

**TSARIST MODERNITY:
COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION IN RUSSIAN TURKESTAN**

Samuel J. Hirst

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Supervisor:
Peter Holquist, Associate Professor of History

ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the Russian administration of the province of Turkestan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It pays particular attention to the introduction of new institutions in the fields of education, policing, and medicine. It begins from the observation that much analysis of Russian empire in Central Asia has emphasized that this was the most “colonial” of the empire’s holdings. Emphasis on the colonial nature of Russian rule has meant that significant attention has been paid to questions of ethnicity, nationality, and the politics of difference. It has also meant that the evolution of Russian imperial institutions in Central Asia has been studied less with the framework of the “modernity” school, which has recently generated much excellent work on other areas of the Russian Empire. Using newspapers and published sources, this thesis seeks to evaluate how influential Tsarist rule was in producing new institutions of power in Central Asia.

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Introduction

Russian troops took Tashkent in 1865; Bolsheviks took control of the city in 1917. Both groups answered to Moscow and neither surrendered their hold on the most important city in Central Asia until remote events brought down the power structures of the metropole itself. To be sure, both the Imperial and Soviet governments saw armed contestations of their very different types of hegemony, the former in a revolt at the end of its tenure, and the latter in a guerrilla uprising that lasted for nearly the first decade of Soviet rule. But while both regimes defeated violent challenges with force, the power of each government did not rest on guns alone. Rather, with the advent of tsarist rule in Turkestan, Central Asian society changed tremendously in a manner that cemented the Russian position in the region.

Too often the history of the tsarist control of Central Asia is dismissed as underfunded, a failure, and an anomaly among the various holdings of the Romanov dynasty. The area that is now comprised of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan, was the last significant conquest in the history of the Russian Empire. As such, what became the administrative province of Turkestan existed under tsarist rule for a mere fifty years. Contributing to the legacy of a weak imperial impact is the fact that unlike the sites of Russian expansion in the Caucasus and Siberia, Central Asia had a large population – approximately five million counted during the census of 1897 – that was rendered relatively homogenous by a widespread Muslim identity.¹ Furthermore, this area larger than France or Texas hosted magnificent symbols of past cultural

¹ *Turkestanskije Vedomosi*, 16 September, 1905.

achievements, among them the fortress of Bukhara and the Registan of Samarkand.

Historians have all but accepted nineteenth-century Russians' beliefs that whereas the "small peoples of the north" lacked civilization and their "future promised total russification," Central Asia had civilization, albeit a civilization in decline.²

Adeeb Khalid begins a recent survey of literature in the field stating as fact, "Central Asia was the most colonial possession of the tsarist empire."³ Khalid's choice of adjectives reveals an acceptance of the argument that the Russian Empire was unique, less or even not colonial in other geographic regions. He makes the comparative aspect explicit when he writes that it was in Central Asia that Russian Empire resembled "British practices in India."⁴ Geoffrey Hosking uses the same language, "Uniquely in the Russian empire, one may consider this region a genuine colony."⁵ Tied into the notion

² On Russia's expansion into Siberia, see Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), esp. 77-78. The first governor of Turkestan, Konstantin von Kaufman defended his decision not promote Russian Orthodoxy based on arguments about the strength of Muslim culture in Central Asia. See Daniel Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 33-35.

³ Adeeb Khalid, "Between Empire and Revolution: New Work on Soviet Central Asia," *Kritika* 7, 4 (2006), 865.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire, 1552-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 388-389.

that Russian rule in Turkestan was peculiarly colonial is a belief in its ephemeral quality. Supposedly, Russian administrators were interested solely in economic profit.⁶ Adrienne Edgar is one historian who has acknowledged the “profound” ramifications of Russian entry into Central Asia. She, however, labels this product of the Russian presence ironic, as in her opinion the tsarist government “did not deliberately try to transform Transcaspia or its other Central Asian possessions; rather, it sought to promote stability.”⁷

Furthermore, by profound Edgar does not mean structural changes to the region, but changes in Turkmen thinking about the meaning of nation, ethnicity and social hierarchy.

