

***Making Uzbekistan: Nation, Empire, and Revolution in the Early USSR.*** By Adeeb Khalid. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. xix, 434 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Maps. \$39.99, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2017.91

Adeeb Khalid, Jane and Raphael Bernstein Professor of Asian Studies at the Department of History at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, has written a highly informative book on the formation of Uzbekistan as a national entity in the period from 1917 to 1932. Civil war, famine and economic collapse were not only responsible for the suffering and death of millions of people, but also created conditions for the transformation of local societies. New groups also rose to power in Central Asia during this epoch. The combination of nation and revolution, which were closely interwoven, developed enormous momentum, especially in the context of modernizing societies. The establishment of a nation was directly linked to progress and civilization. Even within the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan represented the success of such a national project. Remarkably, as the fundamental premise of the book states, it was not Russian communist cadres who were the driving forces behind this rapid development, but the Central Asian Muslim intellectuals.

The project of nation building had already begun in Uzbekistan at the end of the nineteenth century. At first, the Jadids' vision of Modernism and Bolshevik conceptions of a new world competed with one another. The Jadids were modernist, nationalist Muslim reformers. Following 1917, we can trace growing tendencies of radicalization among them: if the population would not acknowledge the good to be won from the revolutionaries' work, they must be forced to do so—rigorously and without mercy. For various reasons, Bolsheviks and Jadids were united in the idea of a cultural revolution: mass education, land reform, female emancipation, and the need for the creation of national identities. This resulted in numerous tensions that led to local resistance against the Jadids' leadership and worldview. After the October Revolution, protagonists of the nationalist movement ultimately aimed for a communist revolutionization of traditional culture. Although the Central Asian groups shared a number of beliefs with the Soviet intelligentsia, as mentioned above, they ultimately followed different paths. Until 1932, the Soviet state had been working to destroy the pre-revolutionary Muslim elite, who had been successful in establishing the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in 1924, as well as the first Soviet generation of Muslim-Uzbek communists. Finally, in 1929, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan separated.

Only a few episodes in Central Asian history have evoked so many diverse interpretations as that of the emergence of ethno-territorial republics that replaced Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva following the inception of the constitution of the Soviet Union on January 31, 1924. Khalid very plausibly argues that one cannot understand these new circumstances as a policy of *divide et impera*. He states that there was no master plan of breaking up larger powerful groups into individually less-powerful subgroups with conflicting interests (so that these sub-groups would turn against each other instead of uniting as one against the common enemy). This widely-shared perception (Malise Ruthven, Ahmed Rashid, Philip Shishkin) would obscure the role of the protagonists,

namely the Central Asian intellectual elites. According to Khalid, the Uzbekistan of 1924 was less a product of Soviet Communist Party policy than of the victory of the Central Asian Muslim intelligentsia who fought for a national project in the Soviet periphery. Prior to 1917, the Jadids had perceived the nation primarily as “Muslims in Turkestan.” Furthermore, a Turkistan-focused Turkism wanted to perceive the settled population of Central Asia as Uzbeks. The Jadids claimed the entire Islamic tradition for themselves. Timurid rule was declared as the Golden Age, and works written in Chaghatay Turkish were praised as the peak of Uzbek literary history.

In his book, Khalid discusses the most important stages of Uzbek history during the period from 1917 to 1932 in great detail. The declaration of the Autonomous Government of Turkestan in November 1917 in Kokand (Chapter 2); the renaming of Turkestan the Turkic-Soviet Republic in January 1920 (Chapter 3); and the attempt to establish a national republic in Bukhara (Chapter 4), were followed by the founding of the Uzbek SSR in 1924 with the central government’s attempt to create a Soviet Central Asia at the same time (Chapter 5). Initially, the Tajiks were also a part of the Soviet Republic, despite the emphasis on the Chaghatayan (and not the Persian) heritage. The first purges of the national Uzbek intelligentsia in 1929 and 1930 marked the beginning of a deliberately forced exclusion of Central Asian Muslim intellectuals.

The following chapters (Chapter 6–9), making up the main portion of Khalid’s book, are dedicated to the cultural revolution in Uzbekistan, a topic that has thus far received little attention and has not been sufficiently valued in academia. As mentioned, Adeeb Khalid is interested in the revolutionary achievement of the Uzbek intellectual elite. He therefore mainly deals with the writings and political activities of the following persons: Abdurauf Fitrat (1886–1938), Mahmudxo’ja Behbudiy (1874–1919), Abdulla Avloniy (1878–1934), Laziz Azizzoda (1895–1981), Munavvar qori Abdurashidxon o’g’li (1878–1931), Obidjon Mahmudov (1871–1936), Saidnosir Mirjalilov (1884–1973), Ubaydulla Xo’jayev (1886–1942), Abdulhamid Sulaymon o’g’li Yunusov, better known as Cho’lpon (1893–1938), Abdulla Qodiriy (1894–1938), Sadiddin Ayni (1878–1954), and Fayzulla Xo’jayev (1896–1938).

With this focus, Khalid firmly positions himself against two interpretations of recent years. One such interpretation is that of Robert Crews. Based on his research on petitions, presented in his work *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia* (2006), Crews’s thesis is that an insight into Muslim life in the USSR could solely be achieved through the eyes of “ordinary people.” The second interpretation is that of Devin DeWeese, which was presented in a review of Khalid’s previous book, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (2007).<sup>1</sup> DeWeese argues that only an analysis of Muslim documents and writings of religious scholars could lead to a meaningful understanding of post-revolutionary Uzbek society. It is clear that neither Muslim intellectuals nor Jadids are much appreciated by Crews or DeWeese. According to Khalid, both authors primarily focus on the quest and the (re)construction of authenticity. Khalid comments: “In this

1. Devin DeWeese, Review of *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* in *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 1 (January 2008): 133–141.

book, I argue for the impossibility of authenticity. Rather, I see culture as historically contingent, contested, and constantly emergent” (12). Influenced by Pierre Bourdieu’s work, Khalid assumes that, ultimately, a dichotomy of a “Muslim society” versus “foreign Bolsheviks” did not exist in Uzbekistan.<sup>2</sup> On the contrary, the intellectuals showed a broad spectrum of competing opinions. While the Soviets created a new type of public realm with help of the establishment of modern media and institutions, strong mechanisms of control also developed as a result. Khalid’s convincing examination of the key texts of the above-mentioned Muslim intellectuals impressively emphasizes the cultural radicalism of the period after 1917. He documents the success of the national idea in Central Asia while simultaneously trying to explain the partition and establishment of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan into two separate national republics. Chapters 10 to 12 describe the political and cultural purges after 1926. The Uzbek intelligentsia was extinguished by 1938.

Overall, Khalid is able to plausibly show that “Uzbekistan” was not simply a Soviet creation invented by the headquarters in Moscow as part of an imperial project. If anything, it was local Muslim intellectuals who used the dynamics of the revolution to deeply transform their own societies.

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2. Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire : l'économie des échanges linguistiques* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1982).