Russification in the Soviet East: Education in Uzbekistan and the Emancipation of Uzbek Women, 1938-1956

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Before the Revolution of 1917, the Uzbek population had a traditional system of religious education, but the literacy level of the Uzbek people was very low. After the Soviets seized power in Uzbekistan, they promoted the development of Uzbek language and culture. In 1937 the Soviet government subjected the entire Uzbek nation to political and ideological instructions. The Russian language became the primary language that dominated many aspects of Uzbek life: party apparatus, science, technologies, state administration, and higher education.

Throughout the Soviet period the majority of children in the rural areas of Uzbekistan attended native schools, while an increasing number of Uzbek children in large towns and cities attended Russian schools. The poor quality of the Russian language teacher programs, the insufficient supply of native schools, and the absence of the Russian language textbooks for Uzbek schools aggravated the Russification process in the Uzbek Soviet republic. Russification was a one-sided policy. The native population of Uzbekistan was forced to learn and speak the Russian language. Russian officials and teachers, on the other hand, considered the study of Uzbek useless.

Russification had both positive and negative aspects. Indigenous population of Uzbekistan was forced to assimilate into the Soviet society. In order to become new citizens of the Soviet Uzbek republic natives had to give up their culture, religion and
traditions. On the other hand, the Soviets created modern Uzbekistan, the Uzbek language, and the Uzbek nation. The liquidation of illiteracy, the introduction of universal seven-year education, and the emancipation of Uzbek women were huge achievements of the Soviet communists. The Russification policy brought radical changes into the life of Uzbek people. Most importantly Soviet educational policies benefited Uzbek women. Many women were liberated and emancipated from the feudal ways of life. The Soviet government gave enormous opportunities to Uzbek women to study and work for the benefit of the new Uzbek Soviet society.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The Soviet Union inherited much of the huge territory of the Russian empire with its multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. During the tsarist period, different policies and methods were applied to the various national territories of the Russian empire, depending on the time of their incorporation and cultural, political, and economic situations. Some territories were left quasi-independent with the full rights of self-government, but the Russification policy was applied to each area.

After the Bolsheviks seized power, they proclaimed the equality of all peoples and guaranteed their autonomy through the federation of ethnic territories and a right to secession. During the 1920s and the beginning of the 1930s the Soviet government promoted the development of national cultures in the Soviet Union. Indigenization (korenizatsiia) policy embraced indigenous cultures and brought attention of the native population of the USSR to their traditions, customs, and languages. According to the Marxist-Leninist ideology, in order to become a member of Soviet society, every proletarian and peasant needed special guidance from the Communist party and the new Soviet intelligentsia.

Sheila Fitzpatrick and other scholars have recently studied the making of Soviet culture and its challenges to tradition and the past. The Cultural Revolution initiated by the Soviet government in early 1920s produced a new Soviet proletariat intelligentsia, which played an active role in the shaping of cultural values.¹ The new intellectual elite

¹ This paper follows the format requirements of A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations 6th edition by Kate L. Turabian.
contributed to the Sovietization and Russification of all the nations of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government was interested in forms of culture as diverse as basic hygiene, appropriate ways to dress and speak, and manners of behavior at home and in public.²

These historians address the concept of “culture” (kul’turnost’), or “becoming cultured.” During the early Soviet period an educated person who followed the Communist ideology and practiced the basics of hygiene and certain manners of behavior in public was considered to be a cultured person.³ The new Soviet society “must be neat and efficient, literate and cultured, hygienic and healthy” in order to struggle for the better future and produce the next healthy generation of the Soviet citizens.⁴

Other historians explore the making of new national cultures within the Soviet Union. Ronald Suny, Yuri Slezkine, and others argue that the Soviet regime, despite the idea of the creation of universal Soviet culture, actually created new nations, cultures, and languages where none had existed before. The Soviet government brought a lot of beneficial changes in to the life of peoples of the North, Far East, and Central Asia.⁵ For example, ethnic groups of the North were literally rescued from extinction.⁶ At the same time, the new written languages and national identities existed within a common Soviet culture. The creation and implantation of the universal Soviet culture complicated the existence of the national cultures. There were non-Russian peoples (Ukrainians,
Byelorussians, and peoples of the Caucasian region) who had highly developed cultures of their own, but they were destroyed by the Soviets and replaced with Soviet culture.⁷

Stalin’s Cultural Revolution obligated many backward peoples of the North, Far East, and Central Asia to change their traditional cultures. According to the guiding principle of Soviet policies, all cultures had to be national in form, but Soviet in content. The Cultural Revolution provided for the rapid transformation of traditional cultures. The Soviet state with its total control over the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres of life fostered the national development of non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union.

Terry Martin and many other historians focus on the Great Russian chauvinism that existed throughout the history of the USSR. According to the Bolshevik ideology, the Russian nation was the first among equals; Russians were the leading power of the Soviet people. Stalin frequently criticized Great Russian chauvinism, but, in fact, the leading positions in the party apparatus and army in every Soviet republic were occupied by Russian communists.

Bolsheviks believed in their historical mission to rescue, enlighten, and modernize backward peoples of the Soviet Union. They planned to turn traditional peoples into modern Soviet citizens. Historically, the Russian nation had more features of western culture than the most peoples of the Soviet Union, which means that they considered themselves to be more advanced culturally and technologically. Closeness to the West was understood to be a marker of modernity and development. There were peoples in the Soviet Union (for example, peoples of the North, Far East, and Central Asia) who were distant from the world of the West. The regime and its new cultural elite understood them

to be more backward than the other ethnic groups of the Soviet Union. "The greater the backwardness, the greater speed needed" to replace all customs, practices, and beliefs with civilized norms of behavior and the new Soviet ideology. The Soviets had to work especially hard to make new Soviet citizens out of the peoples of the North, Far East, and Central Asia.

In 1937 Stalin instituted new national policies toward the whole population of the Soviet Union. All Soviet peoples were obligated to study the Russian language. Soviet propaganda, the intelligentsia, the press, and the educational system were employed to transform traditional ways of life and to bring all the nations of the Soviet Union within the world of Soviet culture. As a part of the revolutionary ideology and strategy the Bolsheviks needed to create new reliable and trustworthy local cadres and administrative workers. Throughout the Soviet Union the non-Russian population was widely recruited into educational institutions and management positions. Speed was important to the Bolsheviks. They did not want to spend time on gradual developments and adjustments. Everything had to be changed and accepted by the peoples of the Soviet Union. Nations that resisted the transformation were repressed.

The annexation of Central Asia by tsarist Russia and the Sovietization of the region from 1920 led to the radical changes. The creation of a new Uzbek nation and its Soviet republic were the main achievements of the nationalization policy, which was followed by a massive literacy campaign for Uzbek children and adults. The liquidation of illiteracy and the enforcement of Russian language among the Uzbeks helped to

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8 Slezkine, Arctic Mirrors, 220.
politicize the local population of the Soviet Uzbek republic. The Soviet government introduced universal compulsory primary and secondary education for the entire Uzbek nation. Many teaching and training programs were introduced to local adults in order to get various professional qualifications. The government established thousands of special literacy schools and workshops for reading and writing all over the Soviet Uzbek republic.\textsuperscript{10}

In order to isolate Uzbek people from the outside Islamic world, in 1927 the Uzbek alphabet was changed from Arabic to Latin and all books written in Arabic script were prohibited. In 1940 the alphabet was changed again from Latin to Cyrillic. This time the change led to important similarities between Russian and Uzbek alphabets, which made the Russification of Uzbek population easier and more natural. The Soviet government used language as an effective way of achieving ideological Russification. By the end of the Soviet regime, the literacy level in Uzbekistan reached nearly 100 per cent and the majority of Uzbek population spoke Russian fluently.

During the Soviet regime Uzbek women gained full political and civil rights as Soviet citizens, but they remained Muslim women. Although local women were given equal opportunities with men in the Soviet education and in the workplace, most of them deliberately remained in the household or took a small part in the life of the local community. Throughout the Soviet period of Uzbek history, Islam remained the foundation stone of Uzbek people’s everyday life. Uzbek women as well as men followed the Muslim tradition and customs.

The practice of women's seclusion, veiling, polygamy, arranged marriages, and marriages with underage girls in Uzbekistan existed throughout the Soviet period. The conservative Uzbek population did not want to give up its traditional ways of life. The Soviet government in Moscow succeeded in promoting the emergence of Uzbek ethnic identity and liquidation of illiteracy among local population. At the same time, the Soviet regime was unable to achieve the ideological fusion of the indigenous peoples of the Soviet Uzbek republic. The Sovietization and Russification of the Uzbek population was not complete. Islam remained at the core of the Uzbek everyday life.
CHAPTER II

TRADITIONAL MUSLIM EDUCATION IN PRE- REVOLUTIONARY UZBEKISTAN

The pre-revolutionary education of the Central Asian population heavily relied on local traditions and Islam, the dominant religion of this area. Sometime in the 8th century, Muslim Arabs invaded the territory of Central Asia and converted the entire population of this region to Islam. Before the Arab conquest indigenous peoples of Central Asia practiced different religions, such as Buddhism, Shamanism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Nestorian Christianity. Within a few centuries Arabs established Islamic institutions and standards of traditional Muslim education in the area. “During the 9th and 10th centuries the Persians renewed their dominance of Central Asia [which] resulted in considerable ethnic and social assimilation of the Arabs by the native Iranian population.” Besides the Islamic rules of everyday life, the native population of Central Asia adopted the Muslim educational system and the Arabic alphabet.

The tenth-century elementary school was free and open to all people of Central Asia. Although rich Muslims of Central Asia had the benefit of higher education, exceptions were made for talented but poor students. A maktab was a lay elementary school in Central Asia, where children learned reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and history. Somemaktabs of bigger cities offered additional subjects, such as poetry, grammar, etiquette, and proverbs. At the same time, mosques also offered elementary education.

1 Yalcin, The Rebirth of Uzbekistan, 15-16.
3 Ibid., 57.
level of education, where children were taught to read and recite the Qur’an and a few subjects similar to those in the maktabs.

Students who finished the elementary level of education entered the madrasa, the institution of higher education. Madrasas were established in the big cities of Central Asia. Only wealthy students, who could afford to continue education, and the most successful students from the mosque schools attended Madrasas. There students studied “jurisprudence, philology, syntax, rhetoric, composition, history, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, algebra, music, politics, economy, dogmatic theology, metaphysics, science, medicine, agriculture, phrenology, dream interpretation, astrology, and magic.” ⁴ Informal types of education also existed in Central Asia. For example, famous scholars held seminars and discussions with groups of students. “The tenth century was the Golden Age of Islam and many scholars of Central Asia were acquainted with great works translated from Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Hindi.” ⁵

In 1220 the Mongols attacked the territory of Central Asia, “massacring much of the population and destroying cities, farms, and irrigation works in Central Asia.” ⁶ During the 13th and 14th centuries, after the Mongol hordes destroyed the highly developed Central Asian civilization, the Chagatai- Turk (or Sart) peoples immigrated to the territory of modern Uzbekistan. ⁷ Centuries later these peoples would become the modern Uzbek nation. The origin of the name of Uzbek people is a matter of debate. Some historians agree that this nation took the name Uzbek from their language. Another group of historians argues that “it may indeed derive from Uzbek (or, more correctly,

⁴ Ibid., 58.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Yalcin, The Rebirth of Uzbekistan, 28.
⁷ Ibid., 72.
Özbeg), khan of the Golden Horde who ruled from 1312 to 1341. “The inability of native population to replace the declining local power with a new alternative of its own resulted in the passing of Central Asian peoples under the Uzbek rule. Uzbek people established Khanates of Bukhara, Khoqand (located on the Fergana valley with “commercial and political links with distant but important countries: to the east, China; to the west, Russia and the Mediterranean world; to the south, Iran and India; and to the north the nomads of the Eurasian steppe and the dwellers of the taiga.”), and Khiva that became part of Uzbekistan. Khans of Bukhara, Khoqand, and Khiva were devout Muslims. They established mosques and madrasas in big cities of their khanates. “The cities of Samarkand and Bukhara and others had been renowned centers of Islamic scholarship and training for the entire Muslim world for centuries.” With time, Bukhara became the center of political and religious activities of Central Asian Muslims. “Its madrasas- the Mir-i Arab madrasa being the most famous one- gave the city the reputation of one of Islam’s foremost centers of learning and orthodoxy.” Uzbek people gave a lot of the world famous scientists, writers, and poets. Among these world eminent Uzbeks were the astronomer Ferghani, Muhammed Al-Khorezmi (the founder of modern algebra), the physician Abu Ali Ibn Sina (known as Avicenna in the western history of science), and Abu – Raikhan Al-Beruni, who “wrote 120 works on various branches of science including geography, geology, mineralogy, mathematics, astronomy, history, and linguistics.”

