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The Fascination of Revolution: Central Asian Intellectuals, 1917–1927

The Muslim world encountered modernity in the form of colonialism, informal or formal. The encounter produced many different reactions from different groups in various Muslim societies. While the ulama debated whether a given society was *Dār al-Islām* or not (as Professor Komatsu's paper in this volume shows so ably), newly emerging groups of intellectuals (and state officials in countries that retained formal independence) argued from a modernist perspective and emphasized the importance—indeed the obligation—for Muslims to strive for “progress” and “civilization.” This trend of “Muslim modernism” underpinned the agendas of many modern states that emerged in the Muslim world in the twentieth century, but its place in the history of Muslim societies tends to be marginalized today, when Islam is more likely to be associated with opposition to “the West,” and to a political commitment based solely on the dictates of religion.

This, of course, is unfortunate. The ideas of progress, civilization, and modernity were absolutely crucial in defining the political action of many Muslims. In many cases, a commitment to these ideas led Muslim intellectuals to the espousal of revolution as a modality of change. This was especially true in the time of crisis unleashed by the destruction of the old colonial order in the course of World War I. The Turkish Repub-

lic was born in such a moment of crisis and the Kemalist regime explicitly saw itself as revolutionary. *İnkilap*, revolution, became the code word for the sweeping changes introduced by the republic. This paper presents a different but contemporary case of Muslim intellectuals' fascination with revolution—the case of the Jadids of Central Asia, who went from reform to revolution in the upheaval caused by the Russian revolution.

The Emergence of Reform

Jadidism appeared in Central Asia at the turn of the twentieth century. It began in the late nineteenth century with a critique of traditional Muslim education and culminated in the advocacy of a far-ranging transformation of many aspects of communal life. The key concepts in Jadidism were “civilization” (*madaniyat*) and “progress” (*taraqqiy*), evidence that the Jadids had appropriated Enlightenment notions of history and historical change. The Jadids assimilated these notions into their understanding of Islam to produce a vigorously modernist interpretation of Islam, in which the achievement of “civilization” (always in the singular) came to be seen as the religious obligation of all Muslims.¹

It was clear to the Jadids that the Muslims of the Russian Empire (and of Central Asia in particular) had lagged behind the rest of the world, that they were “backward,” and in urgent need of “progress”—of advancing along the path to civilization, of catching up with the “more advanced” peoples of the world. For the Jadids, the fault lay with the *maktab*, which not only did not inculcate useful knowledge, such as arithmetic, geography, or Russian, but failed, moreover, in the task of equipping students with basic literacy or even a proper understanding of Islam itself. The Jadids elaborated a modernist critique of the *maktab*, emanating from a new understanding of the purposes of elementary education. The solution was a new method (*usul-i jadid*) of education, in which children were taught the Arabic alphabet using the phonetic method of instruction and elementary school was to have a standardized curriculum en-

1 The following paragraphs are based on Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

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compassing composition, arithmetic, history, hygiene, and Russian. These new-method schools were to be the flagship of reform and indeed to give the movement its name, but the reform soon extended far beyond the modest goals of teaching functional literacy to children. Jadidism became a thoroughgoing critique of Muslim society as it was. As Munavvar Qori Abdurashidxon o'g'li, one of the leading Jadids of Turkestan wrote in 1906, "all aspects of our existence are in need of reform."² This included the reform of customary religious practices, the inculcation of new forms of sociability through the establishment of benevolent societies, the cultivation of new literary genres and of theater.³ The Jadids also argued for change in the position of women, who should receive education to allow them to become better mothers and better members of the community.⁴ Reform was an imperative that could not wait. "If we do not quickly make an effort to reform our affairs in order to safeguard ourselves, our nation, and our children, our future will be extremely difficult."⁵

