

THE UZBEKS

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Please note that this paper was originally written before the breakup of the USSR, so it reflects the pre-independence situation in Uzbekistan

INTRODUCTION

The West has become increasingly aware over the past several years of the multiethnic nature of the Soviet Union. Ethnic tensions that have surfaced recently have served to highlight the fact that the USSR is in fact a union of many different nationalities and that the Russians, although they are the most numerous group, are not the only inhabitants of this, the largest country in the world. One of the largest of these non-Russian nationalities is the Uzbek nation. In fact, the Uzbeks are the third most populous ethnic group in the USSR, their numbers surpassed only by the Russians and Ukrainians. As such, they are also the largest non-Slavic group in the country and the largest Turkic group in the world after the Anatolian Turks. Their numerical size, coupled with their strategic location, make them a very important, though relatively unknown component of the Soviet Union. This paper will outline some of the more important aspects of the culture of the Uzbeks, in order to understand more about this group which, in light of current trends in the USSR, could play a very significant role in the future of the Soviet state.

HISTORY¹

Due to the general absence of reliable historical documents, it is very difficult to trace the early history of the Turkic peoples accurately. As a result of centuries of migration and invasion, there has been much ethnic mixing over the last two millennia, both amongst the various Turkic tribes, as well as between the Turks and various Mongol tribal groups. Thus, it is often difficult to say with certainty where a given group originally came from or when it became distinct from the other groups surrounding it. We do know that the Turkic peoples, along with the Mongols, to whom they are related both racially and linguistically, originated in what is now southern Siberia and Mongolia. The area south of them, now known as Central Asia, was originally populated by predominantly Iranian-speaking peoples. As the Turks, who called themselves "Oghuz," began to move west and south from their ancestral homelands, an enormous Turkic Khaganate, known as the Gokturk

¹ For a more detailed description of Uzbek history, see Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (London: Kegan Paul, 1983), 266-274.

Empire, was established by the mid-sixth century AD. It stretched from the Ural Mountains to Mongolia and extended south into Central Asia, known then in the West as Transoxiana ("The Land Across the Oxus"). As a result of the Arab invasions in the late seventh century, much of the population of Transoxiana converted to Islam.

Later on, Turkic tribes comprised a large portion of the Asiatic hordes of Genghiz Khan (1167-1227) which swept across the Eurasian steppe into the Middle East and Europe. Many of these tribes continued to settle in Central Asia. As a result of these successive Turkic migrations into that area, the population had become a rich mixture of both Iranian and Turkic blood, with the latter element dominating. After the death of Genghiz Khan, his empire was divided up amongst his sons into various hordes. One of these, located on the Volga, came to be known as the Golden Horde. These Turks maintained a predominantly nomadic existence as their ancestors had done for centuries before. Under one of their rulers, Khan Uzbek (1282-1342), they converted to Islam. Further to the south, in Transoxiana, the great Central Asian Turkic conqueror Timur, known in the West as Tamerlane (1336-1405) gained control of the lands which had previously been under the domination of other Mongol hordes, including the White Horde, as the first step in his plan of world conquest.

In the middle of this somewhat confusing scenario, the Uzbeks emerged as a distinct ethnic group in the fifteenth century. Prior to this time, we know little about them, although it seems that they were some sort of tribal grouping within the Golden Horde and it is most likely that they had taken their name from Khan Uzbek himself (his name means "lord of oneself"). Under Abul Khayr (1413-1469), a descendent of Genghiz Khan through the khan's son Juchi, this grouping of tribes split away from the rest of the Golden Horde. Moving south from the region between the Aral Sea and the lower Volga, out of a desire to leave behind the nomadic life of raiding and warfare shared by the vast majority of their Turkic brethren and to adopt a more sedentary lifestyle along the prosperous trade routes that linked Europe to China, they soon subjugated the land of Transoxiana.

In 1500, Muhammad Shaibani Khan (1451-1510), Abul Khayr's son, captured Samarkand, the capital of the Timurid dynasty, which had been founded by Timur. Although there was a period of struggle between the Uzbeks and Babur (1483-1530), the Turkic prince who became the founder of the Moghul Empire in India, the Uzbeks eventually took over control of the area from the various Mongol-Turkic tribes who had themselves previously conquered the indigenous Iranian inhabitants of the area. The Uzbek Khanate that was established by the Shaibanids lasted until the end of the sixteenth century, reaching its height under Abdullah Khan, who

ruled until 1598. By this time, the Uzbeks had begun to mix with the previous inhabitants of the area, both Persian and Turkic, and many of these non-Uzbeks living in the area began to be called by the name "Uzbek" also. However, although they stayed in Transoxiana, the Shaibanids were not able to maintain their political dominance over the area. The Shaibanid dynasty died out with the death of its last ruler, Abd ul-Mu'min, in 1655 and the area was subsequently ruled either by the Persians or by various smaller Turkic khanates.

The Uzbeks continued to play a key role in the three most important khanates that arose, those centered in Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand. These khanates were established in the late eighteenth century and later came under Russian control in the wake of the Tsarist conquest of Central Asia in the nineteenth century. Bukhara (captured in 1868) and Khiva (1873) both became vassal states, while Kokand (1875), along with Tashkent (1865) and other important Uzbek cities were incorporated into the Governorate-General of Turkestan ("The Land of the Turks"), as the area was then known.

As a result of the Russian Revolution, Turkestan became an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1918 and Bukhara and Khiva both became People's Republics in 1920. In an effort to overcome the aspirations of both the Muslim Communists, intent on setting up an independent Turkic republic, and the pan-Islamic forces behind the so-called Basmachi revolts, Moscow subsequently divided up Central Asia into five Soviet Socialist Republics, one for each of the five dominant ethnic groups in the area. The Uzbek SSR was declared on October 27, 1924.

In the wake of both the Russian conquest of Central Asia and the subsequent advent of Soviet power in the area, especially the latter, more than half a million Uzbeks fled south to join their Turkic kinsmen in northern Afghanistan. Up until the Soviet invasion of that country in 1979, they and their descendents formed the bulk of the Uzbek population in Afghanistan.² During the Second World War, many Soviet Uzbeks, along with other Central Asians, deserted from the Red Army and joined the German war effort. Some of these were subsequently able to escape to the West after the war, later to be joined by Afghan Uzbeks fleeing as refugees from the Soviet invasion of their country. However, the vast majority of Uzbeks still reside in the USSR: these Uzbeks will form the primary focus of this paper.

² David C. Montgomery, "Uzbek," *Muslim Peoples: A World Ethnographic Survey*, ed. Richard Weekes (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1978), 461.

GEOGRAPHY

The majority of Soviet Uzbeks currently live in the Uzbek SSR, which is also known as Uzbekistan. Covering 172,740 square miles (447,400 km²), it is a land of great geographic variety, ranging from the snow-capped peaks of the Tien Shan mountains in the east to the low-lying Ust Urt Plateau and the Aral Sea in the west. In between, a large part of Uzbekistan is covered by the arid desert known as the Qizil Qum ("Red Sand"), thus necessitating massive irrigation projects in order to provide the much-needed water for the agricultural regions which make up half of the land in the republic and which are so vital to its economy. The most fertile of these regions are the Ferghana and Zarafshan valleys. The most important agricultural product is cotton,³ although other crops are grown and livestock also plays a key role in the economy. In addition, there are also large reserves of natural gas, petroleum, coal, and various rare metals and other minerals underground.

Uzbekistan is roughly bounded by the two major rivers which flow from the Tien Shan into the Aral Sea: the Syr Darya (formerly known as the Jaxartes), which flows just north of the republican border, and the Amu Darya in the south (formerly known as the Oxus). The republic borders on the Kazakh SSR to the north, the Kirghiz and Tajik SSRs to the east, Afghanistan to the south, and the Turkmen SSR to the west. Its continental location results in a climate which is majoritively dry, warm and sunny, with minimal rainfall. Long, hot summers, with temperatures up to 104° F⁴ alternate with short, cool summers (although temperatures have been recorded as low as -36° F in the mountains). The capital of Uzbekistan is Tashkent (estimated 1986 population - 2,073,000⁵), the fourth largest city in the USSR. Other major cities include (from east to west) Andijan, Ferghana, Kokand, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Urgench. The western third of the republic (165,600 km²), comprising the lowland area around the Aral Sea, contains the Karakalpak Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. However, the Karakalpaks, after whom the ASSR is named, only made up 1.9 percent of the population of Uzbekistan in 1979.⁶

DEMOGRAPHY

The Uzbek population in the USSR has risen dramatically since the beginning of this century, as is evidenced by the figures given in the six censuses which have

³ Uzbekistan is the third largest single producer of cotton in the world and supplies half the total cotton production of the USSR.

⁴ Termez, in southern Uzbekistan, is the hottest place in the USSR, having recorded summer temperatures of up to 122° F - Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia* (London: The Bodley Head, 1966), 11.

⁵ *Europa Year Book 1988: A World Survey*, Vol. II (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1988), 2689.

⁶ *Europa Year Book 1988*, 2757.

been conducted under the Soviet regime. In 1926 the figure was 3,904,622. In 1939, it was 4,844,000. By 1959 it had risen to 6,015,416. The figure climbed to 9,195,093 in 1970 and 12,455,978 in 1979. The 1989 census gives a figure of 16,686,240.⁷ Between 1959 and 1970, the Uzbek population increased by 53 percent, between 1970 and 1979 by 35.5 percent and between 1979 and 1989 by 34.0 percent.⁸ During the same time intervals, the Russians in the USSR only increased 13 percent, 6.5 percent and 5.6 percent respectively.⁹

The annual rate of growth for the Uzbeks in the period 1979-1989 was 2.97, a rate only matched by the Turkmen and only exceeded by the Tajiks, who had an annual growth rate of 3.82 during the same period.¹⁰ As a result of this high growth rate (nearly six times that of the Russians, whose rate was only 0.55 during this period), the Uzbeks have risen from comprising 3.80 percent of the Soviet population in 1970 to 4.75 in 1979 to 5.84 in 1989.¹¹ In 1979, Uzbeks comprised 28.5 percent of all Soviet Muslims.¹² In 1980, the crude birth rate in Uzbekistan was 35.6 per 1000 population, second only to Tajikistan (36.9) and well above the national average (19.2).¹³ The most recent republican figures (1987) show an increase to 36.9 per 1000.¹⁴ Between 1959 and 1969, the average crude birth rate for the Uzbeks was 45.2 per 1000. For the Russians during this time, it was 19.0.¹⁵ These statistics graphically illustrate the disproportionate population growth trends in the Soviet Union which are currently resulting in the Slavic nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians) slowly losing their majority in the Soviet population to Central Asian Muslims. Because of their position as the largest of these groups, the Uzbeks are undeniably the leaders in this trend, referred to by some Russians as "the yellowing of the population."

As noted above, the vast majority of Soviet Uzbeks currently live in the Uzbek SSR (84.8 % in 1979¹⁶). Most of the rest live in the Tajik SSR (7.0 % in 1979), the Kirghiz SSR (3.4 % in 1979), the Kazakh SSR (2.1 % in 1979), and the Turkmen

⁷ Figures for 1926, 1959, 1970 and 1979 from Akiner, *Islamic Peoples*, 275; for 1939, Michael Rywkin, *Moscow's Muslim Challenge: Soviet Central Asia* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 68; for 1989, Ann Sheehy, "Russian Share of Soviet Population Down to 50.8 Percent," *Radio Liberty Report on the USSR*, Vol. 1, No. 42, (1989), 2.

⁸ Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 48; Sheehy, "Russian Share," 2.

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Sheehy, "Russian Share," 2.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 3.

¹² Murray Feshbach, "Trends in the Soviet Muslim Population: Demographic Aspects," *The USSR and the Muslim World*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 76.

¹³ *ibid.*, 79.

¹⁴ *Europa Year Book*, 2757.

¹⁵ Feshbach, "Trends," 80.

¹⁶ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Soviet Empire*, 54.