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9 Ibid., 181.
10 Ibid., 188.
All peoples of Central Asia were united by the common religion and Arabo-Irano-Turkic culture. Three main languages were in use among these people: Arabic, Persian, and Chagatai. Arabic was the language of official writing and Islam: the Qur'an and other religious books were written in Arabic. Persian was a traditional literary language of the Central Asian intelligentsia. It "was the spoken, but not the written, language of the Iranian population of the eastern parts of the emirate of Bukhara." Chagatai was the literary language of Chagatai-Turk peoples. It was a symbiosis of Iranian and Turkic languages that was extensively used by local population. These languages were the international languages of Central Asian nations that united them with Muslims of Middle East and North Africa.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century the Russian empire expanded into Central Asia. The actual conquest of Central Asian territories took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the 1880s, the territory of Central Asia was under the control of tsarist Russia. The newly organized Turkestan Guberniia consisted of five regions (oblast'): "Syrdarya (center Tashkent), Semireche (center Vernyi), Fergana (center Skobelev), Samarkand (center Samarkand), and Zakaspie (Transcaspia, center Ashgabat)" Khans of Bukhara and Khiva became vassals of the Russian tsar and retained status of protectorates. This territorial organization survived until the 1917 revolution.

Although Turkestan Guberniia was administrated by a military governor residing in Tashkent, tsarist Russian officials in Central Asia did not interfere in the local ways of

15 Ibid.
16 Soucek, A History of Inner Asia, 201.
life of Muslim communities and let native khans exercise their power. "The official stuff and language were Russian but administrators themselves avoided rigid enforcement of the policy of Russification. In large measure the Muslim community continued to govern itself according to the centuries-old theocratic laws of social organization and conduct laid down in the Shariat, or cannon law of Islam."17 Tsarist Russia wanted to incorporate the peoples of Central Asia into the empire, but a strategy of flexibility and compromise was necessary.

The economic and cultural life of local population stagnated. The tsarist administration did not interfere in the traditional Muslim educational system. After the Mongol occupation, education passed into the hands of Islam. Elementary, secondary, and higher levels of education were provided by religious teachers. Many subjects of lay education were extracted from the curriculum of Islamic education. Reading and reciting Qur’an and other Islamic religious books were the core of Central Asian education. Even though maktabs, elementary schools, were still open to all, the literacy level was very low.

The tsarist Russian officials followed the principle of religious tolerance and did not interfere in the operation of the Muslim schools. At the same time, a small number of Russian schools were opened on the territory of Central Asia. These schools served Russian and other European children, whose parents moved to Central Asia, and children of the local elite.18 The introduction of Russian language and Russian culture to the Central Asian aristocracy was the first phase of the Russification policy of tsarist Russia.

The tsarist Russian administration also opened native Russian schools (or russko-tuzemnie shkoli) for the ethnic minorities of the native population of Central Asia. But the number of these schools was very small, which did not bring a lot of changes to the educational system of Central Asia. To a large extent, the religious intolerance of Russian Empire was legitimately over "in 1773 with Catherine II's edict of religious tolerance, which officially acknowledged the existence of the Muslim community and allowed the free practice of its essential religious rites." Even though, Muslim peoples of Central Asia were exempt from military service, they as well as other non-Russian nations of Russian empire were accepted as equal.

Many peoples of the Russian empire (Jews, Germans, Czechs, Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles) had immigrated to Central Asia before tsarist Russia invaded these territories; however, the immigration became sizable after 1860. These non-native residents of Central Asia utilized Russian schools. After the emancipation of serfs in 1861, many Russian and Ukrainian peasants also immigrated, as agricultural settlers, to free lands of Central Asia. The establishment of Russian administrative system in Central Asia required many Russian civil service, transportation, education, and industry professionals to immigrate on the territory of the newly colonized region.

Even though Russian and other European newcomers lived among the native population, they did not intermarry or assimilate with them. Moreover, the Russians built their own towns separate from the traditional urban areas of the Central Asian

22 Kimborlin, *Education Methods*, 94.
population. For instance, Russian immigrants built their own quarters along the Tashkent city, “establishing the pattern that they would follow in a number of other places: a European city developed through a rational system of urban planning, presenting a sharp contrast to the traditional native quarters.” Purely European towns and cities sprung up along the main railroads in Uzbekistan.

The traditional Muslim educational system was widely criticized by Russian tsarist administration as well as Jadids, late nineteenth-century Muslim reformers. As a movement, Jadidism emerged among the lower and middle urban bourgeoisie. The followers of Jadidism attempted to develop new teaching methods. In Central Asia Jadidism arose around the turn of the twentieth century as a result of Tatar influence from Crimea and the Middle Volga. Ismail Bey Gasprinskii, a Muslim of Tatar nationality, was the founder of Jadidism in Russian empire. He “had attended a military academy in Moscow and worked for two years in Paris as Turgenev’s secretary.” He advocated modern forms of progress, cultural autonomy, and understood the importance of change in the Muslim education system. Jadids recognized that the progress of Central Asian society was impossible without educational reforms and that people along with humanitarian education had to receive technical education. It was the late-nineteen century requirement of social development.

Most of the Central Asian Jadids, in contrast with Jadids in other parts of the Russian empire, had a traditional Muslim education and, if they spoke the Russian
language, learned it during their adulthood. The Jadids of Central Asia accepted many aspects of Western civilization and wanted to get rid of useless superstitions. "One of its leaders Fayzullah Khodjaev, formulated the aims of the Jadidi movement, which sought the secularization of Central Asian society: ‘Jadidi propaganda [was] aimed at promoting development, and the flourishing of democracy and capitalism along western lines’." 29 They believed that many scientific and technological elements of modern progress could be utilized for the economic and social development of Central Asian region. "The Jadids education movement wanted a system which could cope with Western technology and democracy while holding to the religious teachings practiced in the 10th century." 30

On the eve of the Revolution of 1917, many Jadids schools were open on the territory of Uzbekistan. According to the official data, in 1910, there were 13 schools in Tashkent, 31 in Khoqand, and 23 in the Fergana region. 31 Thousands of Moslem student attended new-teaching schools, but the literacy level was still very low. An especially difficult situation endured in rural areas of Uzbekistan, where only elementary education was available. Jadids educational reforms were not enough to accomplish universal literacy. In order to educate every child of Central Asia, drastic measures of development needed to be undertaken. The Soviet regime possessed such a vision. The radical measures of Soviet educational policy completely changed the entire educational system of Central Asia. It took a long time, but by the end of the Soviet period, the literacy rate of Uzbekistan reached nearly 100 percent. It was the greatest accomplishment of the Soviet government.

30 Kimborlin, Education Methods, 93.
31 Khalid, The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform, 165.
CHAPTER III
RUSSIFICATION POLICIES TOWARD UZBEK EDUCATION, 1938-1956

Я русский был выучил только за то, что им разговаривал Ленин.
(I would learn Russian only because Lenin spoke this language.)
Maiakovskii

Today many people in the former Soviet republics, especially in the big cities of Ukraine, Belorussia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, do not speak their native language. For them Russian has become their first language, and they learn their “mother” tongue in school as a second language. Other nations successfully passed through the years of Russification during the Soviet period and defended their native language, traditions, and culture. The process of Russification for Slavic nations started long before the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and established the USSR. In contrast, the Central Asian population lived in isolation and was only slightly influenced by Russian language and culture before the Revolution of 1917. Mostly, the process of Russification for them started after the communists seized power, and as a result of Soviet educational policies toward the non-Russian population of Soviet Union. Russification was a difficult process for both sides—Soviets and Uzbeks. It took a long time and all of financial and human resources to change the traditional ways of life of the Uzbek population. Education was one of the main tools of Russification and Sovietisation.

Right after the Revolution, the young Soviet state tried to eliminate the illiteracy. In 1926, at the All-Union Congress Lenin said that “the illiterate person stands beyond politics (vne politiki). The first thing he has to do is learn the alphabet.” The liquidation

1 “Beseda o moguchem i velikom russkom iazike,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 27 March 1956, 3.
of illiteracy was the primarily goal of Soviet educational policy. According to the official communist view, the illiterate person cannot be a true and active builder of communism. Only with a Soviet education a person could become a loyal and conscientious Soviet citizen. Short-term courses dedicated to the “liquidation of illiteracy” were open everywhere in the USSR.

The level of illiteracy among the population of Central Asia was the highest in the Soviet Union. Before the Revolution of 1917, “only seven per cent of men and one per cent of women were deemed to be literate.”

It took longer for the Central Asian population to get rid of illiteracy. Even though Soviet government spent a lot of money on education, by 1939 in Uzbekistan there remained 709,998 illiterate people. It was the result of the poor organization of educational programs. In many rural areas of Central Asia schools for illiterate adults were not established at all. Native people themselves were not eager to go to schools. “Often many students only registered for the courses, but [did] not attend them.... At a school of one of the leading factories of Tashkent- TSRR-out of 35 only 3- 4 students attend classes.” Some adults did not see the practical use of education; others did not have time to attend classes.

In order to reach out to the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union and to make the educational process for many adults and children easier, the Soviet government introduced education in the native languages. According to the statistics of 1927, most of the nations of the Soviet Union “were able to send their children to national-language

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4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
secondary schools.” The status of equality of all languages of the Soviet Union was the legacy of the Leninist ideology, but in practice not everything was that simple. Many nations and nationalities of the Far North, the Caucasus and Central Asia lacked a written language. People of the young Soviet state spoke some 130 languages, out of which only about 20 possessed written alphabets. Soviet linguistic experts worked hard to develop written languages for many of these peoples, including Turkmen, Kirgiz, and Karakalpaks of Central Asia. The Soviet process of nation-formation and the establishment of Soviet national republics was based on “size, scale, level of development, and above all the creation of a literary high culture; and then by privileging those in the highest rank with territorial status and a civic nationalism of their own.”