Edgar’s conclusion proceeds logically from a project that is focused exclusively on changing Turkmen perceptions of their own identity. While differing in her conviction that Russian rule brought great change to the region, if unintentionally, Edgar’s work resembles much of the recent literature on Central Asia in its narrow focus. Virginia Martin has written about colonial law and Kazakhs with particular interest in the native practice of *barimta* – cattle theft.⁸ Adeeb Khalid’s book on Muslim cultural reform deals with the internal politics of the reform movement. Daniel Brower looks exclusively at tsarist administrators, investigating their desire to cultivate the concept of *grazhdanstvennost’* – citizenship. The focused approach of all of these books contributes

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 30.

⁸ Virginia Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horder and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001).

to their understanding of tsarist rule in Turkestan as tenuous and uninterested in the creation of political loyalty. In the continued recourse to cattle rustling despite the availability of imperial courts, Martin finds the dominant sentiment among natives to be one of anti-colonial resistance.⁹ Overcompensating for the traditional focus on Russian sources, Adeeb Khalid finds Muslim cultural reform to be driven more by the internal dynamics of society and contact with other Muslim peoples than interaction with the new Russian state.¹⁰ Daniel Brower finds in the grand plans of the Russian administrators and the ensuing disappointment at their failure to be realized evidence of the crisis of failure that faced Turkestan in particular, and also the regime more broadly.¹¹ Natives certainly resisted Russian rule, Muslim politics were driven by their own internal dimensions, and tsarist administrators were frustrated by the lack of funds made available to them. But looking at Turkestani society more broadly shows that resistance did not overthrow Russian rule, Central Asians came to play on a Russian political field, and, for all of its failures, the Tsarist administration of Turkestan succeeded in utterly transforming the landscape of the region.

During five decades of rule, the Russian government established a system of schools for natives, medical clinics aimed specifically at Central Asians, and a penal system. Initially limited to major urban centers, these efforts gained traction over time. Other projects, such as the development of railroads, canals, and telegraph lines were not

⁹ Ibid., *passim*.

¹⁰ Khalid, *The Politics of Cultural Reform*, *passim*.

¹¹ Brower, *Russia and the Fate of Turkestan*, *passim*.

targeted towards any particular segment of the population, but affected natives as much as the social programs. Surveying a wide variety of the spheres administered by Russians in Central Asia reveals the extent of the transformation wrought.

This paper, then, treats changes caused by Russians and their effect, in particular, on natives. Neither group, however, was homogenous, nor was the flow of influence unidirectional. Linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and other factors divided the native population. Class in particular split the Russian population of the province. Yet the divide between natives and Russians was relatively clear. The vast majority of natives were born in Turkestan, while the majority of Russians immigrated from other parts of the Russian Empire, areas where they had experienced many of the reforms and innovations that the tsarist government was to introduce in Central Asia. In a discussion of imported change, it is possible to identify one population group that was native, Muslim, and Central Asian, and another group that was Russian, European, and had arrived recently.¹² Unfortunately, it is much easier to hear the voices of one of these groups than the other. Finding pre-revolutionary native perspectives on colonial policy is somewhat akin to a search for serf viewpoints on emancipation in 1861. What Yanni Kotsonis has written about the latter, “Our representations of peasants, in particular, are drawn from the written word of the non-peasant, and the latter’s assumptions permeate

¹² Russian is used here in the broadest sense. For many it was an imperial identity rather than an ethnic one. The first and third governors-general of Turkestan, von Kaufman and von Rosenbach respectively, were descended from Baltic Germans. While von Kaufman was Russian Orthodox, von Rosenbach was Lutheran.

virtually all the evidence at our disposal,” could easily be said about much of the pre-revolutionary Turkestani population.¹³ Thus, what is at stake here is not *how* natives experienced the impact of Russian rule, but what form the impact took and *whether* natives experienced it. The answer to this question sheds light on the nature of tsarist rule between 1865 and 1917, and also on the transition to Soviet government after the revolution.

¹³ Yanni Kotsonis, *Making Peasants Backwards: Agricultural Cooperatives and the Agrarian Question in Russia, 1861-1914* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1999), 11.