SSR (1.9 % in 1979).¹⁷ Thus 99.3 percent of Soviet Uzbeks lived in Central Asia in 1979 (the remainder reside in other Soviet republics, chiefly the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR). In 1979, Uzbeks constituted 68.7 percent of the population of the Uzbek SSR (the estimated 1988 population of the republic was 19,600,000¹⁸). The next largest group was the Russians (10.8 %), followed by the Tatars (4.2 %), the Kazakhs (4.0%) and the Tajiks (3.9 %). Other groups represented in Uzbekistan include Karakalpaks, Koreans, Kirghiz, Ukrainians, and Jews.¹⁹ In 1970, 77 percent of Uzbeks living in the Uzbek SSR lived in rural areas, whereas 23 percent were urban.²⁰

In addition to the Soviet Uzbeks, there are also Uzbeks living outside of the USSR. The largest group of these, between 1,000,000 and 1,500,000, is found in northern Afghanistan (in the provinces of Maimanah, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Kataghan). As noted above, most of these Uzbeks fled there either after the Russian conquest of Turkestan or in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution.²¹ It is unknown how many of these have been killed or forced to flee into Pakistan as refugees since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The other significant group of non-Soviet Uzbeks can be found in Xinjiang province²² in the People's Republic of China: approximately 15,000 - 18,000 live in this region which is adjacent to Soviet Central Asia.²³ Another 2,000 Uzbeks live in Turkey. Finally, there are communities of Uzbeks living in various Western countries, including Germany, Britain, Canada, and the U.S. In total, then, there are probably over 18 million Uzbeks in the world.

ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnically, the present Uzbek population can be seen as a composite of the different peoples who have inhabited what is now Uzbekistan over the past two millennia. "The Uzbek nation has been formed of three ethnic layers: the urban population, the descendents of the pre-Shaibanid Turkic tribes, and the descendents of the Shaibanid Uzbek tribes."²⁴ The first layer is comprised of the indigenous Iranian population of the area who were subsequently turkified by the influx of Turkic tribes into the area in the first several centuries of our era. The presence of this element in the ethnic makeup of the Uzbeks has resulted in them actually being culturally closer to the Tajiks, who are of Persian stock, than to the other Turkic

¹⁷ *ibid*, 54.

¹⁸ *Europa Year Book*, 2757.

¹⁹ Akiner, *Islamic Peoples*, 276- 278.

²⁰ *ibid*, 277.

²¹ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Soviet Empire*, 51.

²² Formerly known as Sinkiang and pronounced "shin-jong".

²³ Akiner, *Islamic Peoples*, 286.

²⁴ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Soviet Empire*, 57.

peoples of Central Asia. Furthermore, physiologically, both the Tajiks and the Uzbeks are very similar in appearance.

The second layer of the Uzbek nation is comprised of those Mongol-Turkic peoples who lived in Transoxiana prior to the Shaibanid invasion in the fifteenth century. The final layer is, of course, that of the Shaibanid Uzbeks. The result of such an ethnic intermixture is that one can see a blending of both Persian (Caucasoid) and Asiatic (Mongoloid) features in most Uzbeks, although the tendency towards one or the other is more pronounced in certain areas.

However, this tendency towards mixing has not extended to non-Islamic peoples, specifically Russians. Few Russians settle in rural areas; often there are separate European and native sections in towns and cities; the two groups have little, if any, social contact outside of work; and the occurrence of mixed marriages between Uzbeks and Russians or other Europeans is very low, and then only in urban contexts, primarily amongst "Russified" Uzbeks. David Montgomery, an American who studied in Tashkent on three separate occasions, commented that even in that most cosmopolitan of Uzbek cities, although he was assured that intermarriage between Muslims and Europeans was "frequent," most of his contacts "were hard pressed to give a specific example.... Intermarriage appeared to be more an urban phenomenon among the more educated and upper classes.... Reportedly inter-ethnic marriages in rural areas are quite rare, and then usually between a Muslim man and a European woman. In such instances the woman is expected to adopt the Uzbek language, dress, customs and the Islamic religion."²⁵

The French scholars Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup have identified three levels of ethnic consciousness amongst Central Asians: "a subnational, clan or tribal consciousness; a supranational religious (Islamic) or ethnic (Turkic) consciousness, and a national consciousness. The subnational and the supranational are both deeply rooted in the culture of Central Asia and the Caucasus. The national, on the other hand, is a Soviet creation forced upon the population in 1924, with the aim of dividing the Muslim territories and thereby securing Russian control."²⁶ Thus, prior to 1917, identification at a subnational level, primarily as a member of a particular tribe or clan or possibly as a subject of one of the rival khanates, or at a supranational level, as a Turkestani or, more simply, a Muslim, was much more common than identification at the national level as an Uzbek or Kirghiz or Turkmen.

²⁵ David C. Montgomery, "Return to Tashkent," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 66. No. 3 (1979), 299 (this article appeared in two parts in *AA*: Vol. 66, No. 2 and No. 3).

²⁶ Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 135 - see 136-140 for further discussion of this issue.

A further distinction was made between the nomadic and sedentary population of what is now Uzbekistan. The latter were called 'Sarts' by the Russians, a group which represented a "cross between the aboriginal Tadjik (Iranian) inhabitants and their Uzbek (Turkic) conquerors,"²⁷ whereas the former were referred to as Taze (pure) Uzbeks. The subsequent grouping together of all these elements into an Uzbek nation is primarily a phenomenon of the Soviet period. In general, it has been a successful strategy, and most inhabitants of Uzbekistan today identify themselves as Uzbeks, although there are still some who maintain their tribal identity, referring to themselves by such names as Kypchaks, Mangyts, Karluks or Lokays.²⁸

A final note should be made about the policy of the Soviet government in regard to the ethnic identity of the Uzbeks. The Soviets have actively encouraged the appropriation by the Uzbeks of many aspects of Central Asian culture that technically do not belong to them, due to their rather late arrival on the scene. Thus, prominent Central Asian personalities who were either Arabs, Persians or members of other Turkic tribes, such as "the Father of Algebra" Al-Khwarizmi (780-847); "the Second Aristotle" Al-Farabi (c. 870-950); the great philosopher, geographer, and mathematician Al-Biruni (973-1048); "the Prince of Philosophers" Ibn Sina, or Avicenna (980-1037); Timur; his grandson Ulugh Beg (1394-1449); the great Central Asian poet Mir Ali Shir Nava'i (1441-1501); and Babur, are all considered to be Uzbeks simply because they lived in what is today Uzbekistan. Hence, their accomplishments are counted amongst the accomplishments of the Uzbek people. Although this is not strictly accurate from a historical point of view, there can be no doubt that contemporary Uzbek culture has been shaped by all of the various peoples who have either inhabited or invaded the area where they now live: the Persians, the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols and, of course, the Russians.

RELIGION²⁹

The Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi school of Islamic law.³⁰ Prior to the advent of Islam in Central Asia, many of the original inhabitants of Transoxiana were either Nestorian Christians or Zoroastrians (there were also some Buddhists, although this faith was more popular amongst the Uighurs and other peoples in Eastern Turkestan). Further north, amongst those Turkic tribes who still followed a

²⁷ Wheeler, *Peoples*, 13.

²⁸ For more information on these tribal groups, see Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Soviet Empire*, 57f.

²⁹ For more information on the general state of Islam in the USSR, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerancier-Quellejay, *Islam in the Soviet Union* (New York: Praeger, 1967), especially 138-152, 171-183.

³⁰ There are four schools of orthodox Islamic law: Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali, named after four early Islamic legal experts.

more nomadic way of life, shamanism and animism held sway until the coming of Islam.

Islam was first introduced to Central Asia by the armies of the expanding Arab Empire, who crossed the Oxus River (today known as the Amu Darya) in 673 AD and had conquered most of the territory by 715. Under both the Arab Caliphate and the Persian Samanid dynasty that took over control of the area from the Arabs, "Mawarannahr" ("The Land Beyond the River") soon became a major cultural centre of the Muslim world. Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand became the home of many distinguished scholars, scientists, and theologians. Al-Bukhari, who assembled one of the most important collections of the *Hadith* (the oral traditions of Muhammad, second only to the Qur'an in terms of scriptural authority in Islamic theology), came from Bukhara, as his name implies. However, much of the spread of Islam throughout Central Asia was due more to the activity of Arab traders and Muslim mystics, known as Sufis, than it was to the sword. In fact, two of the most significant Sufi brotherhoods (known as *tariqa*³¹) in the whole Islamic world were founded in what is now Uzbekistan: the Kubrawiya, founded by Najmuddin al-Kubra (1145-1221) in Khiva and the Naqshbandiya, founded by Bahauddin Naqshband (1318-1389) in Bukhara.

As noted above, the Mongol Horde, from which the Shaibanid Uzbeks emerged, had converted to Islam under Khan Uzbek. By the time that the tribe bearing his name conquered Transoxiana, the area was of course already solidly Muslim. Islam had grown from the religion of the Arab invaders to become the faith of virtually all Central Asians. Under the Mongols, who had a surprisingly tolerant attitude towards religion in general, a number of other faiths had continued to survive, albeit as minority enclaves. However, Timur, who had inherited their power base in Central Asia, had been a fanatical Muslim and, as such, had ruthlessly wiped out the vestiges of other religions, such as Nestorian Christianity, that remained in his domains. Islam has remained to this day as the primary cultural glue that holds the area together.

Islam, unlike most other faiths, is far more than a religion. It is a cultural system in itself which does not recognize such notions as separation of Church and State or the distinction between sacred and secular. All of life is intended to come under its influence. Thus, the ethnic identity of Central Asians, whether or not they consider themselves to be devout Muslims, is inextricably linked to Islam, resulting in "a national-religious symbiosis within the Muslim *umma* (community), a merging

³¹ The singular is *tariqat*.

or overlapping of ethnic and religious sentiments and loyalties that reappears in all aspects of Central Asian existence."³²

Naturally, prior to 1917, Uzbek society was more obviously Islamic than it is today. The five pillars of Islam (the *shahada* or confession of faith; the five daily prayers, known as *salat*; fasting during the month of Ramazan; *zakat*, the mandatory contribution to the poor; and the pilgrimage to Mecca, known as the *haj*) were all widely practiced. The justice system was based on the *shariat* (Islamic law) supplemented by *adat* (customary laws, such as the payment of the *kalym* or bride price, the practice of early marriage, and polygamy) and the courts were presided over by *qazis* (Muslim judges). Rich land owners often donated land to *waqfs* (endowments to be used for religious or charitable purposes). Religious authorities, including *muftis* (scribes), *ulemas* (scholars), *imams* (mosque prayerleaders), *sheikhs* (holy men) and *hajjis* (those that had made the pilgrimage to Mecca) abounded.

Religious festivals played a major role in pre-Soviet Central Asia. One of these was *Kichik Bayram* (called *Eid al-fitr* in Arabic), which celebrates the breaking of the Ramazan fast. Another even more important feast was *Qurban Bayram* (*Eid al-adhu*), the commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son. The birth of Muhammad was also often celebrated. Most of the significant rites of passage in Uzbek society were also inextricably linked with Islam, the chief of these being circumcision, the marriage ceremony and the traditional funeral.

Obviously, the mosque played a key role in pre-Soviet Uzbek society. Besides functioning as the meeting place for Friday worship and the daily prayers, it was often the location of the local religious school, known as a *mekteb*, or, if it was a larger mosque, possibly a *medressah* (a school of higher education for Muslim clerics and scholars). "In 1900, it was estimated that in Turkestan alone, without counting the khanates of Bukhara and Khiva, there were 1,503 congregational mosques and 11,230 parish mosques with a total of 12,499 *imams* to minister to 6,000,000 persons, that is, one mosque for every 471 believers."³³ The city of Bukhara, in 1914, had 364 mosques (only one of which remains open today³⁴) Samarkand had 23 *medressahs* and 62 mosques before 1917 (again, only one mosque remains open today³⁵). Thus, Uzbek society was well endowed with both religious leaders and buildings.

³² Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 84.

³³ Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964), 186.

³⁴ Violet Conolly, "'Jubilee Year' in Central Soviet Asia," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (1971), 167.

³⁵ Robin and Michelle Poulton, "A Recent Visit to Bukhara and Samarkand," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (1976), 302.

As in many other parts of the Muslim world, most Uzbeks have traditionally followed what is called folk Islam: Islam mixed with certain pre-Islamic, animistic practices. Thus, the use of divination and amulets was common in traditional Uzbek society. In an effort to obtain *barakat* (blessing) from God in matters such as healing, financial prosperity, and the retrieval of lost animals, Uzbeks would travel to *mazars* (shrines or holy places linked with past saints and holy men) in order to pray and conduct various religious rites. These shrines have traditionally been overseen by the Sufis.

Obviously, the advent of Russian rule in Central Asia brought some changes, but all in all, little was done to limit the cultural influence of Islam under the tsarist administration. The Russians were primarily concerned with economic and political control of the area, and hoped that, by adopting a policy of indifference to Islam, it would simply wither away. Thus little changed before the Bolshevik Revolution.