For the Jadids, such reform could only come from within Muslim society itself. It was partly the result of the political conjuncture at which Jadidism arose: the Russian state frowned upon any activity it deemed "political," but nevertheless left large spheres open to communal action. Confessional schools therefore became a major avenue of reform, as did the printed word, which despite censorship and financial problems, transformed the way in which issues of communal importance were discussed. The main mode of operation for the Jadids before 1917 was exhortation—exhorting their compatriots to reform by painting vivid pictures (in newspapers, poems, and theater) of the grim future that awaited them if they failed to heed the call. The impassioned appeal and

2 Munavvar Qori Abdurashidxon o'g'li, "Isloh ne demakdadur," *Xurshid* (Tashkent), September 28, 1906.

3 See Shuhrat Rizayev, *Jadid dramasi* (Tashkent, 1997); Begali Qosimov, *Milliy uyg'onish* (Tashkent, 2002). Many writings of the Jadids have been published in modern Uzbek in recent years.

4 Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Şengül Hablemitoğlu and Necip Hablemitoğlu, *Şefika Gaspıralı ve Rusya'da Türk Kadın Hareketi (1893-1920)* (Ankara, 1998).

5 Munavvar Qori, "Isloh ne demakdadur."

the anguished editorial were the hallmarks of Jadid discourse.

Jadidism was a discourse of cultural reform directed at Muslim society itself. It was up to society to lift itself up by its bootstraps through education and disciplined effort. Jadid rhetoric was usually sharply critical of the present state of Muslim society, which the Jadids contrasted unfavorably to a glorious past of their own society and the current condition of the “civilized” countries of Europe. For the Jadids, progress and civilization were universal phenomena accessible to all societies on the sole condition of disciplined effort and enlightenment. There was nothing in Islam that prevented Muslims from joining the modern world; indeed, the Jadids argued that only a modern person equipped with knowledge “according to the needs of the age” could be a good Muslim.

The situation in Bukhara differed from that in Turkestan in significant ways. After they had capitulated to the Russians, the amirs of Bukhara staked their legitimacy on the claim of being the last surviving Muslim sovereigns in the region, and consequently the last safeguards for “orthodoxy.” They showed little interest in implementing significant reform. Yet, a constituency for reform emerged, as Bukharan merchants newly integrated into the global economy sought a modern education for their sons. The amirs’ refusal to open modern schools led local merchants to organize a benevolent society for “the Education of Children” (*Tarbiya-yi atfāl*) to send students to Istanbul for education. Bukharan reform thus owed a great deal to Ottoman debates. In contrast to Jadidism elsewhere in the Russian Empire, Bukharan reform was predicated on the reform of (and by) the state. Bukharan Jadids hoped that the amir would do his duty as a Muslim sovereign and lead his country to reform and progress. Education remained central to Bukharan reform, but it was to be implemented by the state.⁶ This vision was best articulated by Abdurauf Fitrat (1886–1938), who spent four formative years (1909–1913) as a student in Istanbul on a scholarship from *Tarbiya-yi atfāl*. In 1911, Fitrat used a fictional Indian Muslim traveler as a sympathetic but stern outside critic to list the desiderata of Bukharan reformers. As the Indian travels through Bukhara, he notes the chaos and disorder in the streets, the lack of any measures regarding hygiene and public health, the complete lack of eco-

6 Adeeb Khalid, “Society and Politics in Bukhara, 1868–1920,” *Central Asian Survey* 19, no. 3–4 (2000), pp. 367–396; Sadridin Aynī, *Ta’rikhi inqilobi Bukhoro* (Dushanbe, 1987).

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conomic planning or public education, and the corruption of morals and improper religious practices. Government officials (*umarā*) have no consideration for the good of the state; the ulama “drink the blood of the people,” and ordinary people are victims of ignorance. Fitrat takes care to spare the amir from criticism by the traveler through the rather weak stratagem of blaming all the corruption of Bukhara on the officials and the ulama, but the severe indictment of the current order of things is unmistakable.⁷

On the eve of the revolution, Jadidism had taken root in urban Central Asia, though it had by no means won the day. Traditionalist ulama retained considerable influence, and the carriers of reform found themselves fighting an uphill battle as they staked out a position for themselves in society. As aspirants to leadership, the Jadids were ambitious, and confident that the tide of History was behind them. They aspired to a universal Civilization, which they saw as fully congruent with Islam. As such, theirs was a struggle for *inclusion* – into the modern world, and into the Russian Empire as equal citizens, with rights and representation, rather than as *inorodtsy*.

