

THE SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL DEPENDENCY OF UZBEKISTAN DURING THE SOVIET REGIME AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

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Abstract

When we look back at the 1920s and 1930s of the 20th century, we realize that, like all social life processes, the cultural and spiritual sphere also underwent a period of complexity and difficulty. The Soviet government and its ruling party, in their pursuit of establishing a socialist system across the entire country, understood the unique role of culture and the fact that many things could not be achieved without it. Therefore, from the early years of Soviet rule, they began to develop the process of cultural construction based on their own resources and ideologies.

Keywords: Public Education, Abdurauf Fitrat, Ibrohim Ismoil, Burhon Habib, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidhonov, Abdulla Rahimboyev, Abdurahmon Ismoilzoda, Haydar Shavkat, Anna Poroykova, Vladimir Sergeev.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1920s, efforts to shape the Soviet educational system in Uzbekistan became one of the most pressing tasks in the country's cultural construction. When the Soviets sought to create a new educational system in Uzbekistan, their main goal was not just to develop the branches of popular education in the country or to ensure universal literacy and access to knowledge. Rather, they aimed first and foremost to deeply instill communist ideas and ideals in the minds and consciousness of the children of the land, thereby raising a generation of "faithful and capable" individuals who would serve the system without question.

The Soviet "cultural revolution" impacted all spheres of society, including science, culture, arts, education, and higher education. National schools, which were the centers of education and training, were also adversely affected by this policy. From the early years of Soviet power, efforts to abolish the traditional education system reached their peak. The Soviet authorities, utilizing all the available resources of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," were able to completely dismantle the educational system established by the Tsarist empire in Turkestan within a short time. At the same time, both administrative-repressive and economic measures were taken against the traditional schools.

In addition to dismantling traditional schools, madrasas, and Jadid schools, Soviet authorities did not give much attention to local educational institutions, even though Soviet schools were able to secure sufficient teaching staff and resources. For instance, by 1917, short-term teacher training courses were established in Tashkent, Andijan, Samarkand, and Kokand. By the early 1920s, through these courses, 3,000 local teachers and 802 European teachers were trained.

In this context, local intellectuals, led by Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkxonov, decided to create a modern national university, and a group was formed to establish the Muslim People's University. On April 9, 1918, the organizing committee of the Muslim People's University, consisting of 9 members, was established in Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkxonov's house. The Muslim People's University was formally opened on May 12, 1918, in the Old Town of Tashkent. Its 13 schools started operating from May 14, with the last one opening on June 17, 1918. Four of them were schools for women. On May 31, 1918, the higher education section of the Muslim People's University – the Muslim Teacher Training Institute – was established. However, citing the political and social instability and events in Russia, the Soviet authorities reduced the originally planned five-year course of study at the teacher training institute to just four months, focusing only on training Muslim teachers.

The institute began its work on June 1, 1918, with the following teachers: Abdurauf Fitrat, Ibrahim Ismail, Burhon Habib, Munavvar Qori Abdurashidkxonov, Abdullah Rahimboyev, Abdurahman Ismailzoda, Haidar Shavkat, Anna Poroykova, and Vladimir Sergeyev. The institute's head was Ibrahim Ismailov, and the secretary was Abdullah Rahimboyev. Although it was funded by the Turkestan People's University, the Muslim Teacher Training Institute was completely subordinated to it. Shortly thereafter, the Turkestan People's University administration decided to suspend studies from August 15 to September 1, 1918, and in the fall of the same year, the teacher training institute was closed as a second-rate organization.

The activities of the Muslim People's University, which played an important role in the training of national intellectuals, were completely ignored in Soviet literature, although the names of about 300 teachers who taught there have been identified in recent years.

It is worth noting that on April 21, 1918, Russian intellectuals opened the Turkestan People's University, whose first rector was V. Popov. After the closure of the Muslim People's University by the Soviet authorities, only those local people who knew Russian were able to pursue higher education at this institution. In September 1926, a wide-ranging conference was held with the participation of the women's departments of the regional party committees of Central Asia, where it was decided to intensify efforts and make it mandatory to address women's issues. This mandatory measure was called the "Attack" campaign. The "Attack" initially achieved significant success, as by the spring of 1927, 100,000 women had discarded their veils, 5,000 women had completed literacy courses, and 5,202 women were elected as people's assessors to courts.

However, the "Attack" movement was not only about removing veils. Its main aim was to actively involve women in social production. Various women's organizations were established in Uzbekistan and neighboring republics to this end. Unfortunately, the "Attack" campaign also had serious flaws, as it was hastily implemented without studying the national characteristics and customs of the Uzbek people.



The policy of cultural eradication was further reflected in the decision to replace the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet. The Soviet authorities argued that the traditional Arabic script was a barrier to cultural development, viewing it primarily from a religious perspective. This led to a resolution at the Third Congress of the Uzbek Communists in 1927, which emphasized the need for a more forceful transition to the new Latin alphabet. In 1929, the Arabic script was officially replaced by the Latin alphabet.

In 1940, the Latin alphabet was hastily replaced with the Cyrillic script, which negatively affected the literacy rate and development of the Uzbek language. This hasty transition contributed to an artificial increase in the number of illiterates. More importantly, the cultural life of the people was thoroughly Russified, and opportunities for the Uzbek language were significantly restricted.

During this period, literature and national art also developed in Uzbekistan, albeit under the constraints of the Soviet system. In 1918, Hamza Fergani founded the political theater group "O'lka Sayyor." M. Qori-Yoqubov, U. Egamberdiyev, H. Islomov, and M. Kuznesov were part of this theatrical movement. In the same year, Mannon Uyg'ur established a theater under the "Turon" society in Tashkent. Later, this group evolved into the "O'lka State Drama Theater."

During these years, M. Qori-Yoqubov established the first Uzbek Folk Music Ensemble, and by 1926, the first Uzbek State Concert Ethnographic Ensemble was formed. Renowned Uzbek musicians and singers participated in this ensemble. By 1929, the Uzbek State Musical Theater was established in Samarkand, and Uzbek artists toured abroad, achieving great success in Paris and Berlin in 1925.

Although Uzbekistan's cultural development faced various challenges under Soviet rule, there were notable achievements in education and science. In 1950, the republic had 26 higher education institutions, including two universities, and 92 technical colleges. However, ethnic Uzbeks constituted only 30% of the graduates from higher education institutions by the early 1950s. In the following decades, Uzbekistan became a hub for scientific achievements in natural sciences, with many scholars gaining recognition both within the Soviet Union and internationally.

In the words of First President I. A. Karimov, Uzbekistan's independence is the product of the persistent efforts of our ancestors, who were always ready to protect the nation's dignity and freedom. The colonial oppression left deep scars on the Uzbek people, but they have always fought to preserve their cultural and spiritual identity. The struggle for independence continues, as highlighted by the words of General Skobelev, a figure notorious for his role in the colonial subjugation: "To destroy a nation, it is not necessary to kill its people; just destroy its culture, its language, and its heritage, and it will soon perish."

In conclusion, during the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet authorities aimed to impose a "socialist culture" on Uzbekistan, suppressing the national culture and identity. The efforts to "Sovietize" the Uzbek people and their intellectuals, through policies such as the eradication of traditional education and the imposition of a foreign ideology, left deep marks on the nation's history.



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