Although the new Bolshevik government inaugurated in 1917 was ideologically opposed to all religion, Islam was considered to be perhaps the greatest threat, "since it had its own distinctive social, educational and judicial systems, all of which were regarded as militating against material progress [and thus] it was regarded as infinitely more pernicious and objectionable than any branch of Christianity."³⁶ However, this opposition to Islam could not be openly stated until the Soviets had gained control of the area. Therefore, one of the first acts of the new Bolshevik government was to assure the Muslims of the now-defunct Russian Empire that "your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions, are declared free and inviolable!... Know that your rights, like those of all the peoples of Russia, will be protected by the might of the Revolution!"³⁷

Events were to prove otherwise. At first, during the time of the Civil War (1917-1920), the Soviets adopted a fairly liberal attitude towards religion. However the Bolsheviks realized that a compromise could never be reached with the Muslim clergy, who tended to be very conservative and opposed to any type of reform, whether instituted from within Islam or without. Thus, once power had been consolidated in Central Asia, the new regime began to erode the influence of the religion by attacking some of its less crucial elements first. A propaganda campaign was initiated to dissuade believers from practices such as the wearing of veils by women, pilgrimages to Sufi shrines, religious festivals and circumcision. Some of these campaigns were violent, but more often than not they were presented in a rational and "scientific" way. During the early 1920's, the approach often fluctuated between one of restriction and concession. Thus, religious schools were initially

³⁶ Wheeler, *Peoples*, 97.

³⁷ Cited in Wheeler, *Modern History*, 188.

abolished in 1918, but were then reinstated in 1922. However, by 1927, almost all of them had disappeared. In the same year, the Islamic courts were deprived of all power. By 1930, all *waqf* properties had been confiscated by the State.

Around 1927, a direct frontal attack against Islam was launched which was to continue until the time of the Great Purge of 1937. One of the vanguards of this attack was the *Khudasizlar Jamiyati* (*The Union of Godless Zealots*) which had 90,000 members in the Uzbek SSR in 1932.³⁸ Among other things, the government prohibited the *haj* and *zakat* and denounced Ramazan. The daily prayers were made almost impossible to perform, due to the government control of much of everyday life. Throughout the Soviet Union, antireligious propaganda was conducted with what can only be described as a religious passion. Muslim clergy were accused of being "parasites of society" and "counter-revolutionaries" and liquidated. Mosques were closed by the thousands, many of them being converted into museums of atheism or youth clubs. In 1905, there had been 25,000 mosques and over 50,000 clerics in the Russian Empire.³⁹ As a result of the anti-Islamic campaigns of the Soviets, the figures for the entire Soviet Union had been reduced to about 400 and between 2,000 and 3,000, respectively, by the time of Khrushchev.⁴⁰ Over thirty years later, despite the phenomenal growth in the number of Soviet Muslims, the number of official mosques and clergy has not increased at all.⁴¹

These measures certainly had a devastating effect on Soviet Islam, but the religion which had shaped the entire culture of the Central Asian peoples was not entirely wiped out. Recognizing that it could not exterminate the faith, yet desiring to control its practice, the Soviet government, in 1942, granted Islam official legal status in the USSR and established four Spiritual Directorates for Islam in the country, each under the chairmanship of a *mufti*. One of these is the Spiritual Directorate for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, which has its headquarters in Tashkent.⁴² Since that time, the government has attempted to follow a less aggressive, more subtle approach to Islam involving more scientific methods, such as higher education, in order to achieve its goal of diminishing the influence of the religion in the Soviet Union. At times, such as during the Second World War, when the State needed the support of Soviet Muslims, Islam has gained ground, but at

³⁸ Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quellejeay, *Soviet Union*, 150.

³⁹ Bennigsen and Broxup, *Islamic Threat*, 71.

⁴⁰ *ibid*, 48.

⁴¹ Marie Broxup, "Islam in Central Asia Since Gorbachev," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (1987), 286.

⁴² The other three Directorates are the Directorate for Sunni Muslims of European Russia and Siberia (Ufa, Bashkir ASSR), the Directorate for Sunni Muslims of the Northern Caucasus and Daghestan (Buynaksk, Daghestan ASSR), and the Directorate for Sunni and Shi'a Muslims of Transcaucasia (Baku, Azerbaijan. SSR).

other times, especially under Krushchev's anti-religious campaign, the Muslims have lost concessions given to them earlier.

In seeking to discern the current state of religious activity amongst the Uzbeks, we must look at both "official" Islam, represented by the Spiritual Directorate and "parallel" Islam, represented by the Sufi brotherhoods. Certainly, as has been noted by Western observers, "compared to other Central Asian republics, official Islam in Uzbekistan enjoys a privileged position."⁴³ Of the four Directorates, the one in Tashkent is undoubtedly the most important: it plays a key role in Moscow's efforts to convince the Muslim world that Communism and Islam are entirely compatible. Most delegations of foreign Muslims that visit the USSR start off in the Uzbek capital, frequent Islamic conferences are held in the city, and, since the establishment of the Directorates, the Tashkent *mufi* has been the major spokesperson for official Soviet Islam, frequently heading up Soviet Muslim delegations to Muslim countries.

Furthermore, the Central Asian Directorate oversees most of the few Islamic publications that are allowed in the USSR, including several editions of the Qur'an and Al-Bukhari's *Hadith*, as well as the journal *Muslims of the Soviet East*, which is published in Arabic, Persian, English, French and Uzbek (although the latter is in the now-obsolete Arabic script, not the Cyrillic script currently in use).⁴⁴ The Directorate is also in charge of a museum of rare Islamic manuscripts, including a copy of the Qur'an from the seventh century which reputedly belonged to Osman, the third Islamic *caliph* (the title given to the successors of Muhammad) and which was recently returned to the Directorate by the republican government: "Thousands cheered and wept as the invaluable holy book was moved from a museum to the new headquarters mosque."⁴⁵

In addition to the Directorate, Uzbekistan is also the location of the only two *medressahs* to reopen in the Soviet Union since all such seminaries were closed after the Revolution: the Mir-i-Arab *medressah* in Bukhara (founded in 1530) and the Imam Ismail al-Bukhari *medressah* in Tashkent (also founded in the mid-sixteenth century). These are currently the only places where Muslim clergy may be trained in the USSR and they are hence fairly strictly controlled by the State. In light of this, it is not surprising to learn that, out of 28 subjects studied, only six have anything to do with religion, the rest being concerned with "Soviet sciences."⁴⁶

⁴³ Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1985), 153.

⁴⁴ Akiner, *Islamic Peoples*, 285.

⁴⁵ Richard N. Ostling, "Islam Regains its Voice," *Time*, April 10, 1989, 65.

⁴⁶ Nancy Lubin, "Assimilation and Retention of Ethnic Identity in Uzbekistan," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (1981), 280.

Uzbekistan's prestigious position as far as "official" Islam is concerned may also be gauged by the number of official clergy and working mosques in the republic. The republic certainly has a higher proportion of State-sanctioned clergy than any other Muslim republic.⁴⁷ One Soviet source gives a 1982 estimate of 150 official mosques, compared with only twenty in Tajikistan and four in Turkmenistan.⁴⁸ However, although there are comparatively more mosques in the Uzbek SSR than in the other Central Asian republics, it must be kept in mind that this number is only a small fraction of the pre-Soviet situation and that most of those who attend the Friday prayers are older men, although young people and women may also be seen there. The instances of individuals fasting during the month of Ramazan or performing the five daily prayers are extremely rare. Only a token number of Soviet Muslims are currently permitted to go on the *haj*.

Despite the diminished level of religious activity, however, the three main religio-cultural rites of circumcision, the religious wedding, and the Muslim funeral ceremony are almost universally observed by Uzbeks. In addition, the major Muslim festivals are still celebrated by many. Although fasting is rare during Ramazan, *Eid al-Fitr* is commonly celebrated with an *iftarlik* (fast-breaking party), to which friends and neighbours send *iftar* (fast-breaking food), which is carefully prepared to ensure that it does not become *haram* (unclean). Many also attend the mosque for morning prayers during *Eid al-Fitr*.⁴⁹

In an attempt to offset the influence of Muslim rituals in Uzbek society, the Soviets have attempted to replace some of them with secular alternatives, such as civil weddings and funerals and agricultural festivals which fall at the same time as traditional Muslim festivals. In addition, according to locals, "the Soviet government always schedules the best TV programs during religious holidays."⁵⁰ However, these attempts have had limited success, and then only amongst more urbanized, Russianized Uzbeks. Perhaps more successful is the continuous atheistic propaganda which students receive at all levels of schooling. Courses on scientific atheism are mandatory and students are asked to write on subjects such as "My Relationship towards Religious holidays and towards Religion Itself." "Apparently, if an essay is anything but antireligious, the student is kept after school for consultation and asked to rewrite it. There may also be repercussions later when he or she is applying for a job."⁵¹

⁴⁷ Broxup, "Since Gorbachev," 288.

⁴⁸ Cited in Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 153 - for names and locations of major mosques, see Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Soviet Empire*, 60.

⁴⁹ Abdullah Watani, "Ramadan in Soviet Central Asia," *Islamic World Review*, Vol. 6, No. 70 (1987), 60f.

⁵⁰ Lubin, "Assimilation," 280.

⁵¹ *ibid*, 280.

What of "parallel" Islam, represented by the Sufi *tariqa*? These mystical brotherhoods, which run clandestine mosques, *medressahs*, and houses of prayer, perform traditional religious rites, oversee the shrines and conduct underground propaganda against the Soviet regime, are certainly present in Uzbekistan.⁵² Indeed, the Tashkent *mufti* has published several *fetwas* (legal pronouncements) against the practice of visiting Sufi shrines.⁵³ Uzbek newspapers acknowledge the existence of thousands of "pseudo-mullahs" (presumably Sufis) in the republic.⁵⁴ T.S. Saidbaev, a Soviet authority on Islam "has noted the existence in Tashkent of a sect calling itself 'The People of the Qur'an' and which was urging its fellow Muslims to resume all the traditional practices of their religion."⁵⁵

However, since "official" Islam is much "healthier" in the Uzbek SSR than in the other Central Asian republics, there is less of a perceived need for "parallel" Islam and so the Sufis do not exert as much influence as they do in other parts of the USSR. "In Uzbekistan, the working mosque with its *imam-khatib* [preacher], and not the holy mazar with its Sufi sheikh-guardian, is still the real centre of the spiritual and religious life of the believers."⁵⁶ At the same time, it should be noted that the Sufis have played a key role in the past history of the Uzbeks. Mir Ali Shir Nava'i and most of the other medieval Central Asian poets were members of the Naqshbandiya *tariqat*.⁵⁷ Sufis were part of the ruling establishment in the khanates up until the beginning of Soviet rule. Interestingly enough, they have also been represented in "official" Islam under the Soviets: despite the fact that they were loyal to the Soviet State, the first two *muftis* of the Tashkent Directorate, Ishan Babakhan ibn Abdel Mejid Khan (1943-57), and his son Ziauddin Babakhanov (1957-82) belonged to the Naqshbandiya, and it is likely that the third *mufti*, Shamsuddin Babakhanov (1982-89) was also a member⁵⁸ This helps to explain why the official Islamic establishment in Central Asia has been less harsh on Sufis than elsewhere in the USSR.

Folk Islam, with which the Sufis are often associated, is still alive and well in Uzbekistan. Often, while more "orthodox" practices have dwindled in popularity, those practices which are more rooted in the pre-Islamic "folk" culture, such as the wearing of amulets in order to ward off the evil eye, have survived. Certain occupations have patron saints, such as the Tashkent taxi-drivers, whose patron is

⁵² Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 31-36; *Soviet Empire*, 61f.

⁵³ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 41f.

⁵⁴ Broxup, "Since Gorbachev," 288.

⁵⁵ James Thrower, "The Survival of Islam in the Soviet Union: The Forgotten Muslims of Central Asian and Kazakhstan," *The Scottish Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1987), 117.

⁵⁶ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 153.