From Reform to Revolution

This calculus of power was suddenly transformed by the collapse of the Autocracy in Petrograd. The abdication of the tsar was universally acclaimed as “the dawn of liberty,” as the beginning of a new era in the history of the various peoples inhabiting the empire. In a series of sweeping reforms, the Provisional Government abolished all legal distinctions between citizens on the basis of rank, religion, sex, or ethnicity, and granted every citizen over the age of 20 the right to vote. It also guaranteed the absolute freedom of the press and of assembly. Turkestans had become citizens.

The effect of the revolution on Central Asia was electric. The enthusiasm was captured by the Tashkent poet Sirojiddin Maxdum Sidqiy who

⁷ ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf [Fitrat], *Bayānāt-i sayyāh-i hindī* (Istanbul, 1911). On Fitrat, see KOMATSU Hisao, *Kakumei no Chuo Ajia: Āru Jadīdo no shozo* [Revolutionary Central Asia: A Portrait of Abdurauf Fitrat] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1996).

welcomed “the epoch of freedom” that had just begun: “The sun of justice has lit the world. . . . Now, we have to set aside our false thoughts; . . . the most important aim must be to give thought to how we will live happily in the arena of freedom.”⁸ The ensuing weeks saw public meetings that brought together thousands of people in the cities of Central Asia; all manner of cultural and political organizations appeared, and the elections to councils of various kinds took place. The First Turkestan Muslim Congress met in Tashkent from 16 to 22 April to discuss matters of import to the Muslim community of Turkestan, and to elect delegates to a similar congress of Muslims from all over the Russian Empire in Moscow in May.

What the goals of the community should be and who should define them came to be the crucial question. For the Jadids, the revolution was a summons to action. The failure to seize the opportunity to act, wrote a Jadid teacher, “will be an enormous crime, a betrayal of not just ourselves, but of all Muslims.”⁹ It was also clear to the Jadids that they, with their new knowledge and their awareness of the world, were the natural group to lead their community into the new world being created. This claim was, however, contested by many other groups in society, who had little patience for “half-educated, inexperienced youth” such as the Jadids. By May, the conflict had come into the open, and two sets of parallel organizations appeared among the Muslims of Turkestan. The Jadids created a network of “Islamic Councils” (*Shuroi islomiya*), while their conservative opponents grouped around the Society of Ulama (*Ulamo Jamiyati*). Although many Jadids had impeccable credentials as ulama, the majority of the ulama mobilized against them. The conflict escalated throughout the year, as accusations of insincerity, gullibility, perfidy, and treason flew back and forth. On numerous occasions, the conflict descended into violence. In municipal elections held in several cities in the summer and autumn, the Jadids were defeated handily by their conservative opponents.¹⁰

In any case, the euphoria of March evaporated quickly, as the deepening crisis of the empire made more radical approaches attractive to ever

8 Sirojiddin Maxdum Sidqiy, *Toza hurriyat* (Tashkent, 1917), p. 2.

9 Muallim M. H., “Bukun qondoy kun?” *Kengash* (Kokand), April 15, 1917, p. 12.

10 On conflicts in 1917, see Khalid, *Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, chap. 8.

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larger numbers of the population. In Central Asia, the situation was especially grim. The massive revolt of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz nomads in 1916 had already destroyed the colonial order in large parts of Turkestan. The revolt was suppressed with great brutality, and had led to massive retaliation by Russian settlers, who, armed by the state, extracted revenge from the nomads.¹¹ This bloodletting continued without a pause after the February revolution. Then, in the summer of 1917, rains failed all over Turkestan. The region, already dependent on grain shipped in from other parts of the empire, was plunged into a devastating famine. Ethnic conflict broke out, as Russian settlers, both in the cities and the countryside, sought to protect their privileged access to the food supply.¹² Turkestan was plunged into bloody ethnic and social strife from which it did not recover until the mid-1920s.¹³ For the Jadids, their worst fears were coming true. They had long argued that failure to cultivate reform leading to “progress” would lead to the “destruction of even our present wretched existence.”¹⁴ The famine, the depredations of the settlers, the massive bloodletting of the civil war all seemed to be the realization of that fear.