Many small nations were forced to assimilate and accept the written language and culture of their larger neighboring nation. Some existing written languages were recreated. In 1924, after the Soviet government took control over the territory of Central Asia and established the Uzbek SSR, the recreation of the modern Uzbek language began. The population of the Soviet Uzbek republic, artificially created by the Soviet government in Moscow, was a mosaic. Of many ethnic minority groups that had been living on the territory of modern Uzbekistan for centuries. From the perspective of the Communist party, language was the main element that united people of one nation, who

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lived on the same territory. A universal Uzbek language was necessary to unite a large number of peoples of different origins that lived on the territory of Soviet Uzbekistan. “Some of them [were] Iranian speaking, for example the Iranis, and the Chalas, who [were] Islamized Bukharian Jews; and others [were] Arabs.”13 They were forced to accept Uzbek language and culture. Language was one of the most powerful tools of Soviet nationalization policy. The motivation for this policy was the belief that local administration needed local support, which would come from local cadres. The establishment of the Soviet regime on the territory of Central Asia and the enforcement of the Bolshevik ideology were the main aims of the nativization policy.

Before the Revolution of 1917, “Uzbeks, as most other Central Asians, referred to themselves, their language, their culture- in short, anything that was not foreign- as Muslim, not Uzbek, or Tajik, or Turkish or Iranians.”14 They divided the world into two parts: people who practiced Islam and disbelievers, or infidels. According to the Soviet nationalization policy, the population of the Soviet Uzbek republic had to have a notion of themselves as Uzbek people, but not Muslims. The national identity was an important substitution to the more general religious identity. Communists of the Soviet Union tried to get rid of the religious practices. Along with the Russification policy the anti-religious propaganda was expanded on the territory of the Soviet Union.

Before the Soviets seized power, there were several main dialects on the territory of modern Uzbekistan. All Uzbeks used the Arabic alphabet but had different pronunciation and grammar. In 1920s the Soviet government decided to introduce the Latin script to the Muslim population of Uzbekistan. The Latin alphabet was chosen over

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the Cyrillic because the Cyrillic script was associated with Russian Orthodox religion. After the conquest of the territories of Central Asia and the Far East, Russian Orthodox missionaries began their activity. Many nations of Far East and some Islamic ethnic groups of Central Asia converted to Orthodoxy. The introduction of Cyrillic alphabet in 1920s would evoke anti-Soviet resistance among Muslim population of the Soviet Central Asia.

In 1927, the Latinization of the Uzbek alphabet began. “The change from Arabic script not only served economic interests, but also served the abandonment of certain religious practices, since all religious books were written in Arabic.” This consequently led to the fading away of Islamic identity. The abandonment of the Arabic alphabet broke Uzbek peoples’ economic, political, and religious ties with the outside Muslim world. In addition to the religious books, other texts and books that were written in the Arabic script were destroyed. “Anything written in the Arabic script was considered to be a ‘holy writing’ which could facilitate the emergence and replication of religious sentiment.” The shift from Arabic alphabet to Latin script in Uzbekistan did not take a long time. Because of the low literacy level in the Central Asian republics, “latinization was identical with teaching literacy.”

None of the previously existing dialects served as the foundation for the modern Uzbek language. Professional and experienced Uzbek language teachers, translators, and editors of Uzbek textbooks and newspapers were involved in discussions about new

18 Tokhtakhodjaeva, *Between the Slogans*, 63.
19 Ibid., 97.
orthographic rules. It was a long process of language development in the Uzbek republic. A few years later all of non-Russian nations of Soviet Union were forced to learn the Russian language as their second mother tongue. It was the final step of Soviet linguistic policy.

In 1930s, the educational politics and methods toward the non-Russian population of the USSR again changed. Many national schools on the territory of several Soviet republics were closed, and a new linguistic policy was enforced in order to make every citizen of USSR understand and speak fluent Russian. Most of the national schools of Central Asian republics remained open, but according to the Sovnarkom Union SSR and CC VKP(b) resolution of March 13, 1938, "About compulsory studying of Russian language in schools of national republics and regions," all national schools along with native language had to teach the Russian language. The Russian language became an important element of Soviet education.

While the number of national schools in Soviet Union was decreasing, the number of Russian schools was growing. In Central Asia the increasing number of Russian schools was a direct result of demographic changes. Industrialization and the development of cotton agriculture of Central Asia were very important for the young Soviet state. Slavic peoples were more advanced in modern agriculture and industrial field. In order to hasten the development of these spheres, the Soviet government sent young and enthusiastic professionals from other republics of USSR to Central Asia. Over the period from 1926 to 1939, "1.7 million of Russian people settled [on the territory of Central Asian republics], which is 58% of total population growth... During the next 20

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20 S. Levitina, "Novaia uzbekaskaia orfografiiia," Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 10 April 1939, 2.
21 RGANI, f. 5, op. 18, July 1954- May 1956, d. 74, l. 32.
years the increase of Russian population in many large and industrial cities (such as, Tashkent, Chirchik, Angren, Almalikl, Navoi, Gazli, and others) was fast and considerable. As a result, the Russian population outnumbered Uzbeks, and native Soviet officials stopped publishing the statistical data [on national diversity in Uzbek republic]." In other words, the Soviet government enforced demographic changes in Central Asia, and Uzbekistan in particular, which caused the predominance of Russian population in urban areas. Russian-speaking professionals were blended into the Uzbek urban population. This made the process of Russification natural and challenging for the natives. Uzbek people had to learn the Russian language in order to communicate at work and on the streets and in order to get a better job. Professional jobs in Uzbekistan required the knowledge of the Russian language.

The fulfillment of the linguistic policy caused problems for Soviet officials. In the Central Asian region, by the end of 1930s, there was an extreme scarcity of Russian language teachers. Many young teachers from the Slavic speaking republics of USSR, especially from the RSFSR, were sent to Central Asia and Uzbekistan in particular. Most of these teachers settled in the urban areas of Uzbekistan.

At the same time, party officials of Central Asian republics tried to solve the shortage of teachers on the local level by introducing teacher-training programs for native speakers and not only for the Russian language classes. In order to attract the native population official advertisements were posted in local newspapers. For instance, on January 5th, 1939, Pravda Vostoka, the main Soviet daily newspaper published in

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22 Boris Kamenetskii, Russifikatsiia i natsional'noe vozrozhdenie v Uzbekistane (konets 40-h- seredina 80-h godov) (Tel- Aviv, 1987), 11-12.
Uzbekistan, announced the beginning of one-year teaching courses in history, geography, and Russian language for non-Russian schools. To become a Russian language teacher in an Uzbek school, an applicant had to attest to his or her previous education, pass a medical exam, and pass examinations in history, Russian and Uzbek.24 Within ten months the student would become a teacher of the Russian language. It was a brave step forward that offered opportunities in a variety of fields in a short period of time, but it brought many other problems.

Most of teachers who finished teacher-training programs were unqualified. They had insufficient knowledge of the Russian language. “In most schools of Tunkara, Isnail-Tepe, Dzhalair, Bazar-Tokandi, the Russian language [was] taught by people, who do not know their subject. Young teachers often [could not] compose lecture plans and outlines.”25 The poor knowledge of Russian language and the inability to provide the correct outlines of lecture material was the result of incomplete teacher training. Ten months proved an insufficient training period for a future teacher.

Russian language teacher training programs were not popular among the Uzbek population. “For example, in the courses [of Russian language] in Tashkent technical college only 271 out of 500 places were filled, and later 79 students were expelled from the program for poor progress.”26 In order to fill in the available places in teaching programs, officials accepted people without a sufficient previous education. After graduation, these teachers, with the very basic knowledge of their subject, taught the

24 “Institut povisheniia kadrov narodnogo obrazovaniia,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 5 January 1939, 4.
Russian language in schools. As a result, Uzbek children did not learn Russian language. Professional teachers, who had sufficient training and experience, did not want to go to school to teach because a schoolteacher’s salary was very low. 27

After completing a Russian language training program, graduates were ordered to different places to work. Many of them were sent to the rural areas of Uzbekistan because the shortage of teachers in rural regions was greater than in urban settings. Misunderstandings and miscommunication between central and local administrations as well as inadequate conditions of work and housing made the life of many teachers very difficult. For example, Sakaev, a young graduate of the Russian language teaching program of 1938, together with his 16 colleagues was ordered to Bukhara’s rural area. At the beginning local officials said that they did not need Russian language teachers in their region. After the official documents were checked, teachers were assigned to their new working places. But when the group of young teachers became familiar with conditions of their future job, it became evident that each of them would have to serve schools of three kishlaks [Central Asian village]. These kishlaks were 4-5 kilometers apart from each other. They also had to live in buildings that used to be barns. These conditions made many of Sakaev’s colleagues to quit their jobs and go back to Tashkent- the capital of Uzbekistan. Sakaev himself gave up on his teaching career and took a position as inspector of the Russian language education. 28

The scarcity of school buildings, Russian language textbooks, and other school supplies were additional problems inhibiting the success of Soviet linguistic policy. Many regions of Soviet Uzbekistan did not have buildings for schools; and local Soviet

administrations were responsible for the construction of new ones. By 1939, 539 new schools were established on the territory of the Uzbek republic. Limited financial resources and complicated Soviet bureaucratic system slowed down the schoolhouse construction. In rural areas many schools were established in the buildings that used to be barns. These houses did not meet the basic hygiene requirements.

Every citizen of the USSR had an equal opportunity to go to school. The Soviet government brought new forms of knowledge and learning to many Uzbeks. Universal education and the compulsory study of the Russian language were the main elements of Soviet education. “Russian language became an international language of socialistic culture, in the same way that Latin served as the international language in the Middle Ages, and French in the 18th and 19th centuries.”

By 1939, the Soviet government established 27 universities on the territory of Uzbekistan. Russian language was the language of instruction in all. Thousands of students attended Uzbek institutes of higher education, but most students who finished universities were Russian. The drop out rate of Uzbek students was very high. For example, in 1939 the average drop out rate of Uzbek students was 42.4 percent. The inadequate Russian language instruction in national Uzbek schools was the main reason for the poor progress of Uzbek students in universities. The insufficient knowledge of Russian language closed the door of higher education for many Uzbeks.

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30 “Russkii iazik- dostoinie sovetskih narodov,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 8 July 1938, 1.
31 M. Popov, “Podniat’ kachestvo visshego obrazovaniia,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 9 March 1939, 2.
32 Ibid., 2.
In 1940, according to the decision of the General Council of the Uzbek Soviet republic, the Uzbek writing system was changed from Latin to a new script based on the Cyrillic alphabet.\textsuperscript{33} It was an important economic and political measure. This change was one of the ways in which the Soviets attempted to Russify Uzbek population. In addition to that, the context of education was changed too. "Young Azerbaidzhanis, Uzbeks and Tadzhiks may be taught in their own language, but not about such stalwarts of nineteenth-century resistance to Russian imperial expansion as Shamyl or Yakub Beg. Nor is there any allowance [not officially, at any rate] for the ‘traditional’ attitude towards [for example] the role of women."\textsuperscript{34} Many peoples of the Soviet Union were forced to change their traditional ways and attitudes in order to become Soviet people.

The context of Uzbek education changed completely. It was Russified. Now Uzbek students had to study the works of the great Russian classics, such as Pushkin, Lermontov, Tolstoi, Gogol, Dobroliubov, and others. These authors' famous works were outlined and translated into the Uzbek language and included in textbooks for native schools. A small number of native writers, such as Yunus, Aini, and Behbudiy, was utilized in the Soviet Uzbek education too.\textsuperscript{35} Of course, works of these native writers were chosen because they favored the Soviet regime. The employment of native writers helped to justify Soviet nationalization policy. Every Uzbek along with Russian literature had to know his native culture and writers.