⁵⁷ *ibid*, 8.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, 2, 45.

the prophet Daud (the biblical David).⁵⁹ There are a number of important shrines in the republic, to which pilgrimages are still made.⁶⁰ That this, as well as other practices, is of concern to the government is evident by a December 1979 article in *Pravda Vostoka*, a republican newspaper which, while reporting "tremendous successes in overcoming the vestiges of religion [in Uzbekistan]," noted that the rite of circumcision as well as religious weddings and burial services still prevailed, as did certain folk practices: "One encounters also worship in holy places and appeals to *tabibs* [faith healers] and mullahs to cure illnesses and ailments."⁶¹

It is interesting to note that pilgrimages are even made to some shrines which have been converted into anti-religious museums, such as the tomb of Bahauddin Naqshband, the founder of the Naqshbandiya, in Bukhara.⁶² Shahimardon is a former shrine that has been converted into a memorial to Hamza Hakimzadeh Niyazi (1889-1929), the Uzbek Communist poet who was murdered at that site in 1929 by a mob for attempting to make it into a Red Museum. On a visit to this site, David Montgomery observed "bushes onto which were tied strips of coloured cloth. My associate from the Academy of Sciences said, with apparent embarrassment, that a few old men did these foolish things as prayers. However, judging by the number of cloth strips and bushes involved and also by the steepness of the trail, I feel that numerous people of a wide range of ages came to hang their prayers in an echo of a pre-Islamic tradition at a long ancient holy site."⁶³

Having observed the variety of religious activity going on in Uzbekistan, we might ask what percentage of Uzbeks are true believers. One gets different estimates from different sources; Nancy Lubin, an American who studied in the republic for a year was "told emphatically that the number of believers in Uzbekistan is around 60-70 % of the total population" by the Tashkent *mufti*, but was also "told equally emphatically that the proportion was not above 5-6 %" according to local government officials and academics.⁶⁴ Certainly, this is a difficult question to answer, precisely because being a Muslim is so closely tied to the whole ethnic identity of the Uzbeks and, as noted above, Islam is a religion which applies to all areas of life. This identification of religion with ethnicity is brought out by some comments given in response to a 1965 survey in the native corner of Tashkent which attempted to find out the level of religious observance amongst the

⁵⁹ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Soviet Empire*, 62.

⁶⁰ For a list of the shrines in Uzbekistan, see Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 153-156.

⁶¹ Yaacov Ro'i, "The Impact of the Islamic Fundamentalist Revival of the Late 1970s on the Soviet View of Islam," *The USSR and the Muslim World*, ed Yaacov Ro'i (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 154.

⁶² Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 98.

⁶³ David C. Montgomery, "Once Again in Tashkent," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (1983), 144.

⁶⁴ Lubin, "Assimilation," 279.

population: "I am a believer because as an unbeliever I should be a public laughing stock"; "I believe because my parents were believers and because one cannot go against one's parents"; "I am a believer because I am a Muslim."⁶⁵

Thus, although official Soviet sources would estimate that only 20 percent of urbanized Uzbeks are believers,⁶⁶ it is impossible to know how close this figure is to reality. In general, most younger Uzbeks seem to fall into the middle category of belief; they are neither "militant atheists" nor "staunch believers." One study by an Uzbek academic concluded that "almost all Uzbek youth feel a religious marriage ceremony and circumcision are essential; most participate in Muslim festivals and holidays; and many often visit 'holy places,' whether out of their own volition or because of parental pressure." However, "probably only a very small number believe in or have any conception of Allah, and few know the contents of the Koran."⁶⁷

It is the older Uzbeks who tend to be more devout, but this does not mean that the practice of Islam will necessarily die out with the death of these older believers. On the contrary, there is a trend, very disturbing for the Soviets, of non-believers and even atheists turning back to Islam once they reach the age of 40-45, a phenomenon which has even been recorded amongst staunch Party members.⁶⁸ As one Uzbek told Montgomery, "My father externally conformed to the Party's views on religion during his working years so that he could support his family. Allah understands this. Now, having given his younger years to the government, he is giving his older years to his religion. My life will be the same."⁶⁹ Thus, the ranks of Islam are constantly being filled from below, as it were.

The conclusions of Lubin are pertinent here: "In summary, the religious situation in Uzbekistan is marked by an ambivalent and contradictory official policy, and the effects of this policy have been equally ambiguous. Today, most of Uzbekistan's population, young and old alike, seem to conduct their daily lives somewhere in the hazy area between officially sanctioned and illegal religious practices.... Instead of eradicating religion, the policies more often than not have simply institutionalized duplicity."⁷⁰ However, recently, there have been indications that conservative Islam is far from dead in Uzbekistan. The September 26th 1982 edition of the newspaper *Soviet Uzbekistani* reported on two recent activities which Sufis were probably behind: an illegal "religious learning course" taught by a "false

⁶⁵ Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Soviet Union*, 182.

⁶⁶ Michael Rywkin, "National Symbiosis: Vitality, Religion, Identity, Allegiance," *The USSR and the Muslim World*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 8f.

⁶⁷ Lubin, "Assimilation," 280.

⁶⁸ Bennigsen and Broxup, *Islamic Threat*, 143.

⁶⁹ Montgomery, "Return," 297.

⁷⁰ Lubin, "Assimilation," 281.

mullah" [Muslim cleric] which had attracted believers "as light attracts moths"⁷¹ and the trial of eleven "fanatical crooks" accused of printing and distributing "thousands of copies" of a pamphlet titled "About the Islamic Faith" in Tashkent.⁷²

This resurgence of Islam was brought out even more graphically by the revelation that 270 women had burnt themselves to death in the republic over a two year period (1986-1987) in protest against being "sold" in marriage in exchange for a bride price, a practice which, although it is not technically Islamic, is considered by many to be part of the traditional Muslim culture.⁷³ A scandal erupted in 1989 as demonstrators in the streets of Tashkent protested against *mufti* Shamsuddin Babakhanov, chairman of the Tashkent Directorate, whose reputation was summed up by one elderly Uzbek: "Our *mufti* is a terrible man. He drinks, he smokes, he plays billiards, and he's been photographed with prostitutes in Sochi. There are five Islamic laws and he breaks them all." As a result of the public outcry, Babakhanov was forced to resign.⁷⁴

LANGUAGE

Uzbek is a Turkic language. The Turkic language family is divided into four subgroups: Northwestern, Northeastern, South-western, and Southeastern. Uzbek belongs to the latter group (sometimes called the Karluk or Chagatay group), along with Uighur, the language of the majority population in Xinjiang province in China. Uzbek shares a number of significant linguistic features with most of the 63 other Turkic languages that are spoken from the Mediterranean to northeastern Siberia, including its extensive use of agglutination in word formation, its highly predictable verbal paradigms, its verb final word order, the influence of Arabic and Persian in its lexicon and, in some dialects, its utilization of vowel harmony. Due to the great uniformity in Turkic languages, both diachronically and synchronically, a speaker of Uzbek, with a little extra study, is able to understand a large number of the other Turkic languages, especially those spoken elsewhere in Central Asia. Conversely, approximately 60 percent of the Uzbek lexicon is common to all Turkic languages, and a further 25 percent can be figured out by a speaker of another Turkic language with some adjustments, leaving only 15 percent of the vocabulary which is uniquely Uzbek.⁷⁵ Uzbek is a very expressive language with a rich tense system which enables its speakers to be very precise in their communication.

⁷¹ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Mystics*, 87.

⁷² *ibid*, 91.

⁷³ Angus Roxburgh, "Soviet scandal that almost got away" *The Sunday Times*, 12 Feb. 1989, B6.

⁷⁴ *ibid*.

⁷⁵ Personal correspondence with Dr. Andras J.E. Bodrogligeti, Dept. of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, UCLA.

Uzbek is considered to be the linguistic and literary heir of Chagatay, the classical Turkic language which was spoken in Central Asia during the medieval period and was in use as a literary language from the early fifteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Chagatay had died out as a written medium by the time that Soviet power was consolidated in Central Asia. It was replaced by Uzbek, which had first appeared in literary form in the eighteenth century. In keeping with the Soviets' efforts to include pre-Shaibanid culture as part of the Uzbek heritage, Chagatay is today referred to by Soviet scholars as "Old Uzbek." In addition to Chagatay, both Arabic and Persian had important sociological functions in Uzbek society prior to the Soviet period. Both were used amongst the intelligentsia as languages of literature and higher learning. In addition, the former functioned as the language of religion and the latter as the language of the court. As a result of their influence, about 60-65 percent of the Uzbek lexicon consists of words from these two languages. This situation has resulted in numerous occurrences of Arabic and Persian synonyms for native Turkic words.

The many Uzbek dialects which are still spoken can be roughly classified into two groups: those spoken in the central urban centers (including the Tashkent dialect, which forms the basis of modern literary Uzbek) which have lost the vowel harmony which is so characteristic of Turkic languages, and those which have preserved it. The latter group includes both northern dialects which have been influenced by Kazakh and southern dialects which have been affected by Turkmen.

Prior to the 1920's, Uzbek was written in the same version of the Arabic script that Persian is, namely, with the addition of four letters for sounds found in Persian, but not in Arabic.⁷⁶ However, this script was inadequate for expressing the rich vocalic inventory characteristic of all Turkic languages, since it only has letters for three vowels and these are only recorded when they are long vowels. Extra letters for sounds not found in Turkic languages, as well as the different forms of the letters depending on their position in the word, further complicated its use as a writing medium. All this provided the Soviets with a good rationale for changing the writing system, a strategy which was not without a political motivation. The first major change came in 1923, as the Arabic script was modified by removing unnecessary letters and expanding the vowel inventory with the addition of diacritical marks.⁷⁷ The next step came in 1928, when the Uzbeks, along with about 70 other Soviet languages, adopted a Latin script very similar to the one that had recently been adopted in Turkey. This script was changed somewhat in 1934, as a result of the selection of the Tashkent dialect of Uzbek as the standard literary

⁷⁶ The alphabet had been slightly modified in 1865.

⁷⁷ This script was very similar to the one which is currently used to write the Uighur language in Xinjiang.

language. The Latin script was much better suited to Uzbek, but the situation was short-lived. The final switch was made in 1940, when the Cyrillic script, with the addition of four letters for sounds not found in Russian, was adopted. This change, which was also carried out amongst the other Central Asian nationalities at the same time, was a crucial move which paved the way for the subsequent implementation of Soviet linguistic policy in Central Asia.

Soviet linguistic policy mirrors the "divide and conquer" strategy that resulted in the delimitation of the Central Asian republics along national lines and the subsequent attempt to develop a unique national culture for each nationality in the area. Thus, the Soviets have engaged in a certain amount of language engineering. Moscow has attempted to influence the Uzbek language in a number of ways, in keeping with the three stated aims of its overall linguistic policy in Central Asia:

First, 'the "completion" and "enrichment" of existing languages, the widening of their scope and the transformation of tribal and community languages into developed national languages with a rich terminology and vocabulary'; secondly, the removal of the large Arabic and Persian loan vocabulary inherited from the Muslim conquests; and thirdly, the establishment of Russian as 'a second native language'. These aims if achieved would have the effect of [1] preventing the formation of a single Turkic literary language which might aid in the creation of a united Turkic and Muslim national movement, and of [2] the Russian language being used by all sections of the population.⁷⁸

"The 'completion' and 'enrichment' of existing languages" and the development of "national languages" needs to be properly understood. It is not primarily an altruistic act of kindness on behalf of the Soviet authorities. As noted above, there is great similarity between the Central Asian Turkic languages. Thus, part of the overall Soviet strategy has been to artificially differentiate the languages of the area so that what is in fact a gradual continuum of dialects is made to appear more like a patchwork quilt of quite different languages. This is the essence of "completion" and "enrichment". The political advantages of such a situation are quite obvious. One aspect of this strategy is revealed in the choice of the Iranized Tashkent dialect as the basis for standard modern Uzbek. By choosing a dialect that has lost its vowel harmony, the Soviet linguistic planners have set Uzbek apart somewhat from the rest of the Turkic languages in Central Asia which have retained it. Another manifestation is apparent in the way the Cyrillic script was applied to the various languages in the area: there are many instances where a given sound in two related Turkic languages which had been represented by the same letter in the Arabic alphabet was represented by different letters in the modified Cyrillic scripts that

⁷⁸ Geoffrey Wheeler, *Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 36f.

these languages subsequently received, thus helping to artificially differentiate them.