The conflict was even sharper in Bukhara. Bukharan Jadids, who came to be known as Young Bukharans, had long hoped that the amir would do his duty (as they saw it) as a Muslim sovereign and institute reform from above. In 1917, however, they sought to pressure him into it. In March, they telegraphed the Provisional Government in Petrograd, asking it to push the amir in the direction of reform, to institute some of the liberties that had been proclaimed in Russia after the collapse of the monarchy. The amir complied and issued a manifesto in April, only to turn his back on the Jadids when they organized a public demonstration to “thank” him for the reforms. As order disintegrated in Russia, the

11 On the 1916 uprising, see Daniel R. Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002); *Qaharli 1916 zhil / Groznyi 1916-i god* (Almaty, 1998), 2 vols.

12 Marco Buttino, *La rivoluzione capovolta: l'Asia centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'URSS* (Naples: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo, 2003).

13 G. Safarov, *Kolonial'naia revoliutsiia: opyt Turkestana* (Moscow, 1922), remains a classic to this day.

14 Such expressions were legion in Jadid discourse; this example is from Hoji Muin ibn Shukrullo, *Eski maktab, yangi maktab* (Samarkand, 1916).

amir of Bukhara focused his energies on maximizing his room for maneuver and gaining as much independence as he could.¹⁵ In the process, he relied on the most conservative elements in society for support and unleashed a wave of vicious persecution against the Jadids, many of whom fled to Turkestan. There, in the maelstrom of revolution, they embraced the idea of revolutionizing the East, a process that was to begin with the overthrow of the amir. From “the kind father of the Bukharans, the king who protects his people,” the amir became a bloodthirsty tyrant who lived off the toil of the peasants, and whose concerns did not extend beyond his own body.¹⁶ The Young Bukharans’ relations with the Bolsheviks were always uneasy, but each side had some use for the other. In 1920, the Red Army invaded Bukhara, toppled the amir, and installed the Young Bukharans at the head of a “people’s soviet republic.”¹⁷

The general geopolitical shifts that accompanied the end of the war added to this sense of desperation. In 1918, the Ottoman Empire capitulated to the Entente, and opened the way for unprecedented British paramountcy in the Middle East. The Jadids, along with the overwhelming majority of the Muslims of the Russian Empire, had remained loyal to Russia when the Ottomans joined the war on the side of Germany and Austria. Nevertheless, the Ottoman Empire had long exercised an emotional pull on Muslims under colonial rule, who saw in its existence hope that Muslims could create modern forms of statehood in the age of European domination. The utter defeat of the Ottomans in 1918, therefore, came as a big blow. The defeat of Islam seemed complete, and the need for change all the more urgent. This was a turning point for the Jadids, who lost a great deal of their earlier fascination with the liberal civilization of Europe, and turned to a radical anticolonial critique of the bourgeois order.¹⁸ In this context, the Bolsheviks appeared to the Jadids as agents of a new world order, an order that contained in it the possibil-

15 R. Aizener [Eisener], “Bukhara v 1917 godu,” *Vostok* 4 (1994), pp. 131-144; 5 (1994), pp. 75-92; V. L. Genis, “Bor’ba vokrug reform v Bukhare: 1917 god,” *Voprosy istorii* 11-12 (2001), pp. 18-37.

16 Abdulla Badriy, *Yosh Buxorolilar bechora xalq va dehqonlar uchun yaxshini, yamonni?* (Moscow, 1919).

17 V. L. Genis, «*S Bukharoi nado konchat’ . . .*»: *K istorii butaforskikh revoliutsii* (Moscow, 2001).

18 This turn is best exemplified by Fitrat, *Sharq siyosati* (Tashkent, 1919).

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ity of national liberation and progress. The Bolsheviks had successfully challenged the old order of empire, and shown the power of mobilization and effort of the will.