Education was one of the most effective tools of the Soviet government to spread Soviet ideology and to bring up a completely new generation of Soviet people, who

\textsuperscript{33} F. Namalov, "Novii svod pravil orfografii uzbekskogo literaturnogo iazika," \textit{Pravda Vostoka} (Tashkent), 12 April 1956, 3.
\textsuperscript{34} Tomiak, \textit{Soviet Education in the 1980s}, 34.
would become enthusiastic workers and would build socialism or the radiant future (svetloe budushee). The Soviets tried to change the basis of life of Muslim population of Central Asia by forcing females to study in public schools and to take off their veils, establishing new forms of women’s organization, like the kolkhoz and sovkhoz, and reinforcing communist ideology through the process of education.

Religion was one of the targets of Soviet education. Islam was not only the religion of Uzbek population; it was the way of life. Anti-religious propaganda and Soviet education were the main tools to bring up a new generation of Uzbek Soviet atheists. Teachers were bearers of scientific anti-religious knowledge. They had to teach children to explain every phenomenon of life from the scientific point of view. Physics and biology were utilized to destroy religious myths and legends. Uzbek pupils had to become “not dispassionate atheists but militant people without god (bezbozhniki).”

There were also a new generation of Soviet Uzbek students who applied their knowledge at home and proved their parents and grandparents the power and logic of science. The attack of the Soviet government on Islam did not stop the devoted Uzbek population from practicing their religion. Gradually Islam was driven underground. Uzbek Muslims continued to practice their religion privately at home and in clandestine mosques.

The creation of a new soviet nation without ethnic, cultural or linguistic division was the main goal of the Soviet government. Education, with its process of Russification, was the most effective tool. The Russian nation was the leading power of the Soviet state that helped the primitive peoples of Central Asia to develop their cultures. Russification itself did not mean that every nation of the Soviet Union would become Russian; it meant

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that every ethnic group would become Soviet, including Russian people as a nation.

Many aspects of Russian culture were destroyed under the Soviet regime. For example, there was no tolerance for the Russian Orthodox religion. The process of Russification was driven further with even more coercion after the Second World War.

During the Second World War, a large-scale immigration of the Slavic population took place on the territory of Soviet Central Asia. Under the pressure of the German full-scale offensive on the Eastern front, many professionals were forced to move along with dismantled factories from the European part of the Soviet Union to Central Asia. After the war, an impressive number of forced Slavic immigrants decided to stay. By 1955, nearly 5,000,000 Russian and Ukrainian settlers lived on the territory of Central Asia, which constituted about a third of the whole population of the Soviet East. Most of them settled in the urban areas of Central Asia. The Russification of the urban Uzbek population proceeded rapidly.

The demographic changes of the urban population of the Uzbek Soviet republic resulted in changes of many aspects of city life. An increasing number of native children who lived in large towns and cities attended Russian language schools. Uzbek parents had a choice to send their children to study in Russian or non-Russian schools. But "the choice was not altogether equal: Russian schools were likely to be better equipped, and they were more useful to those who planned to apply to institutions of higher learning outside the Republic or to enroll in certain renowned colleges within the Republic in which courses were taught in Russian." The Russian language was the main element of Soviet education. Most of the higher education institutions of the Soviet Union taught in

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Russian. Thousands of students of Uzbek nationality were forced to drop out of colleges and universities, mostly because of a lack of knowledge of the Russian language. The ability to speak the Russian language was very important for young generations in the system of Soviet education.

Inadequate instructions of the Russian language in Uzbek schools resulted in students’ poor progress. Uzbek students were confused by differences of Uzbek and Russian grammar. The ministry of education suggested the comparison method of teaching Russian language in Uzbek schools. In order to fulfill this method, the Russian language teacher had to know the Uzbek language and the Uzbek language teachers had to speak Russian language. Only in these conditions could students learn the proper Russian.

In 1952 the Communist party of Uzbekistan decided to continue the systematization of Uzbek orthography. Students, teachers, reporters, and scientists were involved in the process of improvement. The unification of the Uzbek writing system was an important step of the Uzbek cultural development. Many works of Russian and Uzbek classic writers, works of Lenin and Marx, and Soviet government resolutions were translated and published in the modern Uzbek language. As a result, the vocabulary of the Uzbek language was enriched with the new terminology. Old monolingual and Russian-Uzbek dictionaries became obsolete and had to be revised and expanded. A new set of

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39 Bilinsky, “Education of Non-Russian Peoples,” 432.
rules for Uzbek language orthography was published in 1956. It took many years for Soviet linguists to adopt and create modern Uzbek language.

Every year millions of Uzbek textbooks, methodical manuals, and Russian-Uzbek dictionaries were published, but a small number of copies of these editions did not satisfy Uzbek contingent of students. The quality of some textbooks was very low. There were many mistakes and imperfections. In connection with the new code of orthographic rules, the publication of many textbooks in 1956 was delayed. For example, the Tashkent printing-house instead of planned 145 thousands alphabets published only 60 thousand. Many Uzbek children could have suffered without primers that year, but native schools organized buying up old ones, which partially helped to escape a shortage of primers. Every year schools and students bought textbooks; as a result, many new textbooks sometimes were left in the bookstores without buyers.

The majority of children in the rural areas of Uzbekistan attended native language schools. The Russian language instruction in non-Russian schools of rural Uzbekistan was poor. Only 50 to 70 per cent of Uzbek students made satisfactory progress in school. Many unqualified teachers had only the most basic knowledge of the Russian language. The frequent change of the pedagogical form in rural schools also disturbed and affected the educational process. The shortage of textbooks and manuals in the Uzbek language, and the high drop-out rate of Uzbek girls were the main problems of rural education. Some girls did not go to public school at all; they were educated at home. The absence of connection between parents and school in rural areas was crucial. Parents

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43 Namalov, "Novii svod pravil," 3.
44 V. Mironov, "7 millionov knig dla shkol i vuzov," Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 3 March 1956, 2.
46 "Uluchshit' uchebno- vospitatel'nuiu rabotu v shkolah," Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 19 April 1953, 3.
ignored the fact that their children made poor progress at school and lacked discipline in the classroom and on the streets. There was no link between Soviet education and Uzbek home upbringing.

The inadequate Russian language education in native schools was the direct result of the insufficient pedagogical training for the Russian language teachers in Uzbek universities. The majority of Uzbek universities suffered from poor organization of teacher training programs. Many native students were admitted to universities without sufficient knowledge of the Russian language, and because of that, were indulged throughout the whole period of studying in university. In this situation Uzbek universities could not possibly provide professional Russian language teachers. Due to the shortage of Russian language teachers in Uzbek schools, many instructors had to work extra hours to cover for the scarcity of the Russian language pedagogical material.

Many Uzbeks who spoke perfect Russian, but the majority of Uzbek students had trouble with the Russian language. Russian grammar was the biggest problem for Uzbek students. It was difficult and confusing. The poor quality and shortage of Russian language textbooks and manuals for Uzbek students in universities of Uzbekistan were other reasons for the poor progress of Uzbek students. Many graduates of Uzbek schools lacked a satisfactory knowledge of the Russian language and were unable to continue their education in universities or to get better jobs. The Russian language became the key component of success in the Soviet Union.

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“The knowledge of Russian language opened [the door] of Russian and world culture’s great treasury to Uzbek people.”48 The Russian literature and the Russian language influenced the development of Uzbek national culture, especially the Uzbek literature. The Soviet government sent many Uzbek poets, writers, and critics to study at the best universities of Moscow and Leningrad. They were assigned internships and practical trainings in the best publications of the Soviet Union (Literaturnaia gazeta, Novii mir, Ogonek, Znamia).49 The Russian language became a second native language of the Soviet non-Russian intelligence. The Russian language was the language of communism, science, technology, and Russian literature. It signified progress in the Soviet Union.

By 1953, most Soviet republics of the USSR completed the plan of the seven-year universal education. The republics of Central Asia lagged behind. While the Ministry of Education of the Soviet Union considered questions about the ten-year universal education, the Soviet Uzbek republic struggled for bringing Uzbek girls in to the public schools to complete their secondary level of education. Universal education was the biggest challenge for the Soviets in Uzbekistan. The Russification of Uzbekistan was going very slow, especially in rural areas where the Russian population was absent. Old religious and cultural traditions were still alive and widely practiced.

In 1953, after Stalin’s death, Nikita Khrushchev became a new General Secretary of the Central Committee of Communist Party of the Soviet Union. New Russification policies took place during his leadership. The main ideas of Khrushchev educational reforms of the 1950s were to increase the study of the Russian language in the non-

48 “Beseda o moguchem,” 3.
Russian republican schools and to decrease the number of students who would get their education in their native languages. The Russian language was the toughest subject for most non-Russian students of the USSR. Because children were overloaded with three languages (mother tongue, Russian, and a foreign language, such as English, French, or German) in their national schools, extra hours to study Russian language were given at the expense of the other subjects.

Most republics of the Central Asia accepted Khrushchev's new Russification policy. As a result, Russification among the Central Asian nations, mostly among urban population, increased. Further Russification and greater centralization in Soviet Uzbekistan followed with new education reforms of the mid-1960s. "In September 1966 the Party Central Committee and the USSR Council of Ministers issued a decree, which, among other things, subordinated a number of institutions of higher education in the republics directory to the Union-Republican Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education in Moscow."

50 This new wave of Russification policies strengthened the position of the Russian language as the universal language of the Soviet education and as the language of entrance examinations and lectures.

50 Ibid., 435.
CHAPTER IV

THE LIBERATION OF UZBEK WOMEN, 1938-1956

A woman must know how to read because she must read the Holly book of Koran; but she must not know how to write, for she would then be able to write love letters. Local laws of Central Asian peoples

Right after the communists seized power in Russia, the Soviet government proclaimed the economic and political emancipation of women in all the republics of the USSR. Women in tsarist Russia were less educated than men. Many professions were prohibited for women. Ideally, women only had to be educated enough to read the Holy Bible in order to take care of children’s religious education at home. The majority of women had a basic education or did not have an education at all. Peasants, and especially peasant women, “were seen by Soviets as backward, primitive, patriarchal figures in need of transformation, and so were subjected to personal and political instruction in broadcasts, newspaper broadsheets, propaganda pamphlets, and study circles.”¹ In order to create a new Soviet woman, who would be “a strong free citizen, … politically and legally equal to any man… [and] fully involved as any man in the productive work of the world beyond the family” the Women’s Department (Zhenotdel) was established in 1919.² Members of the Women’s Department intended to mobilize, educate, and politicize women of the Soviet Union.

Illiterate Slavic peasants were devoted to the Orthodox religion, and consequently, it was very difficult for the state to convince them to go to schools and to follow the Soviet ideology. Still, it was much easier to declare and to carry out the

equality of political and civil rights of all women and men in the Slavic republics than in the Muslim republics. Central Asia was more challenging for the Bolsheviks. The Soviets had to put forth more effort to Russify the Uzbek population, and especially Uzbek women.

According to notions of emancipation, backward and exotic women of Central Asia had to be freed from the slavery and savage rules of the male-dominated society of Central Asia. Zhenotdel was the most useful and helpful organization in the process of the female liberation. To politicize and to draw Uzbek women into public life through membership of the communist party, schools and local female groups were the main tasks of zhenotdel. The activities of the zhenotdel in Uzbekistan “included the construction of women’s clubs, ABC schools to fight illiteracy, Red Corners, Red Boats, Red Yurts, Red Teahouses, and mountaineer women’s Red Huts.” 3 Aleksandra Kollontai, one of the chiefs of the Women’s Department asserted that “in the East we need to teach, draw into schools, and enlighten women... we need to engage women of the East in the people’s education, in the out-of-school activities (vneshkol’noe delo), in the process of liquidation of illiteracy, we need to organize special schools for the Moslem women, and much more.” 4 From the party’s perspective, the veil was the essential attribute of Central Asian women. To make women of Central Asia abandon their veils was the greatest concern of the Soviet government. It was the first and very important step of their liberation within the process of Russification. To free and to educate Central Asian women were the primary goals of the Soviet government in Central Asia.

