsiklopediia*, 312-313.

⁹⁵ Iskhakov, et al, *Z.P. Khodzhaev*, 29.

⁹⁶ Iskhakov, et al, *Z.P. Khodzhaev*, 44.

a story-teller and orator, and his lively and vivid lecturing style, which meant that his lectures were always packed.

As the years went by, Zikrullo Khojaev seems to have assumed statesman-like qualities. As a deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Tajik SSR (elected to the 5th and 6th convocations), like many public figures across the Soviet Union, over the years he was approached by hundreds of people who felt themselves to be his constituents on a variety of issues, both personal and public. Workers, farmers, professors, researchers, students and pioneers all wrote to inform him of their needs, to complain about the shortcomings of this or that state institution or public organization, and to ask his advice. During his final illness in 1973, Zikrullo Khojaev wrote a letter to his colleagues in which he reflected on the legacy he would be leaving behind after “a difficult, but very interesting life.”

Born at the dawn of the Great October, I grew up along with the new system, as did my peers. And it is only thanks to that new system that I, son of a simple employee (*syn prostogo sluzhashchego*), was able to reach the high rank of a professor of neurosurgery. As a loyal son of our great Communist Party, I worked honestly and in good faith, but no matter where the Party placed me, I remained a stranger to any concerns of personal interest before the public interest, to national narrow-mindedness and even elements of nationalism. Such people I consider unworthy of our era, miserable and wretched creatures, mere weeds in our flourishing field.

I am happy to have played my part in furthering our victories against the Nazi invasion. Happy too, that I could be helpful to young doctors, that I helped them to love surgery and neurosurgery. Finally, I am happy that I have work daily to instill the best human qualities in my own children and in my close colleagues. If through these modest efforts I have sown the seeds of hard work, and of devotion to our country, let them thank our Communist Party, whose son I am.

The success of my modest work has not gone unnoticed. My Motherland awarded me the title of Honored Doctor, honored worker of science, and many orders and medals, including the Order of Lenin, the highest award of our homeland. For all of this, I am indebted to our people. I am mentioning all of this only for the sake of my children, my disciples, so that my memory might serve as a way for them, so that my honest work and

excellent behavior might serve as example to my brothers and sisters, no matter what career they might take. [...]"⁹⁷

Although the early 1970s context in which this letter was written differs significantly from the early 21st century context in which the *asilzodagon* doctor Akbarov's memoirs were compiled, there are striking parallels nonetheless. His hope that his "excellent behaviour" will serve as an example to the next generation echoes Akbarov's conviction that it was only his awareness of the greatness of his forebears that kept his own behaviour in check. In the early 1970s, Zikrullo Khojaev placed great emphasis on his credentials as a Communist and on his devotion to the Party: he credits the Party, and his own hard work, for his success. As we know, Zikrullo's father the Mufti left his family for a life of exile at some point during his son's adolescence, but it cannot therefore be said that Zikrullo was raised entirely by the state and Party. His excellence as a student, which was noted from his early days in the Leninobod health school, had surely been facilitated by early instruction at home, which also left a lifelong trace in his fondness for reciting poetry, which may be a harmless eccentricity in some cultures but is the very essence of *adab* among Tajiks. Zikrullo Khojaev had harsh words at the end of his life for anyone who placed personal interest above the public interest, and if he did tend to promote those of a similar background and values to his own, he surely felt he was acting in the public interest. When Zakir Pochaevich died in Dushanbe in 1973, thousands of people attended his funeral.⁹⁸

Conclusion

⁹⁷ Iskhakov, et al, *Z.P. Khodzhaev*, 37-38.

⁹⁸ Iurii Shapiro, "Tadzhikskii meditsinskii" in *Zdravyyi smysl*, Spring 2005, N2 (35), accessed at <http://razumru.ru/humanism/journal/35/shapiro.htm>

“The paradox is that the Leninobod (now Khujand) region preserved many traditional institutions and values, including religious networks, until the present, and at the same time it served as the industrial center of Soviet Tajikistan. This is doubtless due to the reality that Ferghana natives exercised far more political influence in Dushanbe than their counterparts from the other two sectors [namely, Osh in the Kyrgyz SSR, and Andijon in the Uzbek SSR] did in their respective capitals [Dushanbe, Bishkek, Tashkent].”⁹⁹

To explain the enduring “traditions” of relatively industrialised Leninobod by reference to the political influence of Leninobodis in the capital only begs the further question: what stake did the Leninobodi elite have in preserving “traditional institutions and values,” and why? In this chapter I have argued that the interest of the political elite of Leninobod in maintaining institutions and values perceived to be traditional, and presented as such, can be explained by their upbringing as dutiful children and heirs (whether genealogical or educational) of the previous generation of *asilzodagon*.

Elite Leninobodis of the postwar period had found ways to combine loyal Soviet citizenship while proudly upholding “traditions” and cultural values that had, in fact, evolved considerably over the previous few decades. Although understandings of their identity had been profoundly impacted by the decades of Stalinism, it is none the less significant that the *asilzodagon* continued to see themselves as proud bearers of a centuries old legacy.

The sovietised *asilzodagon* were no longer *ulama* – the material bases and institutions that had underpinned their status as stewards of Islamic knowledge and morals had been largely swept away – but they could still think of themselves as *ziyo* (learned). They were professors, doctors, writers, and teachers; and they often held the most influential positions in each of these fields. The Academy of Sciences, the Universities, the Medical Institutes were just as thoroughly

⁹⁹ Zuhra Madamidzhanova and Ildar Mukhtarov, “Cultural life in the Ferghana Valley under Khrushchev and Brezhnev,” chapter 7 in Frederick Starr (editor), *The Ferghana Valley: Heart of Central Asia*, 165.

“*zasorenniy*” (clogged) by tura, khoja and sayyid lineages as had been any Soviet or Party cell in the 1920s or 1930s, but there was no longer any need or call to unmask them. Indeed, no one could accuse them of being socially alien elements – by now, they were acculturated and loyal, no more likely to subvert the system than any notional proletarian.

Even once access to the body of knowledge on which the *asilzodagon*’s reputation for learning had rested had been severely curtailed, throughout the postwar period their behavior reveals that they could still rely on a fairly widespread acknowledgement of their claims to positions of authority and a particular respect on the part of the local population at large. In absence of such a culture of respect and deference, the imperious demeanour of the Sufi shaikh demanding access to the very pinnacle of the state hierarchy looks like plain lunacy. The appointment of Mohammad Osimi as President of the Academy of Sciences despite his not having reached the appropriate academic rank was noted, but not challenged as far as we know. For all that had been lost, the Soviet *asilzodagon* never stopped thinking of themselves as Muslims with a particular heritage to uphold (however hazy some of them may have been about the details).