The Bolsheviks contributed to this mood by talking incessantly in those years of "revolutionizing the East." Throughout 1917, the Bolsheviks had counted on revolution in Russia leading to a proletarian revolution in the advanced industrial states of Western Europe, such as Britain and Germany. When that revolution failed to transpire, the Bolsheviks turned their hopes to the colonies. Movements of national liberation in the colonies would destroy the economic base of bourgeois rule in Europe and thus lead to revolution. For the Jadids, "revolutionizing the East" became a mission that placed them at the center of a process of global importance. By forging revolution in Central Asia, they would help liberate Muslims of India and the Middle East from the tyranny of the British.

Before the war, Fitrat had used an Englishman as his mouthpiece in his exhortations to reform. Europe was the model to be followed, and the onus was on Muslims (and particularly their rulers) to undertake the necessary effort. By the end of the war, Fitrat's views had changed. In Tashkent, where he fled from the amir's persecution in 1917, Fitrat turned to an increasingly critical view of the situation. His writings from 1919 and 1920 are intensely anticolonial and specifically anti-British. From being exemplars of progress, the British had become unmitigated villains. Imperialism, exploitation, and oppression had now become the hallmarks of Europe (and Britain in particular). In a series of essays and two plays that were staged in Tashkent, Fitrat focused on the oppression of British rule in India and celebrated those who struggled against it. For Fitrat, patriotic duty such as driving the English out of India was "as great [a duty] as saving the pages of the Qur'an from being trampled by an animal . . . , a worry as great as that of driving a pig out of a mosque."¹⁹ Muslims could attain progress only by casting off the yoke of imperialism and its agents, among which the amir of Bukhara now counted.

19 Fitrat, "Hind ixtilolchilari" (1920), in Fitrat, *Chin sevish: she'rlar, dramalar, maqolalar*, ed. Naim Karimov et al. (Tashkent, 1997), p. 80. See also Adeeb Khalid, "Visions of India in Central Asian Modernism: The Work of Abdurauf Fitrat," in Hans Harder and Beate Eschment, eds., *Looking at the Coloniser* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2004), pp. 253-274.

It was not that Fitrat had changed his mind. His earlier fascination with Europe was also premised on the need for Bukharans and other Muslims to acquire the skills and the means necessary for self-preservation and self-strengthening. The war and the utter defeat suffered by the Ottomans had transformed the calculus on which Fitrat's earlier ideas were based. British paramountcy in the Muslim world heightened the stakes and removed all illusions of benevolence Fitrat might have entertained. The Russian revolution, on the other hand, with its direct challenge to the established imperial world order, offered tantalizing new hopes of achieving the same objectives Fitrat had desired—progress, national self-strengthening, and independence. Fitrat and many others like him had switched their bets to a different kind of modernity.

The Contours of Revolution

These conflicts were to define the politics of the different actors in Turkistani urban society in the years to come. Society, it turned out, did not care for the Jadids' vision of change. The result for the Jadids was not a retreat into moderation, but further radicalization. The Russian revolution and the broader geopolitical transformation of the world further convinced them of the futility of exhortation and gradualism as modalities of change. "Many among us," Fitrat now wrote, "say, 'Rapid change in methods of education, in language and orthography, or in the position of women, is against public opinion [*afkori umumiyaya*] and creates discord among Muslims. . . . We need to enter into [such reforms] gradually.' [The problem is that] the thing called 'public opinion' does not exist among us. We have a general majority [*"umum" ko'pchilik*], but it has no opinion. . . . There is not a thought, not a word that emerges from their own minds. The thoughts that our majority has today are not its own, but are only the thoughts of some imam or *oxund*. [Given all this,] no good can come from gradualness."²⁰

The Jadids had come to be fascinated by the idea of revolutionary transformation of society, although they saw revolution in national, not