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3 Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, 78.
By the early 1920s, Bolsheviks established military and political control in Central Asia and began to realize of Soviet nationalization policies. During the process of creation Uzbek nation, language, and culture, indigenization (*korenizatsia*) was the major and the most useful nationalization policy. Then, the nationalization policy was radically changed. The veil was officially recognized as an essential attribute of Uzbek culture and women. It was a unique symbol of Uzbek national identity.

The practice of veiling was not universal in Central Asia. It varied with time, place, and traditions. “The heavy horsehair- and- cotton veil, however, existed scarcely at all on the nomadic steppe or in the mountainous regions of northern and eastern Turkestan, let alone among the many non- Muslim peoples of the wider Soviet East, ranging from Caucasian mountain dwellers to Buddhist Buriats to Koreans living in Siberia.” In contrast with women of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstean, who did not wear heavy veils, women of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan wore very heavy veils: chachvons and paranjies that covered all women’s bodies including their faces.

Also, the veil was not an essential element of Muslim religion. It was more of a territorial and traditional element of some Central Asian nations, and the Uzbek society in particular. All Uzbek women wore veils, but not all of them were Muslims. “Indigenous Jewish women in Bukhoro, for example, wore the same paranjies and chachvons as their Muslim counterparts and shared other customs as well.” Moreover, according to the Holly Qur’an, Muslim women had to “lower their gaze, and protect their private parts and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent…” Interpretations of this passage of the Qur’an were different. Many Moslems understood this part of the

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5 Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, 43.
6 Ibid., 51.
Holy Qur’an to mean that women could display only face and hands, but others interpreted this fragment to mean Moslem women had to cover everything, including their faces. A Moslem woman, whether she should cover her face or not, had to cover her head, neck, and bosom, and wear a thick loose dress that would not show the shape of her body and would not be similar to a male clothe or a costume of an infidel.  

Many historians agreed that women’s veiling was a defensive strategy. Central Asian men had to protect his women—mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters—from the sexual temptations of other men. Women were forced to cover their bodies with heavy veils. Some historians argue that veils were not only the measure of defense, but also an attribute of fashion. They believe that when Arabs came to Central Asia, many high class women of this region wore veils as an expensive accessory. In Central Asia, the veil was a symbol of a high social position. “Until roughly the 1870s, upper-class Muslim women in Tashkent and other cities of southern Central Asia had demonstrated their good character by wearing a mursak, a veil that covered most of their bodies but left the face uncovered.” With time the quality and appearance of veils changed. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most women of Uzbekistan wore heavy veils that covered women’s face and body.

As well as veiling, the traditional segregation of Uzbek men and women was a measure of female moral protection. “Most especially it was the most effective means of ensuring that family honor, with its roots in female monogamy and sexual purity, remained untainted by the vagaries of formal and informal contact between the sexes in

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9 Northrop, Veiled Empire, 44.
the public sphere.” Generally, women were not allowed to go out of the house, to visit relatives, or move freely in the streets without men’s permission. Nevertheless, Central Asian women could easily interact with female relatives and members of local community.

Segregation and inequality of sexes were constituted in the complex of religious (Shariat) and traditional pre-Islamic (Adat) laws that governed the lives of Central Asian people. In spite of the strict seclusion and heavy veiling in the most parts of Central Asia, women played an active role in transferring culture and traditions. “Their lives revolved around bringing up and educating their children, around concern about the prosperity of the family and around strengthening of their own and their children’s spiritual and moral character.” Many women practiced an authority at home and ruled the household.

There also was a difference between urban and rural women’s lives. The social gender segregation among the urban population was far more obvious than in rural areas. While urban prosperous women stayed at home and were totally subjugated to their husbands, lower-class women from rural areas often had to work in order to support their families. So, rural women “often had a strong public and social presence.”

During the Uzbek nation making process, korenizatsia was a strategically important political step of the Soviet government. According to the early Bolsheviks’ nationalization policy, the veil was an essential attribute of Uzbek culture. The Soviet government in Tashkent supported women’s veiling in Uzbekistan as an expression of traditional Uzbek culture, which unified peoples that lived on the territory of the Soviet Uzbek republic. By 1926, the Uzbek nation was officially declared. In the middle of the

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11 Tokhtakhodjaeva, *Between the Slogans*, 37.
12 Northrop, *Veiled Empire*, 42.
1920s the Soviet government began Sovietization of the entire population, which, consequently, meant that all nations of the USSR had to give up their ethnic peculiarities. For the members of the Uzbek nation the process of becoming Soviet citizens began with the women’s unveiling.

Before the 1926, even though the unveiling campaign had not officially started, a few Uzbek women cast off their veils. Under the influence of communist agitators’ activities some native women took off their veils. “Although some cases were in party annals, they usually involved only a few women acting individually- not in a large groups- and almost always at demonstrations or gatherings convened at great distances from their homes.”\textsuperscript{13} Many Uzbek women were brought to Moscow to participate in party congress or all union gatherings. There, thousands miles away from their families and communities, Uzbek women “sometimes could be induced to toss off their veils as a dramatic statement to the assembled, mostly Slavic delegates, who would applaud loudly and then go back to other business.”\textsuperscript{14} These women would don their veils, the “pageantry” of the Uzbek nation, back before they will came back home.

From the beginning of the Soviet rule in Central Asia, women were officially declared equal members of the Soviet society and builders of the radiant future. In 1918 in Central Asia the Constitution of the Soviet Union, which declared the equality of rights between men and women, was approved.\textsuperscript{15} From then on, the Soviet state claimed to have full rights over women across the Soviet Union. Central Asian men no longer had their traditional rights over women as a form of property. With the establishment of the Soviet regime the oppressive patriarchal rules of everyday life in Central Asia had to come to

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Tokhtakhodjaeva, Between the Slogans, 49.
the end. Indigenous women regardless their age or social position were victims of the traditional Islamic society. The incorporation of women into Soviet production was the central feature of the Soviet policies. Working Uzbek women would gain their economic independence, which, consequently, would lead to social liberation.

The unveiling campaign of 1927, or the hujum, was the first step on the way of female liberation in Uzbekistan. The liberation of Uzbek women and modernization of Uzbek society through the hujum were the main goals of the Soviet government. The unveiling campaign gave opportunities to Uzbek women for employment outside their homes and access to education. Another idea behind the hujum was to destroy Islamic tradition and customs. “Magazines and newspapers provided antireligious activists with primers on the fine points of Qur’anic doctrine and sought to highlight what they saw as superstitious, oppressive aspects of local custom.”

Form the party’s perspective, if the physical Islamic attribute would be removed, then other forms of the religious devotion would gradually disappear. The veil was an external trapping of the Uzbek Muslim society. To destroy the monopoly of Islam over the cultural life of the Uzbek society was the main objective of the hujum.

The Soviet government tried to prove the legitimacy of unveiling campaign. Besides the Soviet civic law that declared women as equal members of the Soviet society, Bolsheviks represented medical testimonies. Soviet doctors testified that veils were harmful to women’s health. They claimed that female members of Uzbek society suffered from various eye infections, skin diseases, and other respiratory illnesses.

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16 Northrop, Veiled Empire, 74.
17 Corcoran-Nantes, Lost Voices, 45.
On 8 March 1927, the International Women’s Day, the first mass unveiling took place in Uzbekistan. The majority of women who participated in hujum campaign were forced to do so by the party members, zhenotdel activists, and their husbands. “For men, the unveiling of their wives became a condition of employment, and the veil was banned from the zhenotdel, schools and the workplace.” From now on; Uzbek women who wanted to participate in the public life of local community, continue their education and work, had to give up their veils.

From the beginning of the Soviet regime in Uzbekistan, local “party members were ordered to be moral exemplars in every possible way: no drinking, bribe-taking, or visiting of prostitutes.” Consequently, in 1927, the communist party first demanded that Uzbek communists unveil their wives and daughters. Many of them refused to follow communist party orders. Uzbek men defended their position with the fact that when they signed for the communist party card, they did not know that they would have to unveil their wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters. Indigenous members of communist party, who were called upon to be a personal example for the rest of the Uzbek community, failed to carry out their mission.

Uzbek communists and their family members were caught between two powerful forces: the Soviet state and traditional Uzbek community. On one hand, if Uzbek communists would unveil their women, they would bring shame and violent response upon their families. On the other hand, if they would not follow the hujum they would loose their party memberships and positions in the Soviet structure of Uzbek republic. In

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18 Ibid., 46.
20 Ibid., 184.
1927, Uzbek communists faced an ultimatum: they either had to unveil their wives or give up their party membership. The communist party membership card was the pledge of benefits and opportunities in the Soviet state. The controversy was great. The majority of Uzbek men choose honor and the local community’s respect over the communist party membership. Many Uzbeks ignored the party’s call for the hujum and refused to participate in it.

Like all policies ordered from above, the hujum did not have social support in Uzbekistan. The conservative Uzbek society, especially male members of the community, encountered the hujum campaign very negative. “The attacks on women began almost immediately after the mass unveiling as harassment turned to unprecedented violence against hujum women.” In 1928 in Uzbekistan 226 women were murdered and in 1929 the number of such cases doubled. Official reports of 1928-29 show that many Uzbek Bolsheviks were hostile to hujum and had anti-Soviet attitudes toward unveiled women. Uzbek party members were “threatening or beating women who wished to unveil, harassing zhenotdel activist to prevent them from working, practicing polygamy, bride price, and underage marriage in their personal lives, taking sexual advantage of schoolgirls and activists who had unveiled, and even raping and sometimes murdering unveiled women and activists.” Uzbek men accused unveiled Muslim women of being prostitutes and apostates who deserved such a treatment as rape or murder. The hujum did not change the image of Uzbek women. Female members of Uzbek communities remained weak, inferior, and dependent on their men.

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21 Ibid., 194.
22 Corcoran-Nantes, Lost Voices, 47.
23 Tokhtakhodjaeva, Between the Slogans, 60.
Most of Uzbek women, including those who joined the Communist party, deliberately refused to participate in the hujum campaign. Some of them did not want to unveil, because they saw that the unveiled women were the object of scorn and physical abuse. Often, those who remained veiled took part in harassing unveiled indigenous women. "One young woman, upon hearing a veiled woman call her a prostitute, snapped; she 'made a scandal, tearing off [the other woman's] paranji and then beginning to beat her, only afterward wanting to take [the harasser] to the police.' 25 Many women were "killed by their own relatives for violation of the honor code of patriarchal families." 26 Other women simply did not want to give up their traditional Uzbek custom of honor.

After the hujum demonstration, Uzbek women "[reveiled] immediately upon returning home or [refused] thereafter to leave their house." 27 The majority of indigenous women tried to balance their old and new ways of life. Often they would wear veils to enter traditional community and family celebrations or to participate in religious festivals. 28 Some women simply exchanged their traditional veils for large headscarves, shawls, and even tablecloths in order to maintain their honorable status as Muslim women.

In spite of the violent reaction of Uzbek population on the hujum, there were native women in Uzbekistan who remained unveiled. Some of these women were the relatives and wives of communist party members, female beggars, widows, prostitutes, orphans, and runaways. 29 These women, except for the female family members of Uzbek

25 Ibid., 95.
27 Northrop, "Language of Loyalty," 196.
28 Corcoran- Nantes. Lost Voices, 48.
29 Northrop, Veiled Empire, 90.
communists, who were under the communist party pressure, sought different aids, benefits, and protection from the Soviet state. In 1920-30s, the unveiled indigenous women outside of the urban areas of Uzbekistan, where Russian and other Slavic peoples outnumbered the native population, were under constant risk.