A powerful conservative influence on the lives of the generations born in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s was exerted by the older generation, many of whom – once they outlived Stalin – were able to reach a grand old age. The habit of forming multi-generational households was never successfully disrupted in Leninobod, which retained much of the traditional, *havli*-style housing organized in mahallas, in addition to a scattering of new *microraiony* (districts) of apartment blocks on the northern shore of the river, perceived by many to be distinctly less desirable. In many families, three or four generations continued to live under one roof, or round a shared courtyard. There is little evidence of inter-generational conflict, but much of the older

generations continuing to make important life decisions for their children and grandchildren. In mahallas and courtyard houses, the values and outlook of the generations raised before Sovietisation had taken hold (and there were still more old-style maktab than Soviet schools in the late 1920s), continued to loom large throughout the adult lives of their children.

Even Bobojon Ghafurov, who appears to have been a staunch atheist, acknowledged in later life the “pull” of his mother’s worldview, and that of his native village of Ispisor: when, towards the end of his life, he performed the Hajj, he reflected that this would mean far more to the elders in his native village than his political career or scholarship ever had. When asked how their mother felt about Bobojon’s prestigious Soviet career, her younger son replied “Not much. I wanted to say, like Stalin’s mother. But Stalin’s mother was illiterate, whereas [our] mother always prided herself on her descent from the legendary Kamol, she was conscious of her high birth (*vysokorodnost’*), and to her the high rank in the Party achieved by her son was as nothing (*pustiak*).”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Response to a question posed by Sergei Kaledin attributed to Olim Ghafurov in Sergei Kaledin, “Tolmach,” in *Ogonek* N.25, 28 June 2010, 46.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have attempted to assess the impact of Sovietisation on a single, clearly defined social group in Central Asia over the whole arc of the Soviet period, something that as far as I know has not been attempted before. As I have shown, although the *asilzodagon* were a tightly-knit elite status group, tending by preference to cluster in more prestigious careers and professions, the paths taken were surprisingly varied, from farming to high-level Party work, religious leadership (both official and unofficial), medicine, literature, academia and the arts, with a little showing in industry for good measure. By focusing on a genealogically defined yet internally diverse group not only as beneficiaries or victims, but also as shapers and critics of the Soviet system, over several generations, a more nuanced picture can be reached of the failures and gains of the soviet experiment in the Tajik Ferghana Valley.

The Khujandi patricians' claims to nobility were varied – some claimed descent from the Prophet Mohammad (the sayyids), some belonged to prominent Sufi lineages (the khojas), some added descent from the Chingissid khans to the previously mentioned sources of prestige (the tura), but collectively, such families distinguished themselves from the commoners (or “black-boned ones”). The sources of prestige were likewise diverse and frequently overlapping: Muslims recognized that relatives of the Prophet (ahl al-bayt) were owed particular devotion and love, but there were also more tangible markers of status. Waqf endowments established over the centuries protected estates owned by the *asilzodagon*, and property such as mills and oil presses, from taxation and expropriation. The sacred geography of the city: the very skyline, dotted, as it was, with shrines, madrasas and mosques endowed and staffed by *asilzodagon* families, attested

to their prestige and status. The ranks of the ulama, although not restricted to the *asilzodagon*, were preponderantly made up of such notable families. In Khujand, *asilzodagon* families tended to be fluent in both Tajik and Uzbek, which would greatly improve their chances of pursuing a successful career in the Uzbek as well as the Tajik SSRs.

In the course of the half century of Russian rule that preceded the revolutions of 1917, the educational paths and life experiences of the previously homogenous and tightly-knit patricians of Khujand had already begun to diverge. The period of Tsarist rule had led to a cotton boom which had greatly increased the spending power of landowners, merchants and cotton-cleaning plant owners, whose endowments led to a great increase in madrasa construction in the final quarter of the 19th century. Some *asilzodagon*, however, perceiving the value of learning Russian, began to look elsewhere for the further education of their male children – not, however, before they had ensured the transmission of the fundamentals of a traditional education. In the years up until 1917, the Russian-native school funded by the Tsarist administration welcomed increasing numbers of *asilzodagon* pupils. The conversance with Russian culture thus acquired during their teen years paved the way for many Russian-native school graduates to join the Bolshevik Party, once the first cell was established in Khujand in 1917 – indeed, if any graduates of that school actively rejected Soviet power, their histories have been lost.

Not all early recruits to the Communist Party of Turkestan of *asilzodagon* background had attended the Russian-native school, however. There were also those who managed to prove their loyalty to the fledgling regime by volunteering to lead troops against the Basmachi uprising. Indeed, there seems to have been no love lost between the urban *asilzodagon* and the charismatic leaders of armed bands in the countryside, despite the notable status also claimed by some of the basmachi leaders (some of whom were Sufi *eshons*). The authority, respect and

charisma that the *asilzodagon* still generally commanded among the local population in the revolutionary years, together with their skills of horsemanship and marksmanship allowed several *asilzodagon* to achieve significant victories over Basmachi troops and thus gain promotion within the ranks of the Party.

Thus, many of the priorities set by the fledgling Soviet government in Turkestan appeared to have had a particular attraction for the reform-minded young patricians of Khujand: the progressive emphasis on education and eradicating illiteracy, the thrilling military training exercises and expeditions to fight bandits, the cultural circles and theatrical activities (suggestive of a strong continuity with the Jadid movement); all these were appealing. Once they had decided to join the Party or its youth organisations, even policies designed to discriminate actively on the basis of class background could not shake the competitive advantage enjoyed by the *asilzodagon*, who often, in fact, benefitted from the policies of *vydvizhenie* (promotion) and *korenizatsiia* (nativisation) designed to promote native cadres, implemented by European officials ill-equipped to read the class backgrounds of the local population or “unmask” class enemies.

The aligned *asilzodagon* were thus in a strong position to adapt, adjust and adopt the tools of class warfare for their own purposes. They learned, for example, to donate a portion of their real estate – thus often avoiding wholesale confiscation, and found ways of voluntarily surrendering their lands, which often allowed them to maintain closer connections to their former estates than they would otherwise have enjoyed. There were various ways to do this: some secured membership of a *kolkhoz*; many of which were found to have “shadow” members who enjoyed the benefits of association without the burden of work days. During the period of the *waqf* department’s existence, it is likely that beneficial associations with former estates were

maintained by those close to the department's staff, or employed by schools funded by the *waqf* department. The quotas for those to be disenfranchised (the *lishentsy*) could be filled with minimal discomfort to native Communists and those close to them by calculated misapplication of the "boi-mullo" catch-all, which could encompass petty traders and the peasant sons of village imams, without inconvenience to Mu'min Khojaev's merchant and Mufti friends and relatives.