20 Fitrat, "«Tadrij»ga qorshu," *Tong* 3 (May 15, 1920), pp. 78–80.

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class terms.²¹ They flocked into the new organs of power, and threw their energies into a number of projects of cultural transformation. The nation had to be dragged into the modern world, kicking and screaming if need be. Change had to be radical, sudden, and imposed; and it was to be, above all, a revolution of the mind. The masthead of the journal in which Fitrat wrote carried the slogan, “No change can take hold until the mind is changed” (*Miya o’zgarmaguncha boshqa o’zgarishlar negiz tutmas*). The Jadids’ embrace of the idea of revolution brought them close to the Bolsheviks, even though ultimately the two ideas of revolution were quite different. To the Jadids, revolution made sense only as a national, rather than a class, enterprise—revolution would deliver the nation, however defined, from internal and external tyranny, and lead it on the road to progress.

By the summer of 1920, the Bolsheviks had won the civil war and established control over Central Asia. Russian settlers were ejected from the Turkestan government, but Bolsheviks sent from Moscow to replace them knew little of local conditions and had few footholds in the region. They made a concerted effort to recruit members of the indigenous population into the new institutions of power they were building, and thus opened up a space for local activists to join the regime in transforming and reshaping their society.²² The Jadid grabbed this opportunity, as they set out to bring about the transformations they had long aspired to, but in a different political context. The era of exhortation was gone; now, it was the time for mobilization and transformation, for the use of the power of the state to bring about, by force if necessary, the changes that were necessary for “progress” and “civilization.” This is what revolution meant to the Jadids. They had embraced revolution as a modality for change, even as they were hostile to the language of class espoused by the Bolsheviks. Revolution was to serve *national* goals, as articulated by

21 I have made this point at greater length in “Nationalizing the Revolution: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917–1920,” in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, eds., *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 145–162.

22 See my “Turkestan v 1917–1922 godakh: bor’ba za vlast’ na okraine Rossii,” in *Tragediia velikoi derzhavy: natsional’nyi vopros i raspad Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Moscow, 2005), pp. 189–226.

the Jadids. The pursuit of national revolution would displace established elites and replace them with a new leadership; but it did not mean full scale social revolution along class lines. Rather, the revolution was effectively nationalized by a radicalized cultural elite bent on revolutionizing the nation.

The 1920s were years of great enthusiasm for the Jadids. In Bukhara, they found themselves at the helm of an ostensibly independent state. Although for much of its short life (it was abolished in 1924), the People's Soviet Republic of Bukhara fought internal disorder, with peasant insurgency, backed by the amir and his functionaries consuming the eastern reaches of the country and taking up most of the energies of the government. Nevertheless, the Young Bukharans embarked on a program of national and cultural reform that dated from their time as an underground movement. They set out to reform the *maktabs* and the *madrasas* and to systematize them in a network of public education. The *ulama* had been the main source of hostility to the Jadids before 1920, and many of them suffered in the aftermath of the "revolution." Some were executed (old accounts had to be settled), and many went into exile in Afghanistan. Others supported the uprising in the mountainous regions of eastern Bukhara (present-day Tajikistan) against the Bukharan republic. But there were reformist figures, such as Domla Ikrom and Sharifjon Makhdum, notables and luminaries of Bukhara's literary scene, who threw their support behind the new government. During its brief existence, the Bukharan government tried to organize "progressive" *ulama* around this core. During 1923 and 1924, Bukharan *ulama* held congresses (very much on the revolutionary pattern in vogue since 1917) to express support for reforming Islam, for the policies of the Young Bukharan government, and against international imperialism.