Soviets were not the pioneers in the introduction of educational programs for Moslem women in Central Asia. At the end of the nineteenth century, Jadids, new Moslem reformers, introduced new educational programs for every Moslem, including Moslem women. They wanted to modernize Islamic education, primarily, to fit the progress and utilize all of the modern advancements into the Moslem society. Jadids argued that women, who practiced Islam, should unveil and play an equal role in the Moslem society. Many Jadidi writers, such as "Abdurauf Fitrat, Abduhamid Sulaimin-ugli Cholpon, Abdullah Kadiri who were active in the first three decades of this century, declared themselves to be against the oppression of women, persistently defending women's rights to determine their own lives, to dignity and individuality."

As a religion, Islam did not make any distinctions between male and female education. "In this respect, the Prophet says: 'Learning is obligatory upon every Moslem: be he a man or a woman.'" In the Moslem world educated people always were well-respected. The Holly Qur'an itself literacy: "Read! In the name of your Lord who has created (all that exists)....Read! And your Lord is the most generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not."

30 Ibid.
31 Tokhtakhodjaeva, Between the Slogans, 29.
33 Qur'an, 96: 1-5.
Under the influence of Jadids’ ideas, a number of girls’ maktabs made their appearance in the nineteenth century, “and begun to alter the traditionally exclusive nature of Muslim education in favor of the male sex. These female primary schools were common to most large towns, but rarely appeared in the rural areas.”34 While “young middle- and upper-class women in urban areas received an education in Koranic law and the classics, and in some cases were taught Persian and mathematics,” lower-class women in urban and rural areas of Uzbekistan attended primary schools, or maktabs, run by the mullahs.35 Primary education that basically consisted of memorizing and reciting the Holly Qur’an and learning the Arabic alphabet was the same in maktabs for girls and boys. Often, girls in maktabs were taught by women, or otins.

Otins were female religious teachers, who enjoyed high social position in the Muslim society.36 For the most part, they were “women who came from ‘religious dynasties’,” wives of mullahs, or women of aristocratic origins.37 Their honored religious and social position could be compared in some ways to that of mullahs themselves. They had full responsibility for religious education of all girls and women in the Muslim community. Leading religious female gatherings and transferring religious knowledge to younger generations were the main duties of otins in Central Asia. Besides the religion, otins were experts in rituals and cultural mores. They transferred their knowledge and obligated women of local Uzbek communities to respect elders, to make pilgrimage to holy places, and to refuse to marry outsiders.38

34Medlin, Education and Development in Central Asia, 32.
35Corcoran- Nantes, Lost Voices, 138-39.
36Northrop, Veiled Empire, 43.
37Corcoran- Nantes, Lost Voices, 139.
38Ibid., 140.
Initially, highly educated women and women, who composed poems, were called otins. The first known otin was Haiat, a poetess at the court of the Uzbek khan Ubaid Allah.\(^{39}\) In the nineteenth century many famous poetesses, who also taught children, had the status of otin. Otins were representatives of the female Central Asian intelligentsia. During the Soviet period, many religious teachers went undercover and hid their identities in order to preserve their religious knowledge. Ironically, some otins who supported the Soviet regime and “were full card- carrying members of the communist party”\(^{40}\) sustained and practiced Islam in private at home. The Uzbek local administration often winked at their existence and religious activity in the area. Usually, otins transferred their knowledge and books to their daughters or daughters- in -law.\(^{41}\) Despite the religious repressions in the Soviet Union, the role of otins in Muslim society of Uzbekistan survived. In the post- Soviet period, otins reemerged to become “a crucial element in the strengthening of Islam and its practice in their communities.”\(^{42}\)

In the early 1930s, Communists of the Soviet Union proclaimed universal compulsory education for every child of the USSR, whether it was a boy or a girl. All children had to attend the same school and participate in the same classes; both genders had similar curriculum and standards. From the Communist party perspective, girls as well as boys were equal builders of the socialist future. This structure did not fit into the traditional way of life in Uzbekistan. From the beginning of the Soviet regime in Central Asia, the Soviets had to compromise certain aspects of the Communist ideology. “They [men of Central Asia] [said] to us [Soviet enthusiasts, who were sent to Central Asia to

\(^{40}\) Corcoran- Nantes, \textit{Lost Voices}, 140.
\(^{41}\) Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’, 78.
\(^{42}\) Corcoran- Nantes, \textit{Lost Voices}, 141.
civilize and Russify this region] that if we would establish universal schools then their women will not go there. It [was] necessary to find a way to avoid these questions. Our comrades showed to us this way - the organization of clubs for female workers and peasants only. It [was], of course, a transition step, temporary, but necessary measure. 43 It was a necessary step back. Radical changes would shift the Uzbek population to the anti-Soviet resistance.

Many female party and zhenotdel activists from the Slavic republics of the Soviet Union were sent to Central Asia to Russify the female population of the Soviet East. It made easier the process of getting women’s attention and convincing them to go to schools and the Soviet social party gatherings. It was a strategic decision. Only female party and zhenotdel members could reach local women at the beginning of the Soviet period in Central Asia.

In order to perform the Communist party duty better, many of these female instructors studied traditions, cultures, and languages of local nations. They read and studied the Qur’an, Shariat, “works on Central Asia by Tsarist Russian historians, legal scholars, geographers, ethnographers, and travelers; and memoirs of Tsarist officials and their wives, especially those containing some detailed references to the local way of life.” 44 In addition to the knowledge of Islam and traditions of the Central Asian population, party instructors wore veils as an important means of attempting to blend into local female society. These enthusiastic and patriotic deeds of female communist party and zhenotdel activists brought positive results, but there were not enough professional mentors. Rural areas of the Central Asian republics were in the worst condition; often the

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43 Kollontai, Rabotnitsa i Krestianka, 38.
rural population did not see even a male party instructor to coach their political and ideological positions. The majority of female instructors encountered the difficulties of language, transportation and general hostility of the native population.

Women were the weakest link of the Uzbek society. The poor organization of the political propaganda among the Uzbek population and the inability to convince them of the superiority of communist ideology brought few results in women’s education and liberation. During the 1920s and 1930s, the process of liquidation of illiteracy among Uzbek women was going very slow. Although zhenotdel was intensively involved in the process of liquidation of illiteracy, the majority of Uzbek women were not eager to go to schools for illiterate adults. Very few of them attended classes. “On August 13 [1938] out of 30 women only 8 attended classes [for illiterates] in schools for adults of kolkhoz of Tel’man.”45 Many women deliberately did not go to school and did not participate in the Soviet social events. They all had different reasons for that: religious views, neighbor pressure, or family situation. Most of Uzbek women were afraid to unveil and participate in social life of the Soviet Uzbek community because they feared to be murdered by their husbands and by the mullahs. No Uzbek court would convict a man for murder if he killed a wife who dishonored her family, traditions, and Islam.

But there were some young Uzbek women who were forced to stay at home by their fathers, husbands, or other male members of the family. The worst situation with women’s education was in the rural areas of Uzbekistan. The Soviet authorities had more success in controlling the urban Uzbek population, partly because they had frequent interactions with Slavic immigrants, who were sent there to urbanize, civilize, and

45 E. Kolosora, “Partiinaia zhizn’: v Kara- Dar’e zabili o rabote sredi zhenshchin,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 20 August 1938, 3.
Russify the Central Asian nations. Often young women were forced to quit school for the sake of their arranged marriages. In 1938 two Uzbek eighth grade female students notified their teacher that they were afraid to go back home during the school break. They feared that their parents would arrange their marriages. This information was reported to Azimova, the instructor of district committee. Azimova reported this to public prosecutor, but no actions were undertaken. Meanwhile, these two underage girls were forced to get married.  

Inactivity of officials made liquidation of illiteracy among Uzbek women more difficult. In the Kara-Daria region many complaints and requests of young Uzbek women were left without attention and actions. “Biradzhan Haitova wrote: ‘...Already three months I’ve been missing Comsomol meetings- my father does not let me out of the house. Please, help me.’” Many Uzbek women were desperate for help. Authorities received tones of letters that asked officials to assist them to go to school or to find a job, but officials failed to respond.

Even when officials tried to help Uzbek women, misunderstandings and miscommunications between different administrative offices frequently led to the fatal tragedies. In 1938 in Kara-Daria, Umid Kurbanova, a seventeen-year old member of the Communist youth organization, asked Nizamov, the secretary of district committee of Communist youth organization, for help. The young women tried to escape the arranged marriage. Nizamov wanted to help Kurbanova and advised her to stay temporarily on the territory of the pioneer summer camp, but he did not inform the administration of the camp about it. Without a special permission Kurbanova could not stay in the camp. So,

46 M. Popova, “Soveshchanie o rabote sredi zhenshchin,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 26 January 1939, 3.
47 Kolosara, “Partiinaia zhizn’,” 3.
she did not have another choice but to go back to her kishlak. There, after repeated refusals to marry, she was killed by her ‘fiancé’.

Bureaucracy was the biggest problem of the Soviet administrative structure. It was not possible to do something without special permissions from above. Many tragedies would have been prevented if the Soviet system would have been less complicated.

In the 1920s-1930s, many cases of polygamy, rapes, arranged marriages, and marriages with underage Uzbek girls existed in Uzbekistan. Ironically, these problems were observed within party ranks. For example, during the 1937 party investigation in Tashkent, authorities found out that many wives of indigenous communist party members were veiled and illiterate.

In 1939, one of the Uzbek secretaries of communist youth party organization was caught accepting the bride price for his sister.

Throughout the Soviet period, practices of arranged marriages with underage girls and polygamy as well as bride kidnapping, the payment of bride price (kalym), and seclusion were declared illegal and subject to criminal prosecution. From the party’s perspective, the treatment of women was the most obvious evidence of backwardness in Central Asian society. The persecution of women was an anti-Soviet crime, a crime against the rights of a Soviet citizen that violated the Constitution of the USSR. Uzbek communists were widely criticized for their anti-Soviet behavior. In order to reach the larger audience, the Soviet government utilized the media. "Local shaming was recounted..."

48 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 196.
51 Corcoran-Nantes, Lost Voices, 148.
in newspaper articles, editorials, and even newsreel films which discussed in a very
public way the progress of, and discoveries made by," communist party investigation. 52

The Women's Department played an active role in educating Uzbek women about
their rights as Soviet citizens. It "offered a free legal aid service and acted as legal
advocates and public defenders of indigenous women litigants." 53 Although zhenotdel
supported women's resistance to traditional ways of life, it, certainly, did not encourage
them to do so. 54 Young Uzbek women often could not get support from local officials.
Frequently, administrators were overwhelmed with similar cases, but sometimes the
officials themselves were involved in such crimes.

Although in 1930 zhenotdels in Russian and other Slavic and Caucasian republics
were liquidated, the Women's Department still existed in Central Asian republics due to
the political and ideological underdevelopment of the indigenous female population of
this region. In 1936, the new Constitution of USSR declared the equality of men and
women in all spheres of economic, political, and civic life. Officially, the problem of
women's emancipation was solved, and all zhenotdels in Soviet Central Asia were
closed. In 1956, after the women's issues and problems in Central Asian republics were
once again brought to the public and official attention, zhenotdels were reestablished. 55

During the Second World War, the attention of the Soviet government was
concentrated on the major problem of the German occupation. Russification and the
liberation of Uzbek women were now secondary to the immediate demands of the war.
At the same time, political instructions and ideological propaganda among the Uzbek

53 Corcoran-Nantes, Lost Voices, 55.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 19.
population continued. Because a large part of male Uzbek population was ordered to the front, many vacant communist party positions were offered to women. During this time the female party membership in Uzbek Soviet republic increased from seventeen per cent to thirty one percent.\textsuperscript{56} At the same time, the Second World War changed the position of women in Uzbek family. Uzbek women temporary or permanently became heads of their families.\textsuperscript{57} They were responsible for making all decisions. Many women got a feeling for independence.