The desire to remove Arabic and Persian loan words, while at the same time promoting "Russian as a second native language" is an obvious attempt to cut off the Uzbeks and other Central Asians from their natural ties with the rest of the Islamic world and to reorient their cultural allegiance to Russia. The adoption of the Cyrillic script has certainly helped in this process, facilitating the introduction of Russian words into Uzbek, as well as making the learning of Russian that much easier. However, the anticipated results have not been forthcoming. Russian words have been promoted at the expense of words of Arabo-Persian origin, especially in the lexical areas of technology and politics, but there has not been a massive switchover yet. The latter still form such a large part of Uzbek vocabulary that to completely purge them from the language is virtually impossible, and where they have been dropped, Uzbek linguists, instead of adopting Russian terms, have often resurrected old Turkic words. The percentage of Russian words in the Uzbek language did rise from 2 in 1923 to 15 in 1940,⁷⁹ but at present, they only comprise 6-7 percent of the lexicon,⁸⁰ and that number is decreasing, not increasing. Attempts to influence Uzbek and other Turkic languages with Russian morphology and syntax have been even less successful

In the area of Russian language education, there is no doubt that far more Uzbeks are fluent in Russian than before 1917. The language is indispensable for anyone wanting to pursue higher education or work for the government or the Communist Party, as well as being the medium of communication in the Soviet Army. In addition to Uzbek and several other languages spoken in the republic, radio and television programs are broadcast in Russian and Russian journals and newspapers are produced in Uzbekistan. However, Uzbeks have not pursued the knowledge of this language with the fervor that Moscow had hoped for, and where they have, it has been out of a recognition of the pragmatic benefits of doing so, not out of any love for the Russian language per se. The number of Uzbeks identifying Russian as their first language is negligible: 0.53 percent in 1970, and 0.63 in 1979. The percentage claiming "a good knowledge" of Russian as a second language seemed to rise dramatically between 1970 (14.5) and 1979 (49.3).⁸¹ Western analysts have expressed scepticism about this latter figure, suggesting that it was either doctored or reflected a desire amongst Uzbeks to express a greater knowledge

⁷⁹ Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 94.

⁸⁰ Personal correspondence with Dr. Bodrogligeti.

⁸¹ Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 98.

of Russian than they actually possessed. The most recent census figures confirm these suspicions: the figure is back down to 23.8 percent.⁸²

It should be noted that there is a definite difference between the rural and urban population in this area: "Despite great efforts to promote the learning of the Russian language, many rural Uzbeks do not know Russian.... Some young Uzbeks enter the university not knowing any Russian.... On the other hand, there are urban, upper-class Uzbeks who have a minimal knowledge of the Uzbek language and are more comfortable speaking Russian. These families speak Russian at home and acknowledge that their children might never learn Uzbek."⁸³ Those that need to will continue to learn Russian, but the vast majority still consider it to be largely irrelevant to their lives. The central government has stepped up efforts to teach Russian in schools as a result of proposals from the 1979 Tashkent conference "The Russian Language: The Language of Friendship and Cooperation of the Peoples of the USSR." At the same time, on a local level, "every year, more and more items of Western and Soviet literature are being translated into the native languages of Uzbekistan, and local printing houses are putting out increasing numbers of newspapers and journals in the local dialects."⁸⁴ In closing, we might note the observation of Michael Rywkin, a noted authority on Central Asia: "The conclusion is clear: better educated Muslims do learn Russian as an indispensable tool for their own advancement, but linguistic Russification has not taken place, and local Turkic languages are undergoing a real revival."⁸⁵

EDUCATION

As noted above, what is today Uzbekistan was for many years a bastion of learning in the Islamic world, although the area had reached its cultural climax before the arrival of the Shaibanid Uzbeks. In fact, the *medressah* actually had its origin in Bukhara in the tenth century. A number of Central Asian scholars have made significant contributions to Western culture, including the great mathematician Al-Khwarizmi and the philosopher and physician Avicenna. Timur's grandson, Ulugh Beg was not only a patron of the arts, but also a prominent academic himself. Among the greatest accomplishments of medieval Islam is his observatory, remnants of which can still be seen in Samarkand. In fact, this ruler was even recognized in Europe as one of the most prominent astronomers of his time.

⁸² Sheehy, "Russian Share," 3.

⁸³ Montgomery, "Once Again," 142.

⁸⁴ Lubin, "Assimilation," 282.

⁸⁵ Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 99.

However, despite the high level of learning going on in academic circles, the vast majority of the common people still remained illiterate. If common people were exposed to any education at all, more likely than not it consisted of rote memorization of the Qur'an in Arabic in the *mekteb*, although some, especially those studying in the *medressah*, also had access to the Persian and Turkic classics. Furthermore, it was primarily the male inhabitants of the large towns and cities that benefited from this: opportunities for women to receive education were almost non-existent. This situation did improve somewhat during the nineteenth century, however, so that by mid-century, there were 1,800 *mektebs* with a total enrollment of 150,000 and 180 *medressahs* with 15,000 students in the Bukharan khanate⁸⁶ and in 1867, the city of Kokand, with a population of 80,000, was reported to have 15,000 students in 15 *medressahs*.⁸⁷

Efforts were made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, under the influence of the Tatar reform movement known as *Jadidism* (*jadid* is Arabic for "new"), to modernize Islamic culture through new methods of teaching which were closer to the European model. Thus, *Usul-i-Jadid* (New Method) schools were set up in many parts of Central Asia. At the same time, the Russians also established a number of different schools for locals, including Russian schools, to which both Russian and Muslim children were admitted, and Russo-native schools, "whose object was to acquaint Muslim children with Russian culture through the medium of their own language, and also with the elements of the Russian language."⁸⁸ Although the *Jadid* schools were more popular than the Russian ones, neither made a significant impact on the vast majority of the population which was still illiterate. "It is... probable that in 1880... not more than 1 percent of the Muslim population was literate. At the time of the Revolution, it was not more than 3 percent."⁸⁹

Obviously, with the introduction of Communist rule in Central Asia, such a vital sphere as that of education could not be left in the hands of religious elements. However, Muslim schools were not entirely phased out until compulsory primary education was introduced in the early 1930's. Quite apart from their political motivations in secularizing and Sovietizing the education system, it cannot be denied that Moscow has vastly improved the state of education among the local population. "There can be no doubt that the standard of literacy and of higher and technical education in Central Asia is far higher than that of any Muslim country in

⁸⁶ Edward Allworth, "The Changing Intellectual and Literary Community," *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, ed. Edward Allworth, (London: Duke University Press, 1989), 351.

⁸⁷ Wheeler, *Peoples*, 23.

⁸⁸ *ibid*, 99.

⁸⁹ Wheeler, *Modern History*, 198.

the world and indeed higher than of any Asian or African country with the exception of Japan and Israel."⁹⁰

Certainly, one of the most impressive accomplishments of the Soviet regime in Central Asia has been the virtual eradication of illiteracy. In 1959, the literacy rate in the Uzbek SSR in the 9-49 age group was given as 98.1.⁹¹ Including all age groups and leaving out the figures for non-Uzbeks living in the republic, the actual literacy rate for the Uzbeks at that time was 51.0 percent.⁹² Today, literacy is almost universal amongst Uzbeks. There are currently 286 newspapers published in the republic, 195 of them in Uzbek, as well as 88 periodicals, 32 of them in Uzbek.⁹³ There are two universities in the republic, Tashkent Lenin State University and Samarkand Ali Shir Nava'i State University, as well as several institutes for the training of teachers, doctors, agriculturalists and other specialists. Whereas in years past Russians formed a large percentage of students in institutes of higher education in the republic, about two thirds of these students are now Uzbeks.⁹⁴

THE LITERARY ARTS⁹⁵

As a result of the crucial role that Transoxiana played in the medieval Islamic world, Central Asians have a long literary heritage. Prior to the Soviet period, this was primarily expressed in terms of poetry, including written versions of the great oral epics which the area has produced for centuries. Obviously, in light of the general illiteracy in the area, written literature was only accessible to a very small percentage of the population. Thus, the vast majority of people received their exposure to literature through listening to recitations of the oral epics. Many of these, such as *Alpamysh*, *Dede Korkut* and *Koroghlu*, were not just the possession of one group, but were shared by all the Central Asian peoples, including the Uzbeks.

Prior to the fifteenth century, most literature in Central Asia was written in Arabic or, more often, Persian. The Turkic dialects were not considered appropriate for literary purposes. However, that all changed as a result of Mir Ali Shir Nava'i, considered to be the poet laureate of the Uzbeks, even though he lived prior to their advent in Transoxiana. Nava'i made Chagatay, the precursor of literary Uzbek, into a great literary language. Babur wrote his memoirs (the famous *Babur-nama*) in the same language and the earliest Uzbek rulers, including Muhammad Shaibani Khan,

⁹⁰ *ibid*, 198.

⁹¹ E. Glyn Lewis, *Multilingualism in the Soviet Union: Aspects of Language Policy and Its Implications* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), 175.

⁹² *ibid*, 57.

⁹³ *Europa Year Book*, 2757.

⁹⁴ Lubin, "Assimilation," 283.

⁹⁵ For a more detailed account of Uzbek literature, see Edward Allworth, *Uzbek Literary Politics*, (The Hague, Mouton, 1964).

composed poetry in it.⁹⁶ At this time, most literature was poetry, although lines of prose did occur in some of the epics.

As the Russians advanced on Turkestan, many poets wrote verses denouncing the invaders and appealing to the Muslims to repel the foreigners. Later on, towards the end of the nineteenth century, although Chagatay was still being used, some Uzbek poets began to write in their own tongue. Among these were Muhammad Amin-Hoja Muqimi (1850-1903) and Zakirjan Furqat (1858-1909), who wrote both about traditional themes, especially that of romantic love, and the impact of Russian culture on the Uzbeks in poems such as *Gimnaziya (The Russian School)*, *Rus Askarlari tarifiida (About Russian Soldiers)*, and *Elektrik lampochkasi haqida (About the Lightbulb)*.⁹⁷ As a result of the growing Russian influence, some Uzbek poets such as Furqat and Hamza Hakimzadeh Niyazi began to write prose as well as poetry in the early twentieth century. By this time, Uzbek had replaced Chagatay as the main literary language.

During the first years of the Soviet period, Uzbek writers, many of them former members of the *Jadid* movement, played a major role in helping the Bolsheviks consolidate power in Central Asia. Some of these, such as Niyazi, who headed up the Uzbek Union of Godless Zealots, became the victims of fellow Uzbeks angered at the changes that Communism brought to their way of life. Others, such as Abdalrauf Fitrat, Abdullah Qadiri (1894-1939), and Abdulhamid Cholpan (1898-c.1938) along with many other members of the Uzbek intelligentsia, were subsequently liquidated in the Stalinist purges of the 1930's, due to their pan-Turkic and even anti-Russian sentiments.

As with all other aspects of Uzbek culture under the Soviet regime, literature has been subject to significant restrictions. In general, writers have had to conform to the dictates of Socialist Realism, in order that their works may be a tool in the hands of the State for "building Socialism". Furthermore, in keeping with the Stalinist formula "national in form and socialist in content," each nation has been urged to develop its own unique "national literature". Writers have been given clear guidelines for both style and content. Accepted themes have included those of "socialist industrialization," "life on the kolkhoz," atheism, and the emancipation of women. Authors have also been exhorted to follow the example of exemplary Soviet writers. For the Uzbeks, these include both Russians, like Gorky, and fellow Uzbeks, such as Aybek (1905-1968) and Hamid Alimjan (1909-1944).⁹⁸ In

⁹⁶ For more information on Nava'i, see Barry Hoberman, "Chaucer of the Turks," *Aramco World*, Vol 36, No 1 (1985), 24-27.

⁹⁷ Allworth, *Literary Politics*, 28.

⁹⁸ Robert J. Barrett, "Convergence and the Nationality Literature of Central Asia," *The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia*, ed. Edward Allworth (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973), 23.

particular, "Uzbeks have been expected to admire the Russian past but not their own, and to regard Russian poets as part of their pre-revolutionary heritage and originators of the Uzbek literary movement."⁹⁹

Of course, in order to ensure that the literature being produced is acceptable to the regime, all writers who wish to publish must also belong to the *Uzbekistan Soviet Yazuchilari Soyuzi* (The Union of Soviet Writers of Uzbekistan). The primary medium for getting literary exposure is the journal published by the Union, known as *Sharq Yulduzi* ("Star of the East"). One of the former presidents of this Union, Sharaf Rashidov (1917-1983), went on to become the First Secretary of Uzbekistan from 1959 to 1983, as well as an alternate member of the CPSU Politburo.

Besides many of the finest Uzbek writers themselves, there were other casualties of the Stalin era. One of these was *Alpamysh*, one of the great Central Asian epics considered to be a significant part of Uzbek literary heritage. Its content, having to do with the struggle between Central Asian Muslims and the Buddhist Kalmyks, another Soviet nationality, was denounced in 1952 as "a work inspired by Muslim fanaticism and chauvinism."¹⁰⁰ Literary works praising the Soviet leaders and the Russian people in general were also common during this time. A popular practice was to take a traditional folk tale or legend and to substitute the name of Lenin or Stalin for the name of a historical or legendary Central Asian figure.