Education

Having effectively established military control by 1867 over the Central Asian territories that would become Turkestan, the Russian imperial administration set out to consolidate political control. Perhaps the most ambitious project upon which the Russian government embarked was the establishment of a new educational system, designed to foster among natives both knowledge of the Russian language and an allegiance to the Russian state. Unlike many of the territories into which the Russian Empire expanded in Siberia and the Far East, the Muslim Khanates of Central Asia possessed longstanding cultural institutions – such as the madrasas and maktabas – that served as clear competitors for any new Russian pedagogical system. To be sure, Shamanist practices among Eastern Buryats in Siberia proved influential in inculcating resistance to Orthodox attempts at proselytization, but Tsarist officials were significantly more conscious of the tenacity of Central Asian culture. Noted orientalist Osip Ivanovich Senkovskii warned readers not to confuse cultured Central Asians with “the savages of America and the islands of the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁴ Such awareness was not only the product of a particular relationship to Islam and an increased import attributed to written media – many literate natives could read Arabic and Farsi – but also of the sheer size of the new colonial holdings. The Tsarist government treated the population of Turkestan as more or less homogenous and

¹⁴ Quoted in Nikolai P. Ostroumov, “Sposobno li kochevye narody Azii k usvoeniuiu khristianskoi very i khristianskoi kul'tury?” (Moscow: 1896), 12.

estimated it to be around 2.3 million in 1884.¹⁵ Despite the misgivings of those constructing the new system, the obstacles they faced, and the reluctance of the intended participants, over the course of fifty years Russian language and Russian schools managed to secure a firm foothold among a section of the native population.

It was by no means a given that the Tsarist regime would attempt to russify the population of Turkestan. Nikolai Ostroumov, a prominent reformer in the Central Asian Imperial administration and later inspector of schools, felt the need to defend his project with a pamphlet, “Are the Nomadic Peoples of Asia Capable of Adopting Christian Beliefs and Culture?” In this piece, Ostroumov seeks to overturn the judgment of one of Russia’s most popular orientalists, Nikolai Przhevalskii. Ostroumov criticizes Przhevalskii, an explorer of Central Asia for whose statue the nationwide collection of funds had equaled that of a statue for Pushkin in 1888, for having decided negatively on the question of whether “the peoples of Central Asia are capable of progress – progress in the sense of the acceptance and adoption of European civilization.”¹⁶ Nor did Przhevalskii express a marginal position; an 1899 academic work published in St. Petersburg concludes, “As European peoples (*narody*) have striven under the guidance of perfectabilist (*sovershenstvuiusheisia*) culture and progress, to free themselves of the

¹⁵ Fedor Karlovich Girs, *Otchet revizuiushchago po vysochaishemu povelieniiu, Turkestanskii krai, tainogo sovietnika Girsa* (St. Petersburg: 1884), 29-31.

¹⁶ Ostroumov, “Sposobno li kochevye narody Azii,” 4; Daniel Brower, “Imperial Russia and Its Orient: The Renown of Nikolai Przhevalskii,” *Russian Review*, vol. 53, No. 3 (July, 1994), 368.

ballast of superstition and useless traditions, so have the Asian races (*rassy*) attempted to preserve the inheritance of many centuries.”¹⁷ Historian Geoffrey Hosking, on the basis of this discourse that emanated from St. Petersburg and Moscow, concludes that Central Asia was unique within the Russian Empire as an area whose population was not targeted for assimilation. Hosking all but accepts the position of his historical subjects when he writes, “These were Muslims so far removed from Russian practice that any attempt to adapt them would have had scant chance of success.”¹⁸ On the strength of statements made in St. Petersburg, even historians focusing exclusively on Central Asia have dismissed attempts to russify the region. Adeeb Khalid argues that whereas “in previous periods of expansion, the Russian state had coopted local nobilities and absorbed conquered populations into its system of social classification, in Central Asia the rhetoric of conquest mirrored nineteenth-century notions of colonialism.”¹⁹ Yet for each of Przhevalskii’s remarks in the metropole, Ostroumov had a response on the periphery.