The Young Bukharans also nationalized *waqf* properties, tried to establish a system of public health, and sought to establish a *national* economy. Fitrat returned to Bukhara from Tashkent in early 1921 where he joined the National Economic Council. He also served as minister for education, during which period he established a school of music and supervised the task of gathering information about the country's cultural

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heritage.²³ The model for the Young Bukharans came not from Marx, but from modernist Muslim notions of change, especially those that had been developed in the late Ottoman Empire. (The years of the Bukharan republic coincided with the beginning of the nationalist movement in Turkey and the establishment of the Turkish Republic.) This was not what the Bolsheviks had in mind, though, and they squeezed out the most “nationalist” members of the government, including Fitrat, by mid-1923.²⁴

In Turkestan, few Jadids got close to political power. The Bolsheviks were keen to attract members of the indigenous population into their ranks, and the earliest years of the new regime saw a substantial influx of Muslims into the party. Many Jadids joined up, but they were upstaged by a different group of Muslims – those with Russian educations, who could function much more effortlessly in Russian than the Jadids. Many of them were Kazakhs from Semirech’e province, then part of Turkestan. The most prominent indigenous political figure in the early years of Soviet rule was Turar Rysqulov (1894–1938), a Kazakh who had attended a so-called Russian-native school before attending a school of agronomy in Pishpek (now Bishkek). He was not a Jadid, for he had no previous connection to the reform of education or culture. His path to politics was quite direct. During the revolution, he became politically active (although the details of his actions in 1917 and 1918 are murky), and emerged in 1919 as the chairman of the “Muslim Bureau” of the local Communist Party, an office that was supposed to work for the inclusion of the Muslim population of the region into the Party. By January 1920, he had become chair of the central executive committee of Soviet Turkestan, the highest office in the executive branch of regional government under the new regime. To be sure, the executive authority of Soviet Turkestan was subordinate to the center, but Rysqulov was only the first of many natives to head regional government. His passion was the revolutionary mobilization of the local population with the aim of achieving

23 Aleksandr Dzhumaev, “Otkryvaia «chernyi iashchik» proshlogo,” *Muzykal’naia akademiia* 1 (2000), pp. 89–103.

24 An adequate history of the Bukharan People’s Republic remains to be written. The foregoing paragraphs are the first fruit of a long term project on Central Asia in the early Soviet period. For broad outlines, see *Turkestan v nachale XX veka: k istorii istokov natsional’noi nezavisimosti* (Tashkent, 2000), pp. 522–611.

economic and political equality with Russians within the new Soviet state, and working toward a world revolution that would liberate the colonial world from European rule.²⁵ Rysqulov was succeeded by a series of other figures from similar backgrounds, men comfortable with Russian and the intrigues of power, but with no roots in Muslim reform.

The Jadids, however, dominated the cultural realm for much of the decade, during which they worked to create a new *national* culture and cultural identity. What allowed the Jadids to do all this was the Soviet regime's commitment to overcoming backwardness and revolutionizing culture. The state was to play a central role in matters of culture. If the Tsarist regime had shied away from substantial intervention in local society, the Bolsheviks were the very opposite. It was the state's revolutionary goal to "build culture." The state provided funds for the opening of new schools, the publication of newspapers, magazines, and books, and even for theater. The Soviets also sought to "indigenize" their regime in order to overcome the distrust of the indigenous population toward them as outsiders. As early as 1918, they declared Uzbek the official language of Turkestan alongside Russian (by 1921, Turkmen and Kazakh had also been elevated to this status). This official recognition was important, for it opened up the necessity of reforming local languages and modernizing their vocabulary. The Soviets also sponsored large-scale ethnographic "exploration" on the assumption that the land and its people had to be better understood if they were to be incorporated into the new regime.²⁶ All of this opened up vast arenas of cultural work into which the Jadids stepped with gusto.

The Jadids' goals in this regard were those common to any number of nationalist movements in Europe and Asia of the time, which held that a nation has to have a national culture—literature, theater, journalism—that is authentically its own and expressed in its own language. Theater flourished even in the darkest days of the civil war and famine. Writers threw themselves into creating a modern literature that celebrated pro-

25 On Rysqulov, see Ordali Qongiratbaev, *Turar Risqulov: qoghamdiq-sayasi jäne memlekettik qizmeti* (Almaty, 1994); V. M. Ustinov, *Turar Ryskulov: ocherki politicheskoi biografii* (Almaty, 1996). See also T. R. Ryskulov, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh* (Almaty, 1997).