Many Slavic people moved to the territory of Central Asia during the offensive of the German army. A large number of the Russian- speaking refugees settled down in urban areas of the Soviet Uzbekistan. Orphaned and homeless children from Slavic republics of the Soviet Union were also sent to Central Asia, and Uzbekistan in particular.\textsuperscript{58} Many of these children were adopted by local families. So, the process of the Russification and assimilation of the local population became more natural in large cities of the Uzbek republic. After the victory in 1945, the Soviet people worked hard to restore the industrial and cultural capacity of the USSR. Russification returned with new force to the non-Russian republics.

The hard work of postwar reconstruction paid off. The quality of education in all the republics of the Soviet Union improved, but the Central Asian republics still lagged behind. The Soviet policy of universal education forced all children to study together, which violated religious customs of women’s seclusion in Uzbekistan. In the 1950s Soviet authorities in the Uzbek republic still dealt with the old shibboleths of education. Generally, the number of Uzbek girls, who were enrolled in schools, had grown. In

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 168.  
\textsuperscript{57} Tokhtakhodjaeva, \textit{Between the Slogans}, 92.  
\textsuperscript{58} Yalcin, \textit{The Rebirth of Uzbekistan}, 104.
comparison to the 1948-1949 school year, the number of Uzbek girls, who studied in schools and universities, had grown in the year of 1952-1953 to thirty five thousand. More girls of local nationalities graduated from the ten-year high schools. Still, the drop-out rate of female students was high.

The plan of universal education in Uzbek SSR of 1952-1953 was not accomplished due to the high drop-out rate of female students. Most of these girls were high-school students. Their parents or husbands forced them to terminate their education. There were different reasons for that. First of all, the Uzbek society viewed women's education as needless and useless. Second, the structure of the Soviet educational system had a very strong anti-Muslim character. Finally, many Uzbek families could not afford to educate their daughters; they needed their help at home or on family fields.

Not only relatives or husbands were responsible for the high drop-out rate of Uzbek girls, but also school staff, party workers, and members of the local communities, who did not prevent these anti-Soviet crimes. The whole society that surrounded Uzbek girls was responsible for them. Neighbors and school teachers should not have ignored these facts; they had to speak up to defend these girls.

Numerous Communist party members, school principal, and teachers mistreated their wives, sisters, and daughters. They did not let them go out of the house without veils or participate in the social life of the local community. According to the Soviet law, it was illegal for girls under the age of fifteen to contract a marriage. This law opposed the traditional rules of Uzbek society, where a ten-year old girl was considered

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60 A. Rahmanov, “Ne dopuskat' otseva devochek-uzbechek iz shkoli,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 1 July 1953, 3.
marriageable. Uzbek parents and male members of the local communities had to follow the new Soviet rules, otherwise they could be prosecuted. Still, a huge number of underage girls were forced to marry and drop out of school.

Hypocrisy of male indigenous communist party members was common place. While Uzbek communists supported the Soviet state and communist ideology, they sustained Islamic customs and cultural mores. In this way Uzbek men “were able to obtain a certain level of power and privileges within the existing system of gender relations in Central Asian society.” The Soviet government in Moscow was sure that local officials and members of communist party were the true Soviet bond of the new Uzbek society, who would lead Uzbek people to the radiant future. In reality, many native officials led a hidden anti-Soviet life.

Polygamy, arranged marriages, and marriages with underage girls were still the biggest problems in 1950s. Uzbeks continued to follow their traditions and religion. Even Uzbek Communists, who worked in the party’s structure, did not give up their customs. In 1953, communist Sultanov arranged a marriage of Amina Sultanova, his underage sister. She was a six-grader (approximately 13-14 years old). Amina was forced to quit school. The marriage itself was not officially registered because according to the Soviet civil law it was illegal to marry an underage girl. The wedding ceremony, most likely, was conducted in a mosque according to Moslem traditions. None of the people of Amina Sultanova’s surrounding questioned her marriage. Her school teachers and neighbors

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61 Corcoran-Nantes, Lost Voices, 40.
62 Ibid., 165.
ignored the fact that an underage girl was forced to marry. Everything was done right according Uzbek traditions and Islam.

In pre-revolutionary times, polygamy was a widely accepted social phenomenon among the Muslim population of Uzbekistan. It was most common among the high social status Uzbeks. In the lower and middle classes of the Uzbek society due to the financial inability to support more than one wife, polygamy was rare. According to Soviet civil law, every citizen of the Soviet Union could have only one spouse at a time. A person who was married to two or more people was in violation of Soviet law. Uzbek people did not want to let their traditions fade away. Polygamy was the most common in rural areas of Uzbekistan. Usually, a man was officially married to one wife and other marriages were solemnized according to Muslim traditions.

In 1955, the secretary of Communist party of Kosh-Kupirskii region, Sherdzhanov, got married for the third time to an eighteen-year old girl. At that time, he already had two wives. The third wife was a student at Urgenchskii pedagogical institute and after the marriage he forced her to drop out of university. The paradox of his polygamous marriage was that Sherdzhanov and his second wife together finished the party school and later she worked in district committee of Communist party. Polygamy was a common crime among Uzbeks, and, especially, among local officials because they could make enough money to support more than one wife and their children. Ironically, indigenous members of communist party who were called upon to be a personal example for the rest of Uzbek population failed to carry out their mission. Throughout the Soviet period Uzbek communists showed themselves to be more Muslims than communists.

Although veils were prohibited by the Soviet law, veiling still existed among the population of the Soviet Uzbekistan as the most visible sign of resistance to the Soviet rule. After the Second World War an official unveiling campaign once again took place in Uzbekistan. The “veil-burning ceremonies were reincarnated... [and] the ‘last’ veil was burned in 1959.” The second attack on veiling and Islam did not bring considerable results either. After the arranged marriages many Uzbek women, especially in rural areas of southern Uzbekistan, were forced to don veils. It was a part of Uzbek culture and tradition. Every honored and respectful woman had to veil. In rural Uzbekistan this tradition was especially strong. The Soviet government liberated and emancipated a lot of Uzbek women, but it could not reach every corner of the Uzbek territory. The party leaders in Moscow relied on local party officials, but they followed Uzbek traditions themselves. Uzbek members of the Communist party were unreliable and not true communists.

Another old Uzbek tradition that stayed alive among the Uzbek population throughout the Soviet period was women’s self-immolation. “In 1955 in the [Uzbek] republic were registered 75 cases of women’s self-immolation; 11 out of these cases were self-immolation of female school students.” Self-immolation was a traditional form of women’s protest against domestic abuse, difficult family relationships, and false accusation. In 1955, in the Samarkand region a twelve-year-old girl committed suicide by burning herself. Her mother was an abusive parent. A fifteen-year-old girl committed the same type of suicide because her classmate accused her in stealing money. The existence and practice of traditional forms of protest among the female population of the

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66 RGANI, I. 15.
67 Ibid.
Soviet Uzbek republic shows that Uzbek culture and tradition were still very strong. Soviet culture and its traditions had not yet replaced the previous forms of life. In the 1950s Uzbek people were still a long way from the Soviet ideal. At the same time, women’s self-immolation showed that male domination in the Uzbek society was still presented. Native women often could not find the official protection from their abusers and accusers. They did not have another choice, but to burn themselves in order to bring the attention of officials in Moscow to their local problems.

In 1950s most of teachers in Uzbek kishlaks were men, which proves that the feudal Central Asian traditions were still alive. In pre-revolutionary Uzbekistan female teachers were very rare and only in maktabs for young girls. Traditionally male teachers had more respect and support from the conservative Uzbek public. In other words, under local community pressure Uzbek women did not choose the teaching profession. On the other hand, the high drop out rate of female students in schools restrained them from getting a pedagogical education.

Many Uzbek female party activists after their marriages were forced to quit their jobs and stay at home. In Chusta region of the Uzbek republic “the female active members of the Communist youth organization, Minara Mat’ianova, Mamacha Atadzhanova, Zul’fiia Iuldasheva after their marriages dropped out of the Communist party only because they were prohibited [by their husbands] to participate in social work.” Members of the local committee did not investigate the feudal treatment of the female population because, according to Uzbek traditions and culture, married women had to follow their husbands and do whatever their husbands wanted them to do. They

68 Arshurali Khusanov, “V Chuste miriatsia s feodal’no- baiskim otmosheniem k zhenshchine,” Pravda Vostoka (Tashkent), 10 January 1953, 2.
69 Ibid.
were ignorant of the fate of these women. Uzbek administrators, school principles, and party workers were involved in similar crimes against local women. They forced their wives to veil and to stay at home and did not let them participate in the social events of the local community.\textsuperscript{70} Soviet education and Communist ideology urged Uzbeks to change their way of lives, but Muslim religion and traditions were stronger in many parts of Uzbekistan.

Often the pedagogical staff in rural schools consisted of anti-Soviet elements. Mullahs and other religious mentors held teaching positions in Soviet schools.\textsuperscript{71} They attempted to convince people to obey Muslim religious rites and customs. The local administration winked at the presence of religious leaders and their active roles; moreover, officials themselves practiced Islam and supported the existence of religious leaders in the community. The Uzbek population did not want to give up their religion and traditions, especially, customs of marriage, birth, and death.

In 1953, 44.5 percent of all industrial workers in Uzbekistan were women. Uzbek women played an active role in the cotton industry.\textsuperscript{72} There were female doctors, teachers and agronomists, but this group of professional women was very small. By 1953, only four thousand female doctors and a few thousand of female teachers of the Uzbek nationality worked in Soviet Uzbekistan.\textsuperscript{73} Most Uzbek women had low-paying jobs, if they worked at all. Many Uzbek women were forced to stay at home on order to take care of their children. A small number of daycares were open on the territory of Uzbekistan,

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} "Usilit' politiko-vospitatel'nuiu rabotu sredi zhenshchin," \textit{Pravda Vostoka} (Tashkent), 21 January 1953, 3.
\textsuperscript{73} "Vospitanie zhenskikh kadrov- vazhnaia zacacha paitorganizatsii," \textit{Pravda Vostoka} (Tashkent). 22 July 1953, 1.
but the Uzbek republic needed more daycare centers in order to satisfy the needs of Uzbek women. Leading positions in kolkhozes, schools, and party administration were mainly occupied by Uzbek men.

The situation of women's education in urban Uzbekistan was much better. The large number of Russian speakers in Uzbek cities hastened the process of Russification. In 1950s many Uzbek girls graduated from Tashkent high schools and later on got into technical and pedagogical universities. Professionals and university teachers paid frequent visits to high schools in order to encourage pupils to continue education. Political and ideological propaganda among the female population of Uzbek cities was organized better than in rural areas. The Soviet government used radio, newspapers, women's magazines, and political circles to educate and enlighten women of the Uzbek republic. These tools of political propaganda were not available in many rural areas of Uzbekistan.