Ultimately, the adoption of "boi-mullo" as a shorthand for class enemies in Turkestan served the interests of urban *asilzodagon* by minimizing the role played by lineage in determining elite group membership and focusing instead on more malleable categories like wealth and occupation. Further, by identifying the boi-mullo as the enemy against which the all-important battle for cotton was to be fought and won, the category of "boi-mullo" seems to have been hurried into premature retirement. Those who embraced cotton could not be enemies, and when cotton began to "win" in the Khujand district, with the establishment of the first millionaire kolkhozes, the boi mullo must therefore have lost; their continued presence on collective farms might henceforth be conveniently forgotten.

Many *asilzodagon*, of course, chose a life of exile in Arabia, Afghanistan or Eastern Turkestan rather than seeking to adapt to the new social order, but even they often left family members behind, to be drawn into the Soviet project. The most important compelling explanations for the enduring cohesion of the *asilzodagon* even during the violent upheavals of the 1920s are the thick web of mutual obligations binding them to one another: the product of generations of intermarriage, shared residence in the same mahallas, education at the same institutions of learning (both madrasas and early Soviet schools), recognition of common ancestors and so on. At the same time, the mahalla and, to a lesser extent, state institutions like schools also promoted ties of solidarity, and patronage networks that extended vertically, linking

those with widely varying social capital, as well as horizontally. As Roy and others have shown, the kolkhoz also, to a significant extent, reproduced pre-existing patterns of patronage and solidarity within a wholly soviet institution.

Given that functional literacy was largely confined to the social elite in pre-revolutionary Khujand, it is not remarkable that early teachers for Soviet schools were, of necessity, often drawn from the ranks of the *asilzodagon*, although the fervor with which some of these noble teachers embraced the emancipatory promise of Soviet education, and exerted themselves to spread literacy far beyond their own social class, is nonetheless impressive. However, just as Bourdieu might have predicted, whether consciously or otherwise, these *asilzodagon* teachers tended to perceive most promise in those of their pupils whose social backgrounds most closely matched their own, and consequently tended to promote and assist the next generation of *asilzodagon* in rising to the top. The cultural capital of the *asilzodagon* found particular expression in mastery of the classics of Turko-Persian poetry, and there is no more stable marker of eligibility to belong to the cultural elite of the Tajik SSR than mastery of poetry: the long twentieth century did nothing to dislodge poetry from this position of honour.

Ultimately, I argue, it was this early embrace of modern, secular education and scientific inquiry that explains the *asilzodagon*'s flexibility and adaptability to the slings and arrows of life under Soviet rule. As the vicissitudes of life under Soviet rule gradually stripped away the *asilzodagon*'s wealth, rid the city skyline of many physical markers of their prestige, severely curtailed the transmission of Islamic sciences and scholarship, legislated against outward expressions of Islamic piety and all manifestations of "class enemy behavior," one part of their legacy (or, perhaps, of an invented tradition) became increasingly valued and reified as a central component of *asilzodagon* identity: the commitment to learning and the transmission of (secular)

knowledge. Not only did the great emphasis placed on success in Soviet educational institutions prepare them and their children for success in the Soviet workplace, but the ability to reach the top positions in Soviet academia and science allowed the *asilzodagon* to have a disproportionate impact, well beyond their numbers, on training new generations, in shaping Tajik culture, and thus the life of the republic as a whole. The conviction that the pursuit of knowledge was not only an imperative dictated by their august lineages but the most appropriate and honorable way for the *asilzodagon* to serve their communities would have a profound effect on the way that the group as a whole to adapt to, but also leave their own mark on the new landscape of Soviet society.

This in spite of the fact that, following the deadly purges of 1936-38, the *asilzodagon* were much less likely than before to seek high office in the Party and State – the top positions in the republican level nomenklatura were earmarked rather, in the postwar period, to those of less exalted backgrounds, whom the *asilzodagon* had educated, and formed in their own image, through the institutional channels of early Soviet schools. Thus, the Behbudi internat, a boarding school of adobe brick built in the shape of an airplane, named for a khoja *qozi* (Islamic judge) and Jadid scholar, and staffed for many years by a preponderantly *asilzodagon* faculty, graduated the two future First Secretaries of the Tajik Communist Parties who would rule for 30 years between 1946 and 1982.

As a group, the *asilzodagon* of Khujand displayed a series of adaptive behaviours that allowed them on the whole to navigate the conditions of Soviet rule with striking success. No conceivable adaptation could deflect the violence unleashed by the Stalinist purges of the 1936-38, and the loss of knowledge, of Islamic learning accumulated over centuries in the region struck a near-fatal blow to a group whose prestige had for centuries been predicated in part on

their status as scholars. The generation of *asilzodagon* who came of age in the postwar period, and whose careers developed after Stalin's death were perhaps more thoroughly Sovietised than even they thought themselves to be – and surely more so than the central Party leadership tended to suspect.

The children of some of the most eminent Khujandi purge victims of the 1930s became academics: the daughters of Abdurahim Hojiboev and Mu'min Khojaev became professors, life-long friends, and frequent scholarly collaborators; the son of Said Nosirov, Minister of Culture in the 1930s, became a biologist and Academician, his grandchildren, too, are all either doctors or professors (geneticist, biologist, oncologist, engineer). The roll call of Khujandis who defined the postwar cultural landscape includes several *asilzodagon* lineages who appear not to have been purged (or had been exiled earlier): the Osimi family, the Ishoqi family, Muhiddin Khojazod, born in exile in the North Caucasus and Zikrullo Khojaev, pioneering brain surgeon and son of Khujand's final Mufti.



471

Bibliography

Primary Sources

1. Archival sources:

Russian Federation:

Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GA RF) [State Archive of the Russian Federation]

Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI) [Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History]

RGANI,

Tajikistan:

Tsentrāl'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Respubliki Tadjikistana (TsGA RT) [Central State Archive of the Republic of Tajikistan]

Leninabadskii Filial Tsentralnogo Gosudarstvennogo Arkhiva Respubliki Tadjikistana (LF TsGA Tadjh.SSR/ RT) [Khujand/Leninabad branch of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Tajikistan]