There have undoubtedly been attempts to Russianize Uzbek literature, a trend promoted by certain members of the native elite, such as Rashidov: "The works of many of our writers in recent years give proof of their growing literary maturity... They are mastering the rich experience of the Russian world and classics... Russian literature with its revolutionary traditions, deep love of humanity, and its true popular spirit is considered the real university where Uzbek writers attain their literary expertise and mastery."¹⁰¹

However, despite Soviet efforts to regiment Uzbek literature to conform to the ideology of the State, Uzbek writers have not forgotten their literary heritage. As a result, they have been criticized in their writing for endeavoring "to create works imitating foreign Oriental literature" (in other words, their writing sounds too much like that of the rest of the Muslim world, especially Persian literature) and thus "imitating only the sentimental, romantic treatment in them," a method of writing which "produces no positive results" and "leads away from socialist realism."¹⁰² As Edward Allworth, a prominent Western authority on Central Asia, has noted:

⁹⁹ Allworth, *Literary Politics*, 100.

¹⁰⁰ Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 101.

¹⁰¹ Cited in Barrett, "Convergence," 25.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, 29.

"Soviet Russians did not want their own poets, like Pasternak and Anna Akhmetova, to create non-political, intimate, lyric verses. They could still less tolerate Uzbek poems about peacocks, roses, nightingales, and lovers. Such subjects were regarded by militant critics as an unpleasant legacy from the past."¹⁰³

Other authors, in exploring themes from the past, have not been diligent enough in denouncing the old Muslim customs and promoting the new Communist ones: "The writer must not only expose old customs and mental attitudes, but he must also see and accept the new forces in life that are fighting against them."¹⁰⁴ One Western observer has summed up the present situation in the Central Asian literary community as follows: "While neglecting themes of contemporary, industrial life dominated by machines and production plans, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kirgiz, and other Central Asian writers appear to be obsessed... with the rediscovery of their own ancient past, a theme until so recently restricted to exposures of earlier political tyranny and social stagnation."¹⁰⁵

Thus, during the 1970's, many historical novels were written by Uzbek authors, including "such works as Abil Yaqubov's *The Treasure of Ulugbek*, Mimushin's *The Architect*, Pirimqul Qairov's *Starry Nights*, and the first two volumes of Mirzakalan Ismaily's *Fergana before the Dawn*."¹⁰⁶ One of the boldest of these to emerge recently is *Olmas Qoyalar (The Immortal Cliffs)*, by Mamadali Mahmudov, a novel about the Russian conquest of Central Asia. "His novel insistently express love for the homeland - a homeland distinct from Russia - that requires protection from Russia by every Central Asian. Therefore, the fiction excoriates those who collaborate with the invading Russians, calling the traitors 'serpents' (*ilan*)."¹⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, the novel was denounced by the Uzbek Writer's Union.

Prior to the twentieth century, drama did not play a significant part in Uzbek society. Wandering jesters, bards, itinerant comedians and even puppeteers who acted out short roadside dramatic scenarios were not unknown before this time, but it was only under the *Jadid* reformers that drama began to be institutionalized in the first decade of this century. Many of these *Jadids* continued to be involved in the medium under the Bolsheviks. Writers such as Fitrat, Cholpan, and Niyazi were among these. As was the case with Uzbek poetry and novels, nationalistic sentiments in some of the early works were criticized by the regime and many of the playwrights subsequently vanished under Stalin.

¹⁰³ Allworth, *Literary Politics*, 92.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Barrett, "Convergence," 30.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, 28.

¹⁰⁶ Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 101.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Allworth, "The New Central Asians," *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule*, ed. Edward Allworth (London: Duke University Press, 1989), 534.

Although many of the works which have been produced under the Soviets are undeniably propaganda, some of the subject material has come from traditional Central Asian sources, including legends and the great oral epics. In addition, there have been translations of both Russian and English plays (such as *Hamlet*). The emergence of drama has, of course, also paved the way for the subsequent development of the cinema, an even more effective propaganda tool. However, with increased relaxing of censorship and a greater boldness on the part of Uzbek playwrights, changes have come to this medium also.

MUSIC¹⁰⁸

Traditional Uzbek music has been heavily influenced by the musical styles and practices of the Middle East. Thus, the traditional instruments used, including lutes (such as the *tanbur* and *dombira*), spike-fiddles (like the *qobuz*), woodwinds (such as the *nay* and *surmay*), and percussion instruments (like the *doira*) are all very similar to those occurring throughout the Middle Eastern cultural basin, which has been so strongly shaped by Islam. Other aspects of traditional Uzbek music, such as the use of minor keys, the general absence of harmony, the preference for smaller ensembles, certain singing styles, and, until the Soviet era, the absence of written notation, are also indications of Middle Eastern influence.

As with many cultures, Uzbek music has both a "classical" stream and a "folk" one. The classical "art" music of the Uzbeks is based on the structure known as the *maqam*, a pre-arranged basis for a musical performance which specifies the melodies, rhythms, and tempos to be used, leaving little room for innovation. From this Middle Eastern form developed a specifically Central Asian musical suite called the *shashmaqam* (literally, "six maqams"). Uzbek folk music includes such Central Asian characteristics as competitive songs, in which a boy and girl sing successive verses in an attempt to lyrically outwit each other, and the singing of the great Central Asian epic narrative poems, such as *Farhad and Shirin* and *Layli and Majnun*. Traditionally, Uzbek music was performed in small ensembles, since the different tunings of the instruments made certain combinations musically impossible.

Since the coming of the Russians to Central Asia, music has undergone a number of changes. Tashkent was a major cultural center of the Russian Empire and, as such, Russian music early on had an influence on the urban elite. Under the

¹⁰⁸ For more detailed information on Uzbek music, see Joanna Spector, "Musical Tradition and Innovation," *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule* (London: Duke University Press, 1989); Viktor M. Beliaev, *Central Asian Music*, trans Mark and Greta Slobin (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), especially 257-323.

Soviets, Uzbek music was subjected to a number of distinctly Western ideas, including the formation of orchestras and choruses to play and sing traditional as well as Western music. Musical notation was standardized and the musical instruments were restructured to conform to Western musical scales. As native music students were instructed in Western ways, such alien elements as harmonization and bass lines were introduced. Uzbek operas and ballets based on Central Asian literary themes and the oral epics were written.

An extensive recording industry has been established in Uzbekistan, and the Tashkent branch of Melodiya (the Soviet recording company) turns out a steady diet of both Western and Uzbek music, the latter including classical, folk, and contemporary genres. The mass media are also effective ways of disseminating music to the general population, although David Montgomery observed in 1982 that "Tashkent radio and television broadcasts feature more of Soviet European type music and performances than in previous years. There was still a large amount of broadcasting in Uzbek and other Central Asian languages, but less of this broadcasting featured folk and traditional music and dance."¹⁰⁹ There are numerous dance troupes which perform both Western and traditional dances. Amongst the latter, perhaps the most famous is the all-female Uzbek dance company known as *Bakhor* (Springtime).

OTHER ARTFORMS

Prior to 1917, fine arts such as painting and sculpture did not play a prominent role in Uzbek culture, although there was a strong tradition in Central Asia during the medieval Islamic period, especially under Timur, of miniature painting, book illumination, and calligraphy. More popular amongst the common people were the more functional "folk" artforms of carpet weaving, ceramics and embroidery.

The Russian conquest had a negative effect on these crafts. "First, the influx of Russian trade goods in competition with local craft wares weakened and sometimes destroyed local craft. Second, the demand in Moscow for art work from Turkistan often had a deleterious effect on art styles and craftsmanship, since craftsmen did not take the same pains with work destined for an alien and distant market as for the face-to-face customers examining wares in the shops of the bazaar."¹¹⁰

Since 1917, art has been subject to the same dictates of Socialist Realism that literature has. In place of the old guilds that artists and craftsmen belonged to in pre-Soviet days, the State has substituted unions for each artform. As with writers,

¹⁰⁹ Montgomery, "Once Again," 139.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth E. Bacon, *Central Asians Under Russian Rule: A Study in Culture Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 109.

membership is compulsory for those who want to have a market for their art. Almost every artform is promoted on two levels: a Western "professional" one and a traditional one. In general, the latter are still more popular with the local populace.

During the "cult of personality" which thrived under Stalin, artforms such as carpetweaving and ceramics suffered from the tendency to feature portraits of prominent political personalities, especially the great dictator himself. Today, this is much less common and the subject matter for various kinds of artwork may vary from a portrait of Lenin to a depiction of a legendary figure, from a scene of a hydroelectric plant or a cotton collective to a landscape.

ARCHITECTURE¹¹¹

Uzbekistan is the home of some of the finest architecture to be found anywhere in the Muslim world. The most significant of these works are nearly all religious buildings which originated during the Timurid dynasty and are heavily influenced by Persian architectural styles. Although there are architectural masterpieces in several cities, the most impressive of these are in Samarkand. One of these is the Shah-i-Zinda (The Living Prince), the supposed tomb of Kussam ben Abbas, who was alleged to be a cousin of Muhammad himself, martyred on the site in the seventh century. It is a complex of sixteen mausoleums and other buildings, rebuilt by the Timurids after the Mongol conquest.

Timur has also left his mark on the skyline of Samarkand in two monumental structures, one largely in ruins today and the other fairly well preserved. The former is the magnificent Mosque Bibi Khanum (The Old Queen), which was built so hastily, between 1399 and 1404, that it began to crumble shortly after it was finished. The latter is the Gur Emir (The Great Prince), built in 1404, the mausoleum in which Timur is buried, which was originally adjoined to a *medressah*. Its bulbous, fluted cupola is one of the most distinctive features of Samarkand even to this day.

However, perhaps the most famous architectural complex in all of Central Asia is located on the great square in Samarkand known as the Registan, initially built by Ulugh Beg and subsequently added to in the seventeenth century. The square is flanked by three *medressahs*: the Medressah of Ulugh Beg, the Medressah Shir Dor ("Bearing Tigers," referring to the images which adorn its facade), and the Medressah Tilla Kari ("Adorned with Gold," alluding to the original wall coverings

¹¹¹ For more information on Central Asian architecture, see Edgar Knobloch, *Beyond the Oxus: Archaeology, Art & Architecture of Central Asia*, (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1972), especially 107-171; Arthur Sprague, "Modernizing Architecture, Art, and Town Plans," *Central Asia: 120 Years of Russian Rule* (London: Duke University Press, 1989).

inside). The Registan is still a popular tourist attraction and the Soviets have put together an impressive light and sound show that is shown at nighttime to highlight the structures around the square. Outside the city, Ulugh Beg erected his observatory, probably the best in the world at the time (it was built 1424-1428). Only the gigantic slit in the earth which originally housed the sextant is left today. There are also some very impressive architectural monuments elsewhere in the republic, especially in the cities of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand. Although later dynasties could not match the architectural opulence of the Timurids, the Uzbeks continued to build great monuments. As late as 1910, the khan of Khiva, Sayyid Muhammad Rahim Bahadur II, erected a 182 foot-tall minaret in his capital city.

As the Russians moved into Central Asia, they brought their architectural styles with them. Some wealthy Muslims began to build residences in the Russian style. At the same time, Russian architects were influenced by local styles. Once the Soviets took over, Central Asian architecture came under the influence of "Constructivism": "With a heavy emphasis upon function and rational planning, this style was characterized by an almost complete lack of decoration and, at its best, a fine integration of blocklike, geometric forms."¹¹² Constructivism was succeeded by Socialist Realism architecture, described by one author as "a ponderous, anachronistic, and often vulgar revival of classicism in architecture... [which] has left some of the most appropriate monuments to nonart which Communist Party architects could have devised."¹¹³ One such example is the Ali Shir Nava'i State Opera and Ballet Theater in Tashkent, described by the same author as evoking "the image of a small-town 'First National Bank' decked out in the frivolities of Hollywood's Moorish 'East'."¹¹⁴

As noted above, Tashkent has increasingly become a Russian city and this is reflected in the architecture of the capital. Many of the older buildings were destroyed in the wake of a serious earthquake in 1966, thus necessitating much rebuilding, mostly of apartment complexes. Visitors to the republic in 1975 commented on the current architectural scene in the cities:

We saw far too many solid and ugly Soviet-style buildings, with straight lines and square corners, and flat roofs covering an immense concrete expanse. However we admired imaginative attempts to recapture an Uzbek style of architecture: notably in Tashkent where there is a conference-hall modelled on a *caravanserai* [the combination hotel and stable which housed caravans travelling the old Silk Road] to the extent that the tiled walls are built around a central hall... There is in the centre of Tashkent a well-known tea-house (the *Golubye*

¹¹² Sprague, "Modernizing," 508.

¹¹³ *ibid*, 511.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, 514.