26 Ingeborg Baldauf, 'Kraevedenie' and Uzbek National Consciousness (Bloomington: Indiana University, Papers on Inner Asia, 20, 1992).

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gress and the new life, but which was also unabashedly nationalist. The 1920s was the golden age of Uzbek literature, when luminaries such as Fitrat, Cho'lpon, and Abdulla Qodiriy, along with a host of other writers, created works of prose, poetry, and drama that are still unrivalled.²⁷

Creating a national literature required the reform of language itself. The Jadids had long talked about simplifying the grammar and the orthography of the language. Now, they tackled the matter head on. In the radical spirit of the age, the reforms went much further than anything that had been mooted before 1917. By 1922, reformers had begun using a modified form of the Arabic alphabet, one in which all vowels were indicated. By the middle of the decade, even more radical proposals were afoot, and the proposal to adopt the Latin script for all Turkic languages in the Soviet Union gathered force, and ultimately won the day in 1928, when the Latin script was adopted for all languages in the Turkic republics of the Soviet Union. (This reform also affected Tajik, an Indo-Iranian language). The Latinization of Turkic languages was a self-conscious cultural reorientation. To its enthusiasts, the Latin script symbolized progress, modernity, and participation in a universal civilization. There was, of course, opposition to such moves, but as in much else, proponents of radical reform were able to carry the argument by bringing in the power of the state to work on their behalf.²⁸ The Jadids also poured a great deal of energy into the creation of modern schools. The first state-run schools for the indigenous population were new-method schools of Jadid provenance, which were taken over by local soviets and turned into Soviet schools. Teachers from Jadid schools provided the bulk of the workforce in early Soviet schools, and early primers and textbooks bore a clear Jadid imprint in terms of content, style, and subject.

27 Again, a great deal has been published on the subject in recent years in Uzbek. For a useful overview, see *XX asr o'zbek adabiyoti tarixi* (Tashkent, 1999).

28 Ingeborg Baldauf, *Schriftreform und Schriftwechsel bei den muslimischen Russland- und Sowjettürken (1850–1937): ein Symptom ideengeschichtlicher und kulturpolitischer Entwicklungen* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993); John Perry, "Script and Scriptures: The Three Alphabets of Tajik Persian, 1927–1997," *Journal of Central Asian Studies* 2, no. 1 (1997), pp. 2–18; Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 139–143. On language change, see William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development: The Uzbek Experience* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991); B. S. Asimova, *Iazykovoje stroitel'stvo v Tadjhikistane, 1920–1940 gg.* (Dushanbe, 1982).

Conclusion

It all turned out badly for the Jadids. The Bolsheviks' universalist vision of the future had no place in it for any local or national peculiarities. As soon as the Party felt confident of its grip on power in the region, it launched a project of transformation that overlapped with that of the Jadids in its emphasis on social and cultural transformation, but was driven by entirely different criteria. The Jadids were prised out of public life, and over the course of the 1930s, fell victim to the Terror. In the most brutal fashion possible, the Party had asserted its monopoly over the definition of revolution. Henceforth, revolution could only be Marxist-Leninist, as defined by the Party leadership.

Yet, we should remember that in actual political fact, the Party had enjoyed no such monopoly for much of the first decade and more of the Soviet period. Revolution had appealed to many groups in society, who had transformed the face of Central Asia even the full scale Soviet assault on traditional culture began in 1927. In the process, new identities emerged, which to this day bear the signs of the tumultuous era in which they were conceived, despite several generations of historiography that sought to occlude them. Ultimately, however, the Bolsheviks were able to wrest control of the new organs of power they were creating. This they did through the creation of a new political class of indigenous Communists, created through new mechanisms of socialization. These indigenous Communists were a product of Soviet institutions. Their political trajectories were different from the Jadids', and it was this class that was to displace the Jadids (and consign them to oblivion) in the decade after 1927.