Nikolai Ostroumov was one of many Russian officials in Central Asia who did believe that native subjects were capable of “progress,” and in fact that it was the Russian

¹⁷ V.I. Iarovoi-Ravskii, *Sbornik materialov po Musul'manstvu* (St. Petersburg: Tipo-lit. M. Rozenoer, 1899), 105.

¹⁸ Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire*, 388-389. See also Catherine Evtukhov and Richard Stites, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces Since 1800* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 155-156.

¹⁹ Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 15.

Empire's duty, as ambassador of both Christianity and Western civilization, to encourage such development.²⁰ In his pamphlet, Ostroumov acknowledges that allegations of Central Asian backwardness are well-founded but erroneously attributed to race. Rather, Ostroumov maintains, as all culture stems from religion, one need only replace Islam with Christianity to place natives firmly on the path of Western progress.²¹ When the Russian military moved into Central Asia, there was some trepidation about interfering with or confronting Islam. Konstantin von Kaufman, who headed much of the conquest of the region and then became the first governor-general of Turkestan, granted Muslims the right to perform the hajj and even assured them protection on their journeys to Mecca.²² Initially Kaufman solicited the advice of Orthodox theologian Nikolai Il'minskii who encouraged the spread of Russian Orthodoxy through non-Russian languages.²³ Kaufman, however, and the imperial administration after him, opted for an

²⁰ In describing Ostroumov as Russian, I use the word in the broadest sense. While Ostroumov was of Great Russian ethnicity, the imperial administrators of Central Asia came from all parts of the Empire, as can be seen in the surnames of two of the territory's first governor-generals, K. von Kaufman and N.O. Rosenbach.

²¹ Ostroumov, "Sposobno li kochevye narody Azii," 15.

²² Brower, *The Fate of the Russian Empire*, 33-34.

²³ For more on Il'minskii's ideas about proselytization, especially their implementation in the Volga region, see Robert Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

almost opposite program, concerned less with encouraging Orthodoxy than the study of the Russian language.

But even under Kaufman, the most *laissez-faire* of the governors-general of Turkestan, the language of Russification could be heard. At an 1873 reception for Kaufman on the occasion of the taking of Khiva, M. Ia. Kittary proclaimed, “It is the acquisition of the Russian language that is the best means to allow the natives to understand and adopt all that we want to bring to their civilization.”²⁴ Under Kaufman’s successors in the early 1880s, particularly N.O. Rosenbach, imperial policy underwent a pronounced shift from open to reluctant toleration of Islam. Under Rosenbach, much greater official effort went into the organization of schools and educational programs to encourage the spread of the Russian language, if not Russian culture. On his assumption of power, Rosenbach declared, “Over the course of our twenty-year control of the province we have barely begun to deal with our historic task – the enlightening mission, the education of the natives (*inorodtsy*).”²⁵ Thus, while St. Petersburg may have seen Muslim Central Asia as a place too remote for the practical spread of Russian culture, at least some administrators on the ground were hopeful about the possibility of turning the region into an integral part of the Russian Empire.

²⁴ *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, 18 December, 1873,

²⁵ Quoted in Kiriak Efimovich Bendrikov, *Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia v Turkestane, 1865-1924 gody* (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo akademii pedagog. nauk RSFSR, 1960), 179.

In addition to ideological factors associated with the promulgation of Western-style progress, Russian administrators were influenced by more practical issues. Moving into Central Asia, Russia came into direct conflict with British interests in India and Afghanistan, but was also forced to consider pressures exerted by related Turkic and Muslim powers. In an audience granted soon after his appointment, Kaufman confessed to a subordinate that the Tatars were a constant worry, as they encouraged more fanatical strains of Islam among the local population.²⁶ In a biography published after Kaufman's death, the same subordinate observed that the governor-general was always deeply concerned by "the status of the British in India and their influence on Central Asian affairs."²⁷ The British in India, the Tatars within the Russian Empire, and the Ottomans all held claims on the allegiance of Central Asian natives. The primary Russian-language newspaper in Tashkent lamented that native Muslims "look suspiciously upon books printed in Russia, even when in Arabic, and prefer books from Bombay and Istanbul."²⁸ In 1898, in the aftermath of one of the largest revolts against Russian rule, the prosecution of the rebel leaders from Andijan produced an alleged letter of support from the Ottoman sultan.²⁹

²⁶ N.P. Nalivkin, *Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman, ustroitel' Turkestanskogo kraia* (Tashkent: Br. Kamenskie, 1899), 11.