2. Periodicals and news sources

Charkhi gardun

Haqiqati Leninobod

Izvestiia

Ogonek

Ozodi

Pravda

Pravda Vostoka

Radio Free Europe & Radio Liberty, accessed online at www.rferl.org

Sadoi Tojikon

Sogdiiaskaia Pravda

TsentrAziia

3. Memoirs, literature and belles lettres

- Aini, Saddriddin. *Ta'rikhi inqilobi Bukhoro* (History of the Revolution in Bukhara). Dushanbe: Nashriëti "Adib", c1987
- , *The sands of Oxus: boyhood reminiscences of Sadriddin Aini*; translated from the Tajik Persian with an introduction and notes by John R. Perry and Rachel Lehr. Costa Mesa, CA : Mazda Publishers, 1998.
- , *Yoddoshtho* (Rememnerences). Dushanbe: "Adib", 1990.
- Alimuhammad, Noriniso; Homid, Hotami. *Mardi neksirisht*. Ejod, Dushanbe: 2006.
- Asiri Khujandi, Toshkhoja. *Izbrannye proizvedeniia Toshkhodzha Asiri Khudzhandi; sostavlenie teksta, vstupil'naia stat'ia i primechaniia Saadullo Asadullaeva*. Moscow: Glavnaia red. Vostochnoi lit-ry, Izd-vo "Nauka," 1982.
- Homidkhonzoda, Muhammadalikhon. *Piri Tariqat*. Khujand, 2010.
- Ikramov, K.A. *Delo moego ottsa*. Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991.
- Ikromi, Jalol. *On chi az sar guzasht*. Dushanbe, 2009.
- Ikromi, Jalol. *Dukhtari otash: roman*. Dushanbe: Irfon, 1968.
- Khojaev, Faizullo, et al. *Ocherki revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v Srednei Azii. Sbornik statei*. Moscow: 1926.
- Khodzhibaeva, Baroat. *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev. Stranitsy korotkoi zhizni: kniga ob ottse*. Khujand, 2000.
- Krist, Gustav. *Alone through the Forbidden Land: Journeys in disguise through Soviet Central Asia*. London: Faber and Faber, 1938.
- Lykoshin, N.S. *Pol zhizni v Turkestane: ocherki byta tuzemnago naseleniia*. Petrograd, Sklad T-va Berezovskii, 1916
- Nazároff, Paul. *Hunted through Central Asia*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Ostroumov, Nikolai Petrovich. *Sarty: etnograficheskie materialy*. Vol.1. Tashkent, 1890.
- Rahmatzod, Ahmadjoni; Haet, Niyat; Akbarov, A'zamkhon. *Teghi Sinoi ba dast*. Khuroson, Khujand: 2006.
- Rajabi, Dodojoni. *Osmoni hamida*. Nashrieti davlatii ba nomi Rahim Jalil, Khujand: 1998.
- Radzhabov, Zarif Sh. *Dorogoi zananii (Iz vospominanii)*. Dushanbe, Irfon: 1975.
- Sadyk, Hadzhi [Sodiq, Hojji]. *Sut' dela*. Dushanbe, Irfon: 1970.
- Eugene Schuyler, *Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Khokand, Bukhara, and Kuldja*. New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Co. 1877.

Yahyozod Khujandi, Orifjon. *Khujandnoma yo qissaho az ta'rikhi Khujand va khujandiyon*. Khujand, 1994.

Ziya, Muhammad-Sharīf-i Ṣadr-i (Sharīf Jān Makhdūm). *The personal history of a Bukharan intellectual: the diary of Muḥammad-Sharīf-i Ṣadr-i Ziyā*. Translated by Rustam Shukurov; with an introductory study and commentaries by Muhammadjon Shakuri (Shukurov); project director Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh; editor, English language edition Edward A. Allworth. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004.

4. Document collections

Khaidarov, G. Kh and Khamidov R. Ia (eds.). *Bor'ba za ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovetskoi vlasti v Khodzentskom uezde, 1917-1920 gg.: sbornik dokumentov: k sorokaletiiu Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii*. Leninabad: [LGPI], 1957.

Kommunisticheskaiia Partiia Turkestana i Uzbekistana v tsifrakh, 1918-1967. Tashkent, 1968.

KPSS i sovetskoe pravitel'stvo ob Uzbekistane. Sbornik dokumentov, 1925-1970. Tashkent, 1972.

Secondary sources

Abashin, S. N. and Bobrovnikov, V.O. *Podvizhniki Islama: Kul't sviatykh i sufizm v Srednei Azii i na Kavkaze*. Moscow: Vostochnaia literatura RAN, 2003

Abashin, S.N., Arapov, D. Yu. and N.E. Bekmakhanova (eds). *Tsentral'naia Aziia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii*. Series: Historia Rossica: Okrainy Rossiiskoi imperii. Novoe literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2008.

Abashin, Sergei N. and Bushkov, V.I. (eds), *Ferghanskaya Dolina* (Moscow 2004)

Abashin, Sergei. "The Logic of Islamic Practice: A Religious Conflict in Central Asia," *Central Asian Survey*, 25, 2006, 3, 267-286.

Abashin, Sergei. "A prayer for rain: practicing being Soviet and Muslim" in *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 2014, vol.25, № 2, 178-200.

Abashin, Sergey. "Soviet Central Asia on the Periphery," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 16, Number 2, Spring 2015 (New Series), 359-374.

Abdualilkhoja, Hoji Saiid. *Az nasabnomai saidzodagoni Movarounnahr (Bahr-ul-ansob) qismi 4-5*. Dushanbe: 2009.

Abdullaev, Kamoludin and Akbarzadeh, Shahram. *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*. Series: [Historical Dictionaries of Asia, Oceania, and the Middle East](#) #38. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Abdullaev, S. A. (*glavnyi redaktor*, principal editor). *Khudzhand. Dushanbe: Khukumat Leninabadskoi oblasti, Glavnaia nauchnaia redaktsiia tadzhikskikh entsiklopedii*, 1999.

- Adhami, Siamak. *Towards a biography of Ahmad Danesh*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2006.
- Aitpaeva, G.A.; Egemberdieva, Aida; Toktogulova, Mukaram (eds). *Mazar worship in Kyrgyzstan: rituals and practitioners in Talas*. Bishkek: Aigine Cultural Research Center, 2007.
- Allworth, Edward (ed). *Central Asia, 130 years of Russian dominance: a historical overview*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Allworth, Edward. *Central Asian publishing and the rise of nationalism; an essay and a list of publications in the New York Public Library*. New York, New York Public Library, 1965.
- Allworth, Edward. *Evading reality: the devices of 'Abdalrauf Fitrat, modern Central Asian reformist; poetry and prose of 'Abdul Qadir Bedil translated from Persian by William L. Hanaway*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, c2002.
- Allworth, Edward. *The modern Uzbeks: from the fourteenth century to the present: a cultural history*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1990.
- Allworth, Edward. *The preoccupations of 'Abdalrauf Fitrat, Bukharan nonconformist: an analysis and list of his writings / Edward A. Allworth*. Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000.
- Arabov, Oumar. "A note on Sufism in Tajikistan: what does it look like?" *Central Asian Survey* December 2004, Vol. 23 Issue 3/4, 345-347.
- Atkins, Muriel. *The subtlest battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan*, 1989
- Babadzhanov, B.M., *Disputy musul'manskikh religioznykh avtoritetov v Tsentral'noi Azii v XX veke* (Disputes on Muslim authority in Central Asia in 20th century). Almaty: Daik-Press, 2007
- [rendered as Bobojonov, Bakhtyar] "Le Renouveau des communautés soufies dans l'Ouzbekistan," *Cahiers d'Asie Centrale*, no.5-6 (1998):285-311
- Bacon, Elizabeth E. *Central Asians under Russian rule: a study in culture change*. Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1966.
- Bartol'd, Vasilii Vladimirovich. *Istoriia kul'turnoi zhizni Turkestana*. Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSR, 1927.
- Basilov, V. N. "Honour Groups in Traditional Turkmenian Society," in *Islam in Tribal Societies: From the Atlas to the Indus*, ed. Akbar S. Ahmed and David M. Hart (London, 1984), pp. 220-243.
- Becker, Seymour. "National Consciousness and the Politics of the Bukhara People's Conciliar Republic." In *The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia*, edited by Edward A. Allworth, 159-67. New York: Praeger, 1973.
- Becker, Seymour. *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*. London; New York : RoutledgeCurzon, 2004 (originally published in 1968).
- Bendrikov, K.E. *Ocherki po istorii nardnogo obrazovaniia v Turkestane (1865-1924 gody)*. Moscow, 1960.