Kupola) whose roof and chimneys are built as blue domes, and where you can eat '*pilau*' and '*kebab*' between columns behind delicate fretwork screens.¹¹⁵

In recent years, the government has made great efforts to restore some of the Timurid monuments, especially in the Registan. Trades such as the glazing of tiles are still handed down from father to son and skilled craftsmen trained in these artforms are being employed in the restoration projects. Interestingly enough, modern technology has not been able to duplicate the exact color of the azure blue tiles which cover the domes of many of these structures, such as the Gur Emir. The restoration of these buildings has made the Uzbeks aware of yet another valuable cultural contribution they have made to the world. As one student said in conversation with Montgomery, "When you see these buildings, you realize that even in the feudal times we were a people capable of great achievements. We still are."¹¹⁶

DWELLINGS

As in any society, Uzbek dwellings reflect the social standing of their occupants. While the differences between social classes was much more pronounced before the period of Soviet rule, differences can still be seen between rural and urban Uzbek houses. Traditionally, most Uzbek houses have consisted of a walled compound surrounding an interior courtyard and the actual living space. This type of dwelling can still be found in rural areas and in the older sections of most towns and cities. Such a setting is ideal for housing the extended family networks that have traditionally formed the basis of Uzbek culture. The courtyard also provided a place where the women, who were traditionally separated from male society, could do their chores, whether baking bread or tending animals, without being seen by men who were not relatives.

Prior to modernization under the Russians, most cities resembled those of medieval Europe, with the city walls enclosing a mass of narrow streets and dwellings often rising two stories up. Houses with courtyards were less common in the crowded center sections of these cities. Most houses had no windows looking out on the street, the only access being provided by a gate. Inside, especially in the homes of the rich, elaborate decoration often made up for the rather plain exteriors of these dwellings. Most frequently, this decoration consisted of carved wooden doors and walls finished in the carved plaster style known as *ganch*. Occasionally, trees might even be painted on the walls. Floral motifs were common in this type of

¹¹⁵ Poulton, "Recent Visit," 307.

¹¹⁶ David C. Montgomery, "An American Student in Tashkent," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (1972), 38.

decoration. Most homes were simply furnished. Traditionally, people have preferred to sit on cushions and rugs on the floor. The latter were often woven by the women, although this craft was also practiced by men.

Rural villages were for centuries comprised of mud-walled houses and narrow alleys. This remains the norm amongst the Uzbeks of Afghanistan and such dwellings may still be found in some rural areas of Uzbekistan. Since wood is a scarce commodity in Central Asia, mud (or brick, if the owner could afford it) was the most popular building material until this century, when cement began to be used much more widely. Other significant structures in both villages and cities included mosques, bazaars, and teashops. All three can still be found, although, as noted above, there are far fewer mosques now than there used to be.

The coming of the Russians to Central Asia brought changes in the way that buildings were built, as well as the way cities were laid out. Broad avenues and brick buildings became common. Some of the locals, especially the rich, built homes in the European style. "Double cities" developed, with the urban centers containing both a native section and a European one, much the same as occurred in India under the British. Under the Soviets, even further changes have occurred. Thus, large apartment complexes have been constructed in the cities. However, the suites are usually deliberately designed to be too small for the traditional extended family to live together in them.

FOOD

Uzbek food is similar to that of the other peoples of Central Asia. Lamb is the most common type of meat, although chicken, beef, fish, and various types of exotic birds, such as quail, are also eaten. Due to the traditional Muslim prohibition on eating it, pork is rarely consumed. Perhaps the most popular meal is *pilau*, a rice and meat dish topped with carrots and raisins. *Kebabs* are also frequently eaten, as are *manti* (steamed meat pies) and *shurba* (mutton soup). There are also several pasta dishes. Uzbek bread, called *cherak*, is baked in round loaves. The vegetables and fruits, especially grapes and melons, which the republic produces also play an important role in the Uzbek diet. Most meals are accompanied by *chai*, or tea. With the removal of traditional Islamic restrictions on drinking which have occurred under the Soviets, the consumption of alcohol is much more commonplace now.

As with most Muslim peoples, meals are great social occasions, whether eaten at home or in the local *chaikhana* (teahouse). Uzbeks in a rural setting, as well as those who value the traditional way of doing things, eat sitting on the floor, with the food served either on a cloth spread out on the floor or on a low table. Eating with hands was originally used instead of utensils, although this practice is not so

common today. Of course, as a result of the different ways in which Uzbeks have responded to Russian culture, one can now find a broad spectrum of practices, from those who maintain the traditional ways to those, especially in an urban context, who have totally discarded them, eating as the Russians do at tables and chairs.

CLOTHING

Before the Soviet era, Uzbeks traditionally wore either tunics (for the men) or dresses (for the women) over baggy pants. In addition, boots and various types of headgear, including skullcaps and turbans, were worn. Today, Western clothing has by and large replaced traditional dress in public. However, almost all Uzbek men and many women still wear the *duppi* or skullcap. Men's *duppies* are mostly black, embroidered with white thread and are known as *chust duppies*, whereas those of women tend to be more colorful. Even far from Uzbekistan, these *duppies* identify the wearer as an Uzbek. Many women still wear the distinctive Uzbek dresses, formerly made of silk, but now with the traditional patterns of alternating colored stripes printed on to cotton fabric. Women, especially younger ones, frequently wear their long, dark hair in braids and, although the *paranja* (a head to toe covering for women) and the veil are things of the past, it is common to see older women wearing scarves or shawls on their heads. Old men can still be seen wearing turbans and long multicolored robes, known as *chapans*, in the streets of both villages and cities. Indeed, most men have at least one *chapan* in their wardrobe, although younger ones will only wear it on festive occasions or possibly in their own homes.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE¹¹⁷

Over the years since the Uzbeks abandoned their nomadic way of life, the importance of the tribe and clan as the primary unit of allegiance has basically vanished. However, sometimes the old structure of the *elat* (a subdivision of the clan) is maintained in the *kolkhoz* (collective farm), the leadership essentially being a Council of Elders, known as *aqsaqals* (literally, "white beards"). One survey done in 1957 in the Khorezm region showed that "the make-up of the Uzbek *kolkhoz* villages corresponded exactly to the clan (*elat*) divisions, and consisted of groups of 40 families descended from the same ancestor and regarding other Uzbeks as 'foreigners.'"¹¹⁸ Remnants of this old clan-consciousness can still be found, as evidenced by this comment made by an Uzbek student to David Montgomery: "My

¹¹⁷ For a more detailed description of Uzbek society prior to the Russians, see Bacon, *Russian Rule*, 56-91; under the Russians prior to 1917, 105-115; since 1917, 151-189.

¹¹⁸ Bennigsen and Quelquejay-Lemercier, *Soviet Union*, 198.

family is of the white bone [old nomadic tribal aristocracy] lineage; therefore we can only marry into certain families.... Our parents help us to select a spouse so that family prestige is maintained and that we are properly connected."¹¹⁹

Prior to the Soviet era, the basic unit of Uzbek society was the extended family: in addition to the inclusion of grandparents, a typical family also included married sons and their families. The society was strictly patriarchal, hierarchical, and authoritative. Uzbek women, unless they happened to belong to a wealthy family, had little hope for social advancement. They generally lived in seclusion, so that wearing the veil was mandatory if they went outdoors, and they were considered to be the property of their husbands or fathers. Marriage was generally endogamous (within the tribe or clan) and was almost exclusively arranged by the parents. It was very common for cousins to marry. A number of traditional but not specifically Islamic customs relating to marriage were practiced, some of which have been mentioned above. These included the payment of a bride-price (called *kalym*), the practice of *kaytarma*, in which the bride was retained by the family until the full bride-price was paid, and *amengerstvo* (customs of levirate or sororate¹²⁰). Girls were often married off at a very young age and the Muslim practice of polygamy was practiced if the man could afford more than one wife.

All these practices were subsequently banned by the Soviet government. Other customs, such as endogamy and the veiling of women, although not illegal, were portrayed in official propaganda as backward and hence to be shunned. The combined effect of proscription and propaganda has been a radical change in the Uzbek social structure. However, such customs die hard. As late as 1954, a Western visitor to Tashkent estimated that 5 percent of the women in the native part of the city were still wearing the veil, although this practice seemed to have vanished four years later, according to the report of another Western observer.¹²¹ During the sixties, there were still reports of the seclusion of women and polygamy being practiced, often amongst Party officials!¹²² These practices are extremely rare today, although Montgomery did meet one individual who boasted of having three wives.¹²³

As noted above, the practice of *kalym* still occurs, although it is often in the form of wedding gifts today. Although there is no hard evidence of the persistence of marriage at an early age, the school truancy rates for teenage girls suggest that

¹¹⁹ Montgomery, "Return," 302.

¹²⁰ The levirate is "the custom of marriage by a man with his brother's widow" and the sororate is "subsequent or concurrent marriage with a wife's sister" (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged Edition, 1966).

¹²¹ Bennigsen and Quelquejay-Lemercier, *Soviet Union*, 190f.

¹²² *ibid*, 190,192.

¹²³ Montgomery, "Return," 298.

this is still practiced.¹²⁴ In addition, although there is much greater freedom in the selection of a mate than previously, Soviet surveys show that 88 percent of urban Uzbeks and 92 percent of those in the villages still insist on parental consent for marriage.¹²⁵ Although there are undoubtedly many more women in the workforce than there ever were prior to Soviet rule, traditional attitudes towards the role of women still tend to predominate and Uzbek women still expect to raise large families. In 1972, the average expected number of children was 6.26, compared with 2.00 for the Russians.¹²⁶

Of course, these traditional perspectives on the role of women are stronger in the countryside than in the city. Montgomery notes that "the urban Uzbeks, particularly the educated upper classes, limit their family size.... The growth of a consumer economy is one of the reasons. Due to a wider range of economic choices and material satisfactions, rather than by many children, personal status and peer esteem can be attained by material possessions such as televisions, clothes, furniture and cars, which do not require an increase in responsibility, loss of personal freedom, and continuing expense as would many children."¹²⁷

Prior to the Soviet era, the class structure of Uzbek society was much more evident. Social status came from such things as family background, property ownership, wealth, education, religious position, and employment with the government of the khanates. There are some Western observers that would maintain that, despite the Soviet government's goal of a classless society, there is still a social hierarchy in Central Asia, although often one's status now depends on one's relationship with the Communist Party. Montgomery also observed a sense of superiority amongst some urban Uzbeks, especially those from Tashkent, in relation to their rural kinsmen: "Particularly, some women feel themselves too good for Uzbek men from other towns: 'They are not *kul'turniy* enough.' Some upper-class Tashkent Uzbeks justified their cars, fine apartments, *dachas* (country houses) and high salaries as a necessity and not an inequity: 'The rural people, the *kolkhozniks*, do not need luxuries or much money; after all, they can have their own garden and raise animals. City life is harder.'"¹²⁸ Yet another phenomenon related to social groupings is that of *gap-ziyofat* (discussion-hosting) groups. These are informal gatherings, made up of close friends who are usually not related by blood. Meetings may involve a musical performance or some other form of entertainment or perhaps even religious rites. "These groups offer much mutual support in life cycle

¹²⁴ Bennigsen and Quelquejay-Lemercier, *Soviet Union*, 188f.

¹²⁵ Rywkin, "National Symbiosis," 9.

¹²⁶ Feshbach, "Trends," 89.

¹²⁷ Montgomery, "Once Again," 143.

¹²⁸ *ibid*, 142.

transitions and crises such as births, deaths, circumcisions, marriage, illness, education and job placement."¹²⁹

URBAN LIFESTYLE

Most of the towns and cities in present-day Uzbek territory grew up in the oases that dot the desert region, many of them on the banks of the major rivers in the area. From the second century BC up until the time when it was eclipsed by the sea routes as the major trade link between China and Europe, the Silk Road ran through Transoxiana and many of these settlements were key staging posts for the camel caravans that plied the overland trade routes. Thus, there is a long tradition of trade in Central Asia and bazaars and markets have flourished in the area for centuries. Their presence helped to support a large variety of different craftsmen and the bazaars were traditionally divided up into sections according to the merchandise being sold. Before the Soviet period, one could find almost anything one wanted in the bazaar, including silk, yarn and fabric, jewelry, copperware, pottery, leatherwork, rugs, agricultural tools, guns, cooking oil, meat, fruits and vegetables, and baked goods. In addition to their stalls at the weekly markets, many craftsmen had permanent shops set up in the towns.

The cities were also crucial for the administration of the khanates during the period that they dominated the Central Asian political scene. Each had an established bureaucracy, a court system, a police force and an army (although these armies were no match for the superior Russian forces that they later came up against). However, social conditions under the rule of the khans were not ideal. In general, standards of health and sanitation were low. The society was distinctly feudal and the khans themselves were frequently despotic, freely dispensing their version of justice, in the form of torture and execution, to those who dared to cross their will or displease them in any way. Thus, criminals, people accused of apostasy from Islam and unwelcome British envoys were not infrequently hurled from the top of a minaret, such as the Minar Kalan in Bukhara (210 foot tall).

