

**THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN THE UZBEK SSR IN THE 1920S AND
1930S: IDEOLOGY AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONSEQUENCES**

Karimov Suxrobbek Yusupovich

Teacher of the Department of History and Philology,
Asia International University
suxrobkarimov97@gmail.com

Abstract: This article analyzes the implementation of the cultural revolution in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic in the 1920s and 1930s. It examines the ideological foundations, institutional mechanisms, and sociocultural consequences of Soviet cultural policy in a traditional Muslim society. Particular attention is paid to education reform, the antireligious campaign, language policy, and the repression of the national intelligentsia. It argues for the contradictory nature of the cultural revolution, which combined modernization achievements with the destruction of traditional forms of cultural and religious continuity.

Keywords: cultural revolution, Uzbek SSR, Soviet modernization, Islam, education, language policy, intelligentsia.

The policy of cultural revolution occupied a central place in the strategy of socialist construction in the USSR. It was aimed at shaping a new type of personality—the "Soviet man," a bearer of the Marxist-Leninist worldview and a secular value system. In the national republics of the Soviet Union, including the Uzbek SSR, the cultural revolution acquired a particular specificity, as it affected not only the social and educational spheres, but also the fundamental foundations of traditional society, primarily religion and cultural memory.

The ideological basis of the cultural revolution in the USSR was the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, according to which religion was viewed as a form of "false consciousness" and traditional culture as an obstacle to socialist development. The goal was to create a new national culture, which was to be "national in form, socialist in content."¹ For the peoples of Central Asia, these principles were complemented by the need for "accelerated" cultural development in the region. In the Uzbek SSR, cultural policy was aimed at:

- secularization of public life;
- ousting religious institutions from public space;
- developing a culture that was national in form and socialist in content;
- training national cadres loyal to Soviet power.

One of the key pillars of the cultural revolution was the eradication of illiteracy and the creation of a secular education system. In the 1920s and 1930s, a network of schools, technical schools, and higher education institutions was established in the Uzbek SSR, which contributed to an increase in literacy and the formation of a new intelligentsia. Language policy became an important instrument of the cultural revolution. The transition of the Uzbek script from the Arabic script to the Latin alphabet, and then to the Cyrillic alphabet, was seen as a means of modernization and raising literacy.

However, these reforms led to a break with the classical cultural heritage based on the Arabic-Persian written tradition. Restricted access to pre-revolutionary literature and religious

¹ Adeb Khalid. – Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London : University of California Press, 2007. Ctp 58

texts contributed to the weakening of historical memory and cultural continuity. In 1928, the Latin alphabet was adopted for Turkic languages in the Soviet Union. Supporters of the reform saw the Latin alphabet as a symbol of progress and modernity.² The Latin alphabet was universally replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet. This created a double break with the past, further isolating Muslims from the external Turkic world while simultaneously facilitating the Russification of literary Muslim languages and simplifying the teaching of Russian.³

At the same time, the educational system was completely ideological. The closure of madrassas and the ban on religious instruction led to the destruction of traditional forms of knowledge transmission, and the curricula became a tool for the introduction of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The anti-religious campaign was an integral part of the cultural revolution. From mid-1926, the Party launched a large-scale offensive aimed at eradicating all manifestations of backwardness in everyday life, customs, and religion.⁴ The first measures to undermine the economic and legal foundations of Islam began late but were radical: in 1924, Islamic (Sharia) and tribal (adat) courts were abolished. By 1928, all religious schools (maktabs and madrassas), of which there were approximately 15,000 in 1917, were closed, and by 1930, the last waqfs (property and funds bequeathed to the church) were confiscated, depriving the clergy of economic independence. The Soviet state viewed Islam not only as a system of beliefs but also as an alternative form of social organization. Old-method schools and madrassas were systematically closed. Qazi courts were suppressed, waqf management was abolished and nationalized, and Sharia administrations were abolished by 1928. This led to the destruction of the mechanisms through which Islamic knowledge was transmitted.⁵ The clergy (ulema) came to be viewed as a "single reactionary mass of counterrevolutionaries." Thousands of ulema were arrested, sent to labor camps, killed, or "silenced," which caused enormous damage to the status and prestige of the ulema as a class. Borders with neighboring Muslim countries were tightly sealed. Contacts, including the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), were stopped from 1920, and then resumed only on a minimal scale (one plane per year for 30-40 specially selected pilgrims). Between 1927 and 1929, a campaign was carried out to close and destroy mosques, in which Komsomol members often participated. In the late 1920s, the Union of Militant Atheists became active, publishing the magazine "Khudosizlar" ("Atheists") and spreading ideas according to which religion poisons the human mind, like opium or hashish. In March 1927, the "Khujum" campaign was launched, the goal of which was the public removal of the burqa and chachvan.⁶ The campaign provoked a massive and violent response and was curtailed in 1929. Anti-religious propaganda used all media (radio, exhibitions, lectures). Arguments against Islam included portraying it as "the opium of the people," as an obstacle to progress, as well as its antisocial nature, its denigration of women, and its perpetuation of "barbaric" rituals (Ramadan, circumcision). The "fanatically anti-Russian character" of the holy war tradition (Ghazavat) was also ridiculed. As a result, religious life was relegated to the private sphere or became illegal, significantly altering the structure of Islamic institutions and weakening their social influence.

² Ibid.. P. 58

³ Беннигсен А. Мусульмане в СССР / А. Бенигсен. — Paris : Ymca-Press, 1983. — 87 P.; 38.

⁴ Adeb Khalid. — Berkeley ; Los Angeles ; London : University of California Press, 2007. P. 70-71

⁵ Ibid.. P. 71

⁶ Horsehair veil

The final stage of the cultural revolution was the mass political repressions of the late 1930s. Representatives of the Uzbek intelligentsia—scientists, writers, teachers, and cultural figures—came under attack, accused of "bourgeois nationalism" and "pan-Islamism."

The repressions led to the extermination of a significant portion of the intellectual elite and the destruction of alternative cultural projects, which had a long-term impact on the development of science and culture in the republic.

The cultural revolution in the Uzbek SSR was contradictory. On the one hand, it contributed to the modernization of society, expanded access to education, and the formation of a secular culture. On the other hand, it was accompanied by violent interference in the traditional cultural environment, the loss of religious institutions, and the distortion of historical consciousness. The experience of the Uzbek SSR demonstrates the limitations of universalist modernization models implemented without regard for local cultural specifics.

The policy of cultural revolution in the Uzbek SSR became a crucial factor in the transformation of society during the Soviet period. Its results determined the nature of the republic's cultural and educational development for decades to come. At the same time, the destruction of traditional forms of culture and religious life necessitated a rethinking of this historical experience in modern historiography.

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