- Bennigsen, Alexandre A., and S. Enders Winbush. *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Berkes, Niyazi. *Development of secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964.
- Braginskii, Iosif Samuilovich (editor and translator). *Gurugli: tadzhikskii narodnyi epos* [otbor dastanov, issledovanie i perevod I.S. Braginskogo ; kommentarii sostavleny Kh. Nazarovym; otvetstvennyi redaktor toma Kh.G. Korogly]. Moskva: Izd-vo "Nauka," 1987.
- Brooks, Jeffrey. *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985.
- Brower, Daniel. "Islam and Ethnicity: Russian Colonial Policy in Turkestan." In *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*, edited by Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, pp.115-35. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Brower, Daniel. *Turkestan and the fate of the Empire* (London, 2002)
- Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Burg, Steven. "Central Asian Elite Mobility and Political Change in the Soviet Union." *Central Asian Survey* 5, no. 3/4 (1986): 77-90.
- Bushkov, V. I. 1993. 'Population of Northern Tajikistan (1870-1990)', in *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: A Post Soviet Critique*, edited by Vitaly Naumkin. Reading: Ithaca Press.
- Buttino, Marco (editor). *In a collapsing empire: underdevelopment, ethnic conflicts and nationalisms in the Soviet Union*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1993.
- Buttino, Marco. *La rivoluzione capovolta: l'Asia centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS*. (Napoli: L'ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003).
- Cameron, Sarah. "The Hungry Steppe: Soviet Kazakhstan and the Kazakh Famine, 1921-1934," PhD diss., Yale University, 2010.
- Caroe, Olaf. *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism*. London, 1954.
- Castagné, J. "Le culte des lieux saints de l'Islam au Turkestan." *L'Ethnographie*, 46 (1951), pp. 46-124.
- Clancy-Smith, Julia A. *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994
- Collins, Kathleen. *Clan politics and regime transition in Central Asia*. New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2006
- Coslovi, Franco. "Il ruolo secolare della tariqa naqšbandī: note preliminari." *Annali della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere di Ca' Foscari* (Venezia), 14/3 (Serie Orientale, 6), 1975, 123-129.
- Crews, Robert. "Empire and the Confessional State: Islam and Religious Politics in Nineteenth-Century Russia." *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 1 (2003): 50-83.

- Crone, Patricia. *God's Rule: Government and Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Dagiev, Dagikhudo. *Regime transition in Central Asia: stateness, nationalism and political change in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*. London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013.
- Davies, Sarah. *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-41*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Dawut, Rahile and Jun, Sugawara (editors). *Mazar: Study of Islamic Sacred Sites in Central Eurasia*. Tokyo: Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Press, 2016.
- Dağyeli, Jeanine Elif. "By Grace of Descent: A Conflict between an Ishan and Craftsmen over Donations," *Der Islam* Bd. 88 (2012), 279–307.
- DeWeese, Devin. "The Eclipse of the Kubravīyah in Central Asia," in *Iranian Studies* Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Soviet and North American Studies on Central Asia (1988), 45-83.
- DeWeese, Devin. *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tukles and Conversion in Historical and Epic Tradition*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- DeWeese, Devin. "Sacred History for a Central Asian Town: Saints, Shrines, and Legends of Origin in Histories of Sayrām, 18th-19th Centuries." In *Figures mythiques des mondes musulmans (Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée, 89 90)*, ed. Denise Aigle (Paris, 2000), 245-295.
- DeWeese, Devin. "The Politics of Sacred Lineages in 19th-Century Central Asia: Descent Groups linked to Khwaja Ahmad Yasavi in Shrine Documents and Genealogical Charters." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 31/4 (1999), 507-530.
- DiMaggio, Paul. "Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students." *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (Apr., 1982), 189-201.
- Dudoignon, Stephane A. "Local Lore, the transmission of learning, and Communal Identity in Late 20th-century Tajikistan: The *Khujand-Nama* of 'Arifjan Yahyazad Khujandi," in Stephane Dudoignon, ed., *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century* (Berlin, 2004), 312-41.
- Dzhalilov, Sh. *Bor'ba s basmachestvom v Khodzhen'skom uezde: 1917-1923 gg. Tadzhikskii gosudarstvennyi universitet im. V.I. Lenina*. Dushanbe: Irfon, 1968.
- Edgar, Adrienne Lynn. *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Erkinov, Aftandil. *Praying for and against the Tsar: Prayers and Sermons in Russian-Dominated Khiva and Tsarist Turkestan*. ANOR, volume 16. Klaus Schwarz Verlag, Berlin, 2004.

- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Stalin and the making of a new elite, 1929-1939," *Slavic Review* Vol. 38, No. 3 (Sep., 1979), 377-402.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia." *Journal of Modern History* 65 (December 1993): 745-70.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Stalin's Peasants: Resistance and Survival in the Russian Village after Collectivization*. Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Everyday Stalinism: ordinary life in extraordinary times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. *Tear off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in twentieth-century Russia*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Fjeld, Heidi. *Commoners and nobles: hereditary divisions in Tibet*. Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, NIAS Press, 2005.
- Frank, Allen J. and Mamatov, J., eds, *Uzbek Islamic Debates: Texts, Translations, and Commentary* (Springfield, VA: Dunwoody Press, 2006).
- Frank, Allen J. and Mamatov, Jahangir. *Dictionary of Central Asian Islamic Terms*. Dunwoody Press, 2002.
- Gafurov, B.G. [Ghafurov, Bobojon], *Istoriia Tadjhikskogo naroda v kratkom izlozhenii. Tom pervyi. S drevneishikh vremen do velikoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii 1917 g.* Institut istorii, iazyka i literatury Tadjhikskogo filiali akademii nauk SSR. Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi literatury, 1949.
- Geraci, Robert. *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Guliamov, S. *Tadjhikskaja sovet'skaja intelligentsiia: istoriia formirovaniia i rosta za gody Sovetskoi vlasti*. Dushanbe: Irfon press, 1974.
- Harris, Collette. *Muslim Youth: Tensions and Transitions in Tajikistan*. Westview Case Studies in Anthropology, 2006.
- Haugen, Arne. *The establishment of national republics in Soviet Central Asia*. Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Heathershaw, John and Herzig, Edmund. *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood*. Routledge, 2013.
- Hellbeck, Jochen. *Revolution on my mind: writing a diary under Stalin*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of nations: ethnographic knowledge & the making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005.
- Hobsbawm, E and Ranger, T. (editors), *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press: 1983.
- Hopkirk, Peter. *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia*. New York: Kodansha Globe, 1997.

- Ilioliev, Abdulmamad. "Popular culture and religious metaphor: saints and shrines in Wakhan region of Tajikistan." *Central Asian Survey* Vol. 27, No. 1, March 2008, 59–73.
- Iskandarov, B.I. *Materialy po istorii gorodov Tadzhikistana*. Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Donish, 1975.
- Iskandarov, M. *Iz istorii sovetskogo stroitel'stva v Tadzhikistane 1924-29 gg.* Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Izd-vo "Donish", 1983. 1976
- Iskhaki, M. B and Iskhaki, K.M., *Istoriia zarozhdeniia i stanovleniia natsional'noi shkoly v Severnogo Tadzhikistane (1917-1929 gg.)*. Khujand, Tajikistan: Khuroson press, 2002.
- Jonson, Lena. *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam* (International Library of Central Asia Studies). I.B. Tauris, 2006.
- Kalinovsky, Artemy M. "Not Some British Colony in Africa: The politics of decolonization and modernization in Soviet Central Asia, 1955–1964," in *Ab Imperio* 2/2013, 191-222.
- Kamp, Marianne. "Three Lives of Saodat: Communist, Uzbek, Survivor." *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer - Autumn, 2001), pp. 21-58. Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the Oral History Association
- Kamp, Marianne. *The new woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, modernity, and unveiling under communism*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, c2006.
- Karimov, T. *Shurishi soli 1916 dar Tojikiston* (The 1916 uprising in Tajikistan). Dushanbe: Nashriëti "Irfon," 1966
- Karimov, Temur. *Pobeda velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii v severnom Tadzhikistane (1917-1923)*. Dushanbe: Irfon publishing house, 1975.
- Kassymbekova, Botakoz. "Humans as territory: forced resettlement and the making of Soviet Tajikistan, 1920–38," *Central Asian Survey*, 2011, Vol. 30(3-4).
- Kassymbekova, Botakoz and Teichmann, Christian. "The Red Man's Burden. Soviet European Officials in Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s," in M. Reinkowski, & G. Thum (editors), *Helpless Imperialists. Imperial Failure, Fear and Radicalization*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012.
- Kassymbekova, Botakoz. "Helpless Imperialists. European state workers in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s." *Central Asian Survey* 2011, 30(1).
- Keller, Shoshana. "The Struggle against Islam in Uzbekistan, 1921-1941: Policy, Bureaucracy, and Reality." Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1995.
- Keller, Shoshana. *To Moscow, Not Mecca: The Soviet Campaign Against Islam in Central Asia, 1917–1941* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001).
- Kemper, Michael, Anke von Kugeleren, and Dmitry Yermakov, eds. *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the early 20th Centuries*. Vol 1. Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1996.

- Kendirbaeva, Gulnar. "'We are children of Alash...' The Kazakh intelligentsia at the beginning of the 20th century in search of national identity and prospects of the cultural survival of the Kazakh people." *Central Asian Survey* 18, no. 1 (1999): 5-36.
- Khaïdarov G.Kh., and Khamidova, R.Ťa. *Bor'ba za ustanovlenie i uprochenie sovyetskoï vlasti v Khodzentskom uezde, 1917-1920 gg.: sbornik dokumentov: k sorokaletiiu Velikoï Oktiabr'skoï sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii*. Leninabad [now Khujand]: [LGPI], 1957.
- Khaïdarov, G. Kh. (editor). *Ocherki is istorii severnykh raionov Tadzhikistana (uchenyte zapiski, vypusk XXX)*. Leninabad, 1967.
- Khaïdarov, G. Kh. and Abdullaev, S. A., *Stranitsi istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia v Turkestanskoi ASSR (1918-1924 gg.)*. Ministerstvo obrazovaniia respubliki Tadzhikistan & Khudzhandskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni Akademika BV.F. Gafurova. Khudzhand, 1998.
- Khaïdarov, G.Kh. and Morozov, N.M. *Pervye shagi Khodzentskogo Soveta. Mart 1917 g. – fevral' 1919 g.* Dushanbe: irfon, 1968.
- Khalid, Adeeb. "Society and Politics in Bukhara, 1868-1920," *Central Asian Survey*, 19/3-4 (2000), 367-396.
- Khalid, Adeeb. "Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer, 2006), 231-251
- Khalid, Adeeb. "Tashkent 1917: Muslim Politics in Revolutionary Turkestan." *Slavic Review* 55, no.2 (Summer 1996):270-96.
- Khalid, Adeeb. *Islam after Communism: religion and politics in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Khalid, Adeeb. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: jadidism in Central Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Khalid, Adeeb. *Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR*. Cornell University Press, 2015.
- Khlevniuk, O.V. *Politbiuro: mekhanizmy politicheskoi vlasti v 1930-e gody*. Moscow: Rosspen, 1996.
- Kocaoglu, Timur. "The existence of a Bukharan Nationality in the Recent Past." In *The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia*, edited by Edward A. Allworth, 151-58. New York: Praeger: 1973.
- Komatsu, Hisao. "The Evolution of Group Identity among Bukharan Intellectuals in 1911-1928: An Overview." *Memoirs of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*, no. 47 (1989): 115-44.
- Kotkin, Stephen. *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995.
- Kurbanov, A.D., *Sotrudnichestvo Tadzhikistana i Uzbekistana v podgotovke kadrov v 20-30-e godov*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to Khujand State University (Khudzhandskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni akademika B.G. Gafurova), 1997.