In 1956, N. Kaz'min, the head of school department of the Central Committee of Communist party of the Soviet Union, reported to the Central Committee on the maltreatments of Uzbek women in the Uzbek Soviet republic. He listed the cases of polygamy, self-immolation, arranged marriages, marriages with underage girls, and the involvement of local officials in these crimes. Kaz'min asked the Central Committee to send a special group of political educators to Uzbekistan. Officials in Moscow decided that after the congress of the Uzbek intelligentsia, where women's political and ideological education was discussed, it would be pointless to send specialists from Russia. They believed that the Uzbek party and local social organizations would be able

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75 RGANI f. 14-16.
to improve the situation among the female population of Uzbekistan. It was definitely a wrong decision, which indicated misunderstanding between core and periphery. According to Kaz’min’s report, many local administrators and party officials followed Islamic and Uzbek traditions. In order to change Uzbek women’s lives, the Soviet government had to use radical measures. They had to establish total control over the Uzbek population’s life and force them to change; otherwise, the liberation of women would not be accomplished.

The Soviet regime brought a lot of changes into the life of Uzbek women. The Communist party, the Soviet government, and the Russian people liberated and enlightened the women of Uzbekistan. They gave Uzbek women the opportunity to get an education and to choose their professions. The Soviet government vested Uzbek women with the human and equal political rights of the Soviet citizen. It played an active role in introducing modern technologies into their life. For the most part, the backward and primitive traditional life of Uzbek women was changing. The existence of old forms of protest and traditions proved that more of political and ideological work would need to be done in order to reach and liberate every woman of the Soviet Uzbek republic.

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76 RGANI, f. 5, op. 18, January 1956- October 1956, d. 79, l. 17.
Russification of the Central Asian population, and the Uzbek people in particular, had begun long before the Bolsheviks seized the power. By the 1880s, tsarist Russia completed the annexation of the Uzbek territory. Russian officials found the cultural life of the local population in stagnation. Russian language and Russian education were introduced to children of the local aristocracy and other wealthy families. Although the invasion of the Uzbek territory by Russian Empire started the process of Russification in Uzbekistan, Russian officials did not interfere into the life of local communities.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Jadids, the followers of the new method of teaching Arabic alphabet, appeared in Central Asia. Even though Jadidism was pioneered by Garpinskii in the Crimea in the 1880s, Jadid movement of Central Asia differed from Jadidism of Crimean Tatar and Transcaucasian Muslims. Its expression emerged as a ruthless critique of traditional way of life of Muslim Central Asian society. It also was a response to the Russian conquest and the rule of Russian Empire. Neither tsarist officials nor Jadids of Central Asia made radical changes in cultural life of the Uzbek population. Most of the people continue to live traditional life of the Muslim community.

Radical changes began after the revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks planned to build the Soviet state that would emerge as a voluntarily union of different nations, which, at the same time, would be unified into the one Soviet nation. Every citizen of the Soviet Union had to have the notion of his ethnic origin, but, on the first place, to be a bearer of the Soviet culture and the newly invented Soviet traditions. In order to achieve

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these grandiose plans, the Bolsheviks had to divide all peoples of the USSR into nations and designate the territory for the most of them. After the Bolsheviks established national territories and created national identities, the Soviet government enforced Russification policies.

The Uzbek national identity, territory, and language were artificially created by the Soviets without taking peculiarities of ethnic groups that have lived on the territory of Uzbekistan into consideration. The Soviet government tried to change the Uzbek culture and the everyday life of the Muslim Uzbek community. According to the soviet model, all Soviet citizens had equal rights for education, employment, healthcare, and other benefits. The Soviet government introduced the universal educational system to all nations of the USSR. The Russian language was placed at the core of the Soviet education. From the party perspective, every Soviet citizen had to speak and understand Russian language, the language of the Communist party.

Women’s question was another important, necessary, and difficult issue in Uzbekistan. Culturally, traditionally, and historically women in the Uzbek society were not equal to men. They depended on the male members of their family. This was one of the most difficult elements to overcome. To liberate women and to give them education and equal opportunity to work were the greatest issues of the Soviet regime in Uzbekistan. Islam was the way of Uzbek community’s life. It was impossible to change it in a short period of time. Muslim culture and traditions remained at the core of the everyday life in Uzbekistan.

Over the course of the two decades from 1960s till 1980s the Soviet government reinforced the policy of Russification. The Communist party was concerned about
Uzbeks’ weak skills in Russian language and measures were designed to address the problem. Students were forced to study more hours of Russian language in native schools. The Uzbek nation was subject to political instruction in the Russian language.

From the Communist party’s perspective, only the Russian language was suitable for use in science, technology, and intellectual life. At the beginning of the twentieth century Russian speakers were more urbanized and mobile than the other ethnic groups of the Russian empire. According to the official Soviet political line, the Russian language was the language of international communication among the peoples of the USSR. It was the language of communism, Marxism- Leninism, and its leader Lenin. The Soviet government chose the Russian language as the universal language of the multinational and multilingual Soviet Union. The Russian language was at the core of Soviet education. Without knowledge of the Russian language natives of the Central Asian region could not find qualified jobs or matriculate into universities.

Russification of education and the compulsory study of the Russian language in the Soviet Uzbek republic were related issues. The Russian language was an ethnic language that inevitably expressed aspects of Russian culture and tradition. This meant that some features of Russian culture and tradition replaced the ethnic characteristics of Uzbek nation. At the same time, many aspects of Russian culture and tradition were similarly erased, forbidden, or destroyed by the Soviets. “Great Russians were much more limited in manifesting their ethnic national aspirations or enjoying the institutions and privileges of a nation-state.... The nation was in danger, its heritage squandered, its monuments crumbling, the memory of its past distorted almost beyond recovery.”

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2 Suny, *The Revenge of the Past*, 129.
Russian culture and tradition were cast in the framework of communist doctrine. Whatever did not fit into the Soviet formula was thrown away and forgotten.

Russification had both a positive and negative impact upon the Uzbek population. The loss of tradition and culture was the worst aspect of the Russification policy. Many urban Uzbeks lost the ability to speak their native language; Russian became the mother tongue. In order to become Soviet citizens, Uzbeks had to give up their national identity and language. On the other hand, Russification benefited the Uzbek population in many spheres of modern life. The liquidation of illiteracy, the creation of a universal educational system, the involvement of Uzbek women in public schools, and the introduction of the Uzbek nation to modern technologies and science were the bright sides of Russification.

The emancipation of Uzbek women was the biggest achievement of the Soviet government. The Soviet policy toward woman encountered resistance from the conservative Uzbek society. Many women, especially in the rural areas of Uzbekistan, deliberately opposed policies of Russification and remained in household work or in lower-skilled jobs by preference. At the same time, there were women who were forced to follow traditional Uzbek customs by their husbands or parents.

Urban Uzbek women were more successful in their social and political liberation because they had “more opportunities and better facilities regarding employment, information and education.” There was a small group of professional Uzbek women. During the Soviet period, it was not unusual to see indigenous female directors of factories and kolkhozes. There were women who achieved high official positions. The most famous was Yadar S. Nasriddinova, who served as a chairperson of the presidium of

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the Supreme Soviets from 1959 to 1970. The medical field was one of the most popular fields among native women. By the end of the 1970s, indigenous “women constitute[d] more than three quarters of the medical personnel,” but most of the medical positions occupied by Uzbek female workers were low-pay or low-status positions. Although the Soviet government offered a great education and job opportunities to Uzbek women, most of the native women occupied the unskilled and manual labor jobs.

By the end of 1991, Uzbekistan had become an independent state and the Uzbek language was proclaimed its state language. Many Russian people left Uzbekistan due to linguistic difficulties. Today the urban population of sovereign Uzbekistan still prefers the Russian language as a means of communication. Besides, national minorities, those could not afford to publish their own newspapers, read the Russian press. By the end of the Soviet period, there were over 100 ‘indigenous’ and ‘immigrant’ ethnic minorities on the territory of Uzbekistan. Many ethnic groups immigrated or were exiled on the territory of Uzbekistan during the Stalin totalitarian regime. “These included Koreans from the Maritime province; Meskhetian Turks from Georgia; Tatars from the Crimea and Kazan; Chechens and Ossetins from the Caucasus; Jews from Ukraine, Belarus and the Russian federation; Germans from the Volga; Pontic Greeks from the Black Sea region and several others.” Members of these ethnic minority groups, most of which were very small in number, attended Russian schools. As a result, most of them were more comfortable with Russian language than with their own native languages.

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4 Corcoran-Nantes, Lost Voices, 168.
6 Landau, Politics in the ex-Soviet Muslim States, 82.
7 Yalcin, The Rebirth of Uzbekistan, 105.
8 Ibid., 104.
In contrast with the urban regions of Uzbekistan, the process of Russification did not go that far in the rural Uzbek areas. "60 per cent of Uzbek population lives in rural areas, and the figure is higher if we consider only ethnic Uzbeks, because non-Muslim minorities tend to live in cities." The rural Uzbek population managed to safeguard their national culture and traditions. They contrived to retrieve native languages as their first languages: as spoken on the streets and at home.

The collapse of the Soviet system resulted in the immediate program of the rebuilding of religious institutions throughout the former Soviet block. After the idea of Uzbek independence was carried out, religious schools and veiled women started to appear in the urban and rural areas of Uzbekistan. A growing number of young Uzbeks attend traditional religious schools. By the middle of the 1990s, over 5,000 mosques and 380 madrasas were opened and successfully operated on the territory of independent Uzbekistan. Uzbek media launched the official "propaganda of the image of a woman obedient to her husband, devoted to family, and 'domestic' guard of Islamic values." An increasing number of Uzbek men and women made the pilgrimage (hajj) to the holy places of Islam.

The constitution of Uzbekistan, which was approved in December 1992 by the Supreme Soviet, declared the equality of legal status, freedoms, and rights of all citizens of Uzbek republic, irrespective of sex, race, ethnic origins, language, religion, and social background; however, Uzbek women after the collapse of the Soviet Union lost their

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10 Ibid., 163.
12 Ruffin, *Civil Society in Central Asia*, 163.
economic and social significance. The deterioration of the economic welfare of women in Uzbekistan is stipulated not only by the general economic situation but also by lowering of their economic participation, reduction in social welfare privileges and subsidies, growing dependency of the social status of women on reviving religious and traditional views on the role of women in family and society. The average level of female employment in Uzbekistan dropped from 71 per cent during the Soviet period till 46.5 per cent after the declaration of independence of Uzbekistan. Besides their economic independence, Uzbek women lost many benefits and access to social services. In order to improve the declining social status of Uzbek women the new government of the independent republic of Uzbekistan began protective policies toward women.

Under the influence of social and economic decline of Uzbek women’s status along with increased number of arranged marriages and cases of polygamy the level of education of female Uzbeks declined. Although the compulsory general secondary education remained obligatory for every citizen of Uzbekistan, many women still left school for the sake of an early marriage. Now the continuation of their education is under the total control of their husbands. On the other hand, “a married young woman has a much higher status [in the Uzbek community] than an unmarried one does, this is why young girls themselves [prefer] to marry early.”

After the declaration of the Uzbek independence, the decline of Russian language became irreversible. Due to the high level of immigration a number of Russian professionals, including school teachers, in Uzbekistan declined. Russian language, as

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13 Ibid., 137, 28.
14 Ibid., 17.
15 Ibid., 18.
16 Ibid., 68- 75.
17 Ibid., 71.
well as Russian newspapers and television, was no longer favored in Uzbekistan.

Although the Islamic traditions and educational system were partially restored and the usage of Russian language deteriorated during the first years of Uzbek sovereignty, the new independent nation of Uzbekistan remains a product of the policies and trends of the Soviet era.


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