²⁷ Ibid., 84.

²⁸ *Turkestanskije Vedomosti*, 20 January, 1900.

²⁹ Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Tauris, 1988), 66.

Such ties to foreign countries were threatening not only for what they boded with regard to future behavior during conflict with any of these powers, but also because they hampered Russian efforts to secure political control over the region. In a decade of near-constant conflict between the Romanov and Ottoman Empires, a police informant reported in 1912 that Muslim hajji had made nearly 40,000 rubles worth of donations to the Khalif in Istanbul.³⁰ Adeeb Khalid has done much to show that the reformist Jadid movement in Central Asia developed relatively independently of the corresponding movement among the Tatars, but this does not change the fact that the Russian authorities did perceive radical Tatars to be promoting Islam among a more secular Central Asian population.³¹ Kaufman's early fears were repeated by newspaper editorialists advocating that the efforts "of the Russian government be directed towards protecting the native Sart population from efforts by Tatars to bring them under their influence."³² With foreign claims on native loyalty present in the minds of Russians in Turkestan, the issue of education became a significant issue as it was viewed as a key measure to win over at least a portion of the native population.

Russian schools in Turkestan took all manner of form, and were perhaps unified only in their common lack of funding. Within an impoverished empire, Turkestan was a colony that cost more to govern than it provided profit. The Tsarist administration was

³⁰ Khamdam Sadykov, *Kolonial'naia politika tsarizma v Turkestane i bor'ba za national'nuiu nezavisimost' v nachale XX v.* (Tashkent, 1994), 21.

³¹ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 91.

³² *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 18 November, 1905.

loath to spend freely on a project from which the benefits were not immediately apparent. Nonetheless, schools continued to materialize from the initial conquest of Turkestan all the way up until the Revolution of 1917. The schools could be for natives only or they could be for natives and the children of Russian settlers and government servitors together. Often the number of pupils ranged from ten to fifty. Where funding allowed, dormitories were constructed and native students offered free board to encourage attendance.³³ A wide variation in form did not disrupt a continuity of content that encouraged first and foremost study of the Russian language.

In her book, *Tribal Nation*, Adrienne Edgar claims that during the Tsarist period “familiarity with Russians and the Russian language became a new source of power and prestige.”³⁴ The process by which this transformation occurred was not a simple one, as shown by the variety of schemes that the Tsarist government employed to encourage the study of Russian. At joint Russian-native schools, while Russian pupils were required to study theology, their native counterparts had lessons in Russian language and literature.³⁵ Here, Russian language was offered as the secular alternative to Orthodox teachings. In another gambit, the Russian administration attempted to attract Central Asians to the Russian language by financing the translation of short works of Russian literature into Uzbek, the idea being that this might inspire native children to pursue the works in Russian. The hope that these would be popular was justified by the attendance of 800

³³ Bendrikov, *Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia*, 172.

³⁴ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 31.

³⁵ Bendrikov, *Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia*, 174.

Muslims at the second reading of Leo Tolstoy's short story, "What People Live By," and Aleksandr Pushkin's "Tale of the Fisherman and the Fish."³⁶ Not only was the Tsarist government willing to make concessions and work through native languages, officials were also amenable to working through native institutions of learning. A report by inspector of schools, S.M. Gramenitskii, describes his trip to a madrasa in Tashkent where, "knowing the Eastern custom according to which an important person, upon visiting a madrasa, donates money for use by the school," he gave funds earmarked for the hiring of an instructor of Russian.³⁷ In all of these instances, the Tsarist government did not require natives to study the Russian language. Rather, Tsarist policies focused on drawing Muslims to the study of Russian voluntarily.