- Lazzerini, Edward J. *Ismail Bey Gasprinsky and Muslim Modernism in Russia*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington, 1973.
- Lewin, Moshe. *The Making of the Soviet System*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Liber, George O. *Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR 1923–1934*. Cambridge Russian, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, Cambridge, UK, 2002.
- Lorenz, Richard. “Economic Bases of the Basmachi Movement in the Farghana Valley.” In *Muslim Communities Reemerge: Historical Perspectives on Nationality, Politics, and Opposition in the Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia*. Edited by Andreas Kappeler, Gerhard Simon, Georg Brunner and Edward Allworth, 277-303. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994.
- Louw, Maria, *Everyday Islam in Post-Soviet Central Asia*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Malikov, Azam Mannonovich. *Uzbeki gruppy kungrat doliny zerafshana v XIX – nachale XX v.* (“The Uzbeks of the Zeravshan Valley Kungrat group in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries”) Samarkand, Uzbekistan: Ministerstvo vyshego i srednego spetsial’nogo obrazovaniia respubliki Uzbekistan, Samarkandskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni Alishera Navoi, 2007.
- Mamadaliyev, Imam. *Iz istorii pomoshchi Turkestanskoi ASSR golodayushchemu naseleniyu povolzh’ia (1921-1923g.g.)*. Khujand, Tajikistan: Ministerstvo kul’tury respubliki Tadzhikistana, 2003.
- Mandel, William M. “Soviet Central Asia,” [*Pacific Affairs*](#), Vol. 15, No. 4 (Dec., 1942), 389-409.
- Manz, Beatrice (editor). *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994.
- Manz, Beatrice. “Central Asian Uprisings in the Nineteenth Century: Ferghana under the Russians.” *Russian Review* 46 (1987): 267-281.
- Martin, Terry. *The affirmative action empire: nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, c2001.
- Masov, Rahim M (editor). *Ocherki po istorii Istaravshana (Uratiube). XX vek*. Akademiia nauk respubliki Tadzhikistan: Institut istorii, arkheologii e etnografii im. A Donisha. Dushanbe, 2002
- Masov, Rahim. *Istoriia topornogo razdeleniia*. Dushanbe: Irfon press, 1991.
- Massell, Gregory J. *The surrogate proletariat: Moslem women and revolutionary strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- Mawdsley, Evan and White, Stephen. *The Soviet Elite from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Central Committee and its Members 1917-1991*

- McChesney, R. D. *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480-1889*. Princeton, 1991.
- McChesney, Robert D. *Central Asia: foundations of change*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1997.
- Michaels, Paula A. *Curative powers: medicine and empire in Stalin's Central Asia*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, c2003.
- Morimoto, Kazuo (editor). *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*. Routledge, 2012.
- Morrison, A.S. *Russian Rule in Samarkand 1868-1910: A Comparison with British India*. Oxford Historical Monographs, Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Nabiev, Mirzotohir Saifiddinovich. *Sotrudnichestvo i rol' obshchestvenno-politicheskikh deiatelei i intelligentstii Tadzhikistana v razvitie nauki i kultury Uzbekistana v predvoennye gody (1917-1941gg.)*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation submitted to Khujand State University (Khudzhandskii gosudarstvennyi universitet imeni akademika B.G. Gafurova) in 2004
- Negmatov, N. N., *Issledovaniia po istorii i kul'ture Leninabada*. Izdatel'stvo "Donish:" Dushanbe, 1986.
- Newth, J. A. 1963. 'The 'Establishment' in Tajikistan I', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 14, No.4.
- Northrop, Douglas. *Veiled Empire: Gender and power in Stalinist Central Asia*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Northrop, Douglas. "Languages of Loyalty: Gender, Politics, and Party Supervision in Uzbekistan, 1927-1941," *Russian Review* 59, no.2 (April 2000): 179-200.
- Nourzhanov, Kirill. 2008. "Reassessing the Basmachi: warlords without ideology?" *Journal of South Asia and Middle East Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3.
- Nourzhanov, Kirill and Bleuer, Christian. *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History*. Australian National University E Press, 2013.
- Obidov, I. *Ocherki mukhtasari ta'rikhi maorifi khalqi Tojikiston* (A short history of public education in Tajikistan). Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Nashriyoti Irfon, 1965.
- Ochilzoda, A. *Subhi Khujand* (Tajik: 'Khujand mornings'). Dushanbe: Irfon, 1987.
- Ohayon, Isabelle. *La Sédentarisation des Kazakhs dans l'URSS de Staline. Collectivisation et changement social (1928-1945)*, Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose-Institut Français d'Études sur l'Asie Centrale, 2006.
- Ohayon, Isabelle. "Réformes et société en Asie Centrale Tsariste et Soviétique," introduction to *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, Vol. 49, No.1 (Jan-Mar. 2008), 75-78.
- Isabelle Ohayon, "Lignages et pouvoirs locaux: L'indigénisation au Kirghizstan soviétique (années 1920-1930)," *Cahiers du Monde russe*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 2008), 145-182.
- Orifov, A., Rizoev B., Isomitdinov J., *Sarvar va siyosatmador (zindaginomai nakhustin raisi Hukumati Tojikistoni Shuravii Abdurahim Hojiboev)*. Khujand: Noshir, 2010.

- Özdalga, Elisabeth. *Naqshbandis in western and central Asia: change and continuity; papers read at a conference held at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, June 9-11, 1997*. [Istanbul]: Svenska forskningsinstitutet Istanbul; Richmond: Curzon Press (distributor,), 1999.
- Payne, Matthew J. *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001.
- Penati, Beatrice. "The reconquest of East Bukhara: the struggle against the Basmachi as a prelude to Sovietization," *Central Asian Survey* 2007, vol. 26:4, 521-538.
- Penati, Beatrice. "On the Local Origins of the Soviet Attack on "Religious" Waqf in the Uzbek SSR (1927), in *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, tomus 36, 39-72.
- Perry, John R. *A Tajik Persian reference grammar*. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Petrov N.V., Skorkin K.V., *Kto rukovodil NKVD 1934 – 1941* (Moscow, 1999).
- Pianciola, Niccolò and Sartori, Paolo. "Waqf in Turkestan: the colonial legacy and the fate of an Islamic institution in early Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1924." *Central Asian Survey*, Dec2007, Vol. 26 Issue 4, 475-498.
- Pianciola, Niccolò. "The Collectivization Famine in Kazakhstan, 1931-1933," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3/4 (Fall 2001)
- Pianciola, Niccolò. *Stalinismo di frontiera. Colonizzazione agricola, sterminio dei nomadi e costruzione statale in Asia Centrale (1905-1936)* [Frontier Stalinism. Agricultural Colonization, Extermination of the Nomads and State Building in Central Asia (1905-1936)]. Rome: Viella, 2009.
- Pierce, Richard. *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.
- Poliakov, Sergei P. *Everyday Islam: religion and tradition in rural Central Asia*. Edited with an introduction by Martha Brill Olcott; translated by Anthony Olcott. Armonk, N.Y. : M.E. Sharpe, c1992.
- Prozorov, S.M. (editor), *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii: entsiklopedicheskii slovar', tom 1*. Moscow, Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk: Sankt-Peterburgskii filial Instituta vostokovedeniia. Izdatel'skaia firma "Vostochnaia literature" RAN 2006
- Radzhabov, Zarif Sharipovich and Khaidarov G. Kh. (eds) *Istoriia Leninabada: nauchno-populiarnyi ocherk*. Dushanbe, Izdatel'stvo "Irfon", 1986.
- Radzhabov, Zarif Sharipovich. *Poet-prosvetitel' tadzhikskogo naroda Asiri (Kratkii ocherk); pod red. akad. B.G. Gafurova*. Dushanbe: Donish, 1974.
- Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan*. Published in cooperation with the Institute for Sino-Soviet Studies, the George Washington University (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press: 1970)
- Richardson, J. (editor). *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York, Greenwood: 1986.