Recreation and entertainment amongst the city dwellers was primarily of the spectator variety. Old men would sit around in the teashops, gossiping, telling stories and playing games such as chess. There were also fights between animals, such as cocks and rams, and professional entertainers, especially on bazaar days and during the Muslim festivals. These included "musicians, dancers, comics, puppeteers, acrobats, jugglers, stiltwalkers, and animal acts."¹³⁰ Almost all of these

¹²⁹ Montgomery, "Return," 296.

¹³⁰ Bacon, *Russian Rule*, 87.

entertainers were men. Especially popular were the dancing boys, known as *bachas*. One of the most exciting sports not only to watch, but also to participate in, was the horsemanship game known as *ulaq* or *buzkashi*, in which teams of riders compete to carry a sheep carcass around a post and across a goal line. Apparently, the game was originally played by the Mongols with live prisoners of war. Of course, this form of entertainment had to be played in wide open places outside the city and was also popular with rural folk. Although alcohol is forbidden in Islam, it seems that drinking was not entirely unknown, even amongst the khans, although those imbibing had to do so discretely. Certainly, use of the water pipe was widespread, with both men and women smoking *nas* (green tobacco). Less frequently, opium and hemp (called *bang*) were smoked as well.

There can be no denying that the Soviet era has vastly improved the material standard of living of the Uzbeks. This is especially true in the urban areas, which have grown steadily as a result of the rapid development of industrialization in the republic. As a result of the major emphasis on cotton cultivation in the republic, a number of related industries, such as cotton ginning, cotton-seed oil and fertilizer production, textile manufacturing and the production of agricultural machinery, have developed. The cities provide access to the modern conveniences that are available to Soviet citizens elsewhere in the USSR.

The higher educational institutions in the cities also open the door for more and more Uzbeks to move into professional positions in industry, communications, medicine, education, and administration. This is especially true of women, a radical change from the past. For instance, in 1947, Uzbeks only comprised 3.9 percent of the scientific workers in their own republic. In 1960, they made up 34.4 percent. By 1975, the percentage had risen to 48.1.¹³¹ Though this is still not proportional to their share of the overall population, it is undeniably an improvement over the past. Indeed, the increasing proportion of Uzbeks in positions of influence has the Russian population of the republic worried. As David Montgomery has noted, as a result of his stay in Tashkent, "with the rise in Uzbek qualifications the European population is no longer assured of its domination of high level positions and must now compete. Some Europeans cannot accept the fact that Uzbeks are qualified and attribute their employment at high levels to bribes and other corrupt practices.... there were comments that once Uzbeks had become securely employed in positions of authority and responsibility, they tended to favour only other Uzbeks for employment."¹³²

¹³¹ Steven L. Burg, "Central Asian Political Participation and Soviet Political Development," *The USSR and the Muslim World*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 43.

¹³² Montgomery, "Return," 300.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of urban life in Uzbekistan is the degree to which the cities, and hence their residents, have been Russianized. This is especially true of Tashkent, where there are as many Europeans as there are Uzbeks. Much of the housing in the city is racially integrated, although there are older sections of the city where few non-Muslims live. As a major administrative and industrial center in the USSR, the Uzbek capital has probably felt the impact of the Russian culture more than anywhere else in the republic. Thus, knowledge of the Russian language is greater and adherence to Islam is more tenuous here. Yet, as Nancy Lubin observes, "the long dusty roads of these cities,... the old men on donkeys competing with buses and trolleys on the city's main thoroughfares; the young Uzbek boys grazing their sheep in the university park - everything in the physical appearance of Uzbekistan's cities suggests that they are not 'modern industrial centres' in any familiar sense of the term, but rather, that elements of an ancient past still linger, indeed still remain strong."¹³³ Lubin also notes that this cultural duality extends to all of the activities of Uzbek city-dwellers: "Local teenagers in the smaller cities of the Fergana Valley may spend one evening celebrating a wedding or circumcision strictly according to traditional and religious rules, and then spend the next evening dancing Western rock and roll in Andizhan's local discotheque, or studying for exams on scientific atheism."¹³⁴

RURAL LIFESTYLE

"Uzbeks are for the most part a rural people. In Uzbekistan, approximately two-thirds live in villages and towns with populations of less than 2,500."¹³⁵ The Uzbeks originally moved south into Central Asia in order to leave behind a nomadic lifestyle and to adopt a more sedentary way of life. As a result, rural Uzbek life differs from that of some of the other Central Asian peoples, chiefly the Kazakhs and Kirghiz, many of whom still travel with their flocks and herds between summer and winter pastures. In contrast, the rural Uzbeks are almost all agriculturalists, most of them involved in working the land, although some also work in animal husbandry. As noted above, irrigation was and still is crucial in order to support this vital section of the Uzbek economy. Prior to the Soviets, most rural Uzbeks lived in a village, called a *qishlaq*. Under the Soviet regime, many have been reorganized into collective farms.

As noted above, the most important crop in Uzbekistan today is cotton. Although cotton has been grown for a long time in the area, it was not until after the

¹³³ Lubin, "Assimilation," 278.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, 278.

¹³⁵ Montgomery, "Uzbek," 462.

Russian conquest that it became the chief crop. In order to better supply Russia's expanding need for the commodity, an improved strain of American cotton was introduced in the late nineteenth century. "Before the introduction of the American variety, cotton had been grown by Uzbek and Tajik peasants on small holdings, as a cash or barter crop supplementing grain and other food crops. Russia, with its increasing demand for cotton, sought to convert the region to a one-crop economy, turning all suitable land to cotton culture and shipping in grain from Russia."¹³⁶ This trend has continued under the Soviets, with more and more land being used for cotton growing and less and less for grains, including rice.¹³⁷ Besides cotton-growing, sericulture (silk worm harvesting) is also an important component of Uzbek agriculture, as are the growing of various fruits (especially melons and grapes), rice, tea, and some grains. Traditionally, animals have played a big role in both agriculture and transportation. Astrakhan lamb skins, which come from the famous karakul sheep, comprise a significant Uzbek export item. Horses, camels, and donkeys were and still are used as beasts of burden. Of course, these have been supplemented more recently by tractors, trucks, and buses.

Prior to the Soviet regime, rural society was feudal in nature, with poor peasants working on land owned by rich peasants and landowners. Under the Soviets, the initial stage of change came in the form of agrarian reform. "By the end of [1925] it was claimed that in Uzbekistan all land holdings exceeding 135 acres had been expropriated and redistributed."¹³⁸ However, this reform was only a temporary step toward the ultimate goal of collectivization. "In Uzbekistan alone between 1930 and 1934 more than 40,000 *kulak* [rich peasant] holdings were liquidated. By 1932 74.9 percent of the peasant households in Uzbekistan had been collectivized."¹³⁹ This percentage had increased to 99.2 by the end of the Second Five-Year Plan in 1937.¹⁴⁰ This collectivization campaign was an important step in exerting Soviet control over the area, as Geoffrey Wheeler, a British scholar, has noted: "By destroying the traditional system of land tenure and water rights the Soviet regime struck at the roots of Muslim society and prepared the ground for the supplementary campaigns aiming at political indoctrination and cultural regimentation."¹⁴¹

However, at the same time, Michael Rywkin observes that "the role of private plots in Uzbek agricultural production is actually increasing.... Soviet Uzbek estimates are around 26 to 28.8 percent [of the gross output of the republic] and

¹³⁶ Bacon, *Russian Rule*, 107.

¹³⁷ For figures, see Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 47.

¹³⁸ Wheeler, *Modern History*, 136.

¹³⁹ Wheeler, *Peoples*, 72.

¹⁴⁰ Bacon, *Russian Rule*, 155.

¹⁴¹ Wheeler, *Peoples*, 73.

account for a quarter of a collective farmer's income."¹⁴² In almost every area of livestock raising and crop production, the percentage of their income that Uzbek farmers derive from privately owned means of production is considerably higher than the USSR average.¹⁴³ Indeed, there are definite economic advantages to living in the country: "work on the cotton collectives pays huge rouble bonuses and facilitates the rapid accumulation of funds."¹⁴⁴ In addition, the rural lifestyle itself is attractive to many Uzbeks. As one Uzbek educator, noting the tendency of students of rural origin to accept jobs in the country rather than in the city, noted, "Perhaps it is the housing; many Uzbeks have as their ideal to have a house with a courtyard and garden plot, and maybe even a cow; modern urban dwellings are not that appealing."¹⁴⁵

In general, rural Uzbeks tend to be much less Russianized than their urban kinsmen. Thus, knowledge of the Russian language is much lower than in the cities, adherence to Islam and the more traditional customs is stronger, and social interaction with Russians is minimal, since most of the Russians in the republic live in the cities. However, even in rural areas, "many Uzbek families - and particularly rural collective farmers - have cars, and almost all Uzbeks have TVs, radios, and electricity."¹⁴⁶

THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

The Soviets have attempted to manufacture a new cultural identity for the Uzbeks. They have been successful to some extent. Certainly the process of modernization that has taken place over the past seventy years has drastically changed the shape of Uzbek culture. However, it seems that the Uzbeks, while willing to benefit from some of the obvious material benefits of Soviet rule, have not whole-heartedly abandoned their traditional way of living. On the contrary, if anything, the attempt to suppress different aspects of their culture, such as language and religion, has resulted in an even stronger affirmation of what it means to be Uzbek. There is definite fascination with and appreciation of the past heritage of the Uzbek people. As one Uzbek said to Montgomery, "We realize that tourists come here to see Uzbeks and not more of Russia. Thus, their interest in Uzbekistan encourages us to be more mindful of our music, dance, architecture and other traditions."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² Rywkin, *Muslim Challenge*, 54.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴⁴ Montgomery, "Return," 174.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 301.

¹⁴⁶ Lubin, "Assimilation," 284.

¹⁴⁷ Montgomery, "Once Again," 145f.

It is certainly difficult to predict what the future shape of the USSR will be. It no longer seems improbable that republics and maybe even whole sections of the country could secede from the Union. In light of recent events, this appears to be especially likely in the Baltic states and in the Caucasus. However, although Central Asia has been much less turbulent during the same time that there has been ethnic unrest elsewhere in the USSR, we should not therefore conclude that this reflects a lack of interest in being free of Soviet rule. On the contrary, there almost seems to be a silent strategy unfolding in Uzbekistan and the adjacent republics. Whereas other sections of the country that had experienced various degrees of modernization before 1917 can legitimately look back over the past seventy years and lament the fact that they have lagged behind as a result of being part of the Soviet Union, there is a very real sense in which the Uzbeks and other Central Asians, despite the suffering they have experienced under the current regime, have been brought fully into the modern world during the Soviet era. At the same time, they have been rapidly growing in numbers, especially over the last three decades. They are now in a much stronger position to actually form either separate nations or even one united country. In light of this possibility, we might close with the following observation by Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup:

At present, the Uzbeks are by far the largest and most developed group among Central Asians.... The Uzbek Republic contains all the cultural and historical capitals of Central Asia - Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, Urgench, Shahrissabz and Khiva. The best Central Asian universities (Tashkent and Samarkand) and scientific institutions (the Uzbek Academy of Science in Tashkent) are in Uzbekistan, and so is the seat of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate and the only working *madrassahs* (Tashkent and Bukhara). The Uzbeks, not surprisingly, also have the largest and most sophisticated native intelligentsia of Central Asia to act as guardians of the national culture and the traditions of Central Asia.... These advantages have allowed the Uzbeks to claim the Muslim culture of Turkestan between the ninth and nineteenth centuries as their own. Avicenna, Timur, Ulugh-beg, Ali-Shir Navai and Emperor Babur are all claimed as Uzbeks, with the result that the Uzbeks are promoting the merger of 'Uzbek' and 'Turkestani' consciousness. The Uzbeks are now recognised as the leaders of Central Asia by most other Central Asians, and while this role is more psychological than economic or political, it is nevertheless certain that the importance of the Uzbeks as the leaders of Central Asia - and eventually maybe of all Soviet Islam - is growing. It is probable that by the turn of the century the Uzbek nation, some 25 million strong, will act as the pole around which other nationalities of Central Asia will federate. If Turkestan is to be united again, as in the time of Timur, it

will be around the great cities of Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara once more, and under Uzbek leadership.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Bennigsen and Broxup, *Islamic Threat*, 139f.

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