- Riordan, John P. 2008. "Red DIME: Dissecting the Bolshevik Liquidation Campaign in the Ferghana Valley against the Basmachi Resistance," SAMS Monograph.
- Roche, Sophie. *Domesticating youth: youth bulges and their socio-political implications in Tajikistan* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).
- Rosliakov, A.A. "Politika Sredazbiuro TsK VKP v otnoshenii loyal'nykh elementov natsional'noi burzhuzii v 20-ykh godakh." *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk TSSR, seriia obshchestvennykh nauk*, no.4 (1967): 10-16.
- Roy, Olivier. *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2000.
- Rudenko, A. and Sorokin, A. *Tadzhikistan v ogne*. Dushanbe, Irfon: 1993.
- Rypka, Jan. *A History of Iranian Literature*. D. Reidel Publishing Company, Dordrecht, Holland: 1968.
- Sabol, Stephen. "The Creation of Soviet Central Asia: The 1924 National Delimitation." *Central Asian Survey* 14, no. 2 (1995): 225-41.
- Sahadeo, J.F., *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923* (Bloomington, 2007).
- Sahadeo, Jeff and Zanca, Russell. *Everyday Life in Central Asia: past and present*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.
- Sartori, Paolo. "Tashkent 1918: giurisperiti musulmani e autorità sovietiche contro i «predicatori del bazar»" *Annali di Ca' Foscari* 2006, vol. 45, no.3, 113-139.
- Sartori, Paolo. "L'Islam in Asia Centrale tra recupero della tradizione e movimenti radicali: il caso uzbeko," in *Sfide e opportunita' nel Caucaso e in Asia Centrale* (Istituto per gli studi di Politica Internazionale, 2007), 243-276.
- Sartori, Paolo. "Towards a History of the Muslims' Soviet Union: A View from Central Asia," *Die Welt des Islams* 50 (2010), 315-334.
- Sartori, Paolo. Editor. *Explorations in the Social History of Modern Central Asia (19th- Early 20th Century)*. Leiden: Brill, 2013
- Schoeberlein-Engel, John Samuel. "Identity in Central Asia: Construction and Contention in the Conceptions of 'Özbek,' 'Tajik,' 'Muslim,' 'Samarqandi,' and Other Groups." Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1994.
- Shukurov, Maksud Rakhmatullaevich. *Kul'turnaia zhizn' Tadzhikistana v period razvitogo sotsializma*. Dushanbe: Irfon press, 1980.
- Slezkine, Yuri. "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53 (Summer 1994) 414-52.
- Stefes, Christoph, *Understanding Post-Soviet Transitions: Corruption, Collusion and Clientilism*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Subtelny, Orest. *Ukraine: A History*. University of Toronto Press, 2000

- Sultonov, Sh. M., *Abdurahim Khodzhibaev i ego vremia (istoriko-politicheskii ocherk)*. Khujand, Nuri ma'rifat: 2010.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor. *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Suny, Ronald Grigor Suny and Martin, Terry (editors). *A state of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Starr, Frederick. *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*. M.E. Sharpe, 2011.
- Tadzhi, Usman. *Proklatyi narodom [predstaviteli burzhuaiznykh partii v Khodzhenie v pervye dni Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii]*. Dushanbe: Irfon, 1969.
- Teichmann, Christian. "Canals, cotton, and the limits of de-colonization in Soviet Uzbekistan, 1924–1941." *Central Asian Survey* (December 2007) Vol. 26(4), 499–519.
- Thibault, Hélène. "The Soviet Secularization Project in Central Asia: Accommodation and Institutional Legacies," *Eurostudia*, vol. 10, N.1 (2015), 11-31.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer. *The Sufi orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Troitskaia, A.L. "Iz proshlogo kalandarov i maddakhov v Uzbekistane," in G.P. Snegarev, V.N. Basilov (eds.), *Domusul'manskie verovaniia i obriady v Srednei Azii*, Nauka, Moskva 1975, 191-223.
- Tursunov, N.O. *Iz istorii gorodskogo remesla Severnogo Tadzhikistana (Tkatskie promysly Khodzhenia i ego prigorodov v kontse XIX – nachale XX vv.)*. Donish publishing house, Dushanbe, 1974.
- Uyama. Tomohiko (ed.). *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center Hokkaido University, 2007).
- Uyama Tomohiko, "The Contribution of Central Eurasian Studies to Russian and (Post-) Soviet Studies and Beyond" in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Volume 16, Number 2, Spring 2015 (New Series), 336.
- Von Kugelren, Anke Michael Kemper, and Allen J. Frank (eds). *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries*. Vol. 2. Berlin: Klaus Schwartz Verlag, 1998.
- Voronina, V.L. *Narodnaia arkhitektura severnogo Tadzhikistana*. Moscow: Gos. izd-vo lit-ry po stroitel'stvu, arkhitekture i stroit. materialam, 1959
- Werbner, Pnina; Basu, Helene. *Embodying charisma: modernity, locality, and performance of emotion in Sufi cults*. London; New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Young, Glennys. *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997
- Zarubin, I.I. *Naselenie Samarkandskoi oblasti, ego chislennost', etnograficheskii sostav i territorial'noe raspredelenie*. Leningrad, 1926.

Zenkovsky, Serge A. "Ideological Deviation in Soviet Central Asia," in [*The Slavonic and East European Review*](#), Vol. 32, No. 79 (Jun., 1954), 424-437.

Zenkovsky, Serge A. *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1967.

Zenkovsky, Serge. "Kulturkampf in Pre-Revolutionary Central Asia." [*American Slavic and East European Review*](#), Vol. 14, No. 1 (Feb., 1955), 15-41.