Unlike their flexible policies for promoting the study of the Russian language, the Tsarist government was more rigid in its insistence on the adoption of certain Russian practices. Every school day began with a long prayer for the health of the Tsar, the Tsarina, and the Tsarevich. Depending on the school and the pupil, the prayer might be said in Russian or any one of the native languages of Turkestan.³⁸ If students took advantage of free board at the Russian dormitories, they were obliged to wear Russian uniforms and eat Russian food.³⁹ Examinations included mandatory knowledge of

³⁶ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 29 April, 1901.

³⁷ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 9 January, 1900.

³⁸ Bendrikov, *Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia*, 204-5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 174.

Russian systems of weights and measures.⁴⁰ The requirement of cooperation on such prosaic matters is representative of a key element of Tsarist education policy. Russian officials frequently conceded on matters deemed to be ideological, allowing native students to forego lessons in theology, and providing secular alternatives. Gradually, however, Russian practices came to dictate the terrain on which education took place – a portrait of the tsar would hang in the classroom, pupils would dress in the Russian style, and Russian units would be the basis for arithmetic.

A further characteristic of Russian educational policy, and one characteristic of the government's approach, was the ostentatious acknowledgement of high-achieving students. Governor-General Ivanov made a habit of presiding at the exam for students graduating from the Russian-native school in Tashkent.⁴¹ And, in one of its most surprising schemes, the Russian government funded the annual several-month trip of a group of exceptional native students to St. Petersburg. In 1899, eighteen students partook in the trip, visiting fifteen cities within the Russian Empire, including Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan.⁴² In St. Petersburg, the next group of teenagers was granted an audience with the Tsar and photographed with the Tsarina.⁴³ High-profile attention in St. Petersburg was only one side of the trip, as a Tashkent editorialist praised the benefits of showing natives “mosques rising up among Russian cities and his fellow-believers

⁴⁰ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 11 June, 1901.

⁴¹ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 28 May, 1900.

⁴² Bendrikov, *Ocherki po istorii narodnogo obrazovaniia*, 217.

⁴³ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 7 September, 1900.

peacefully praying in these mosques under the protection of Russian law.”⁴⁴ The inclusion of cities like Baku, Kazan, and Astrakhan on the itinerary was clearly intended to showcase the presence of Muslim Azeris and Tatars, along with Turkic Kalmyks in the Russian Empire. Ideally, the Tsarist government hoped that such excursions would have ripple effects at home, General Kuropatkin encouraging his audience in St. Petersburg,

Everything that you see and learn, tell to your parents, to your relatives, to your comrades and all your acquaintances. Tell them that here you were treated not as others, but as brothers.⁴⁵

Yet this program illustrates the Tsarist government’s initial focus on assimilation among a narrow elite, rather than the Central Asian population as a whole.

Despite the budgetary limitations on the Tsarist program to provide Russian education for the native population, by 1917 considerable success had been achieved. In 1904 and 1905, the Russian-native school in Tashkent had fifty-six and then fifty-three graduates respectively.⁴⁶ A journalist for *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* reported that natives who had completed Russian schools generally went on to become minor officials, native clerks, translators, or continued their studies in madrasas. One sees, then, that a native elite capable of serving the Russian administration was emerging. Governor-general Ivanov publicly expressed his gratitude to an alumnus of the Katta-Kurgansky Russian-native school who had donated a significant amount to the school from his salary as chief

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3 September, 1900.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 7 September, 1900.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 17 August, 1905.

of the administration of the Katta-Kurgansky district.⁴⁷ Adeeb Khalid interestingly notes that during the political turbulence of 1917, members of the Muslim-reformist Jadid movement joined in a political union with other Russian-educated natives. Within the movement, the latter took positions of leadership. As Khalid claims, “Active politics required a command of the Russian language and the Russian political idiom.”⁴⁸ Central Asia may have been one of the last areas incorporated into the Russian Empire and one of the last targets for assimilationist policy; nonetheless, Russian education policies produced a layer of native society that was familiar with the Russian language and Russian customs. This segment, in turn, proved best-placed in influencing the course of events when the old regime fell, primarily because they had adapted to the new political terrain formed by Tsarist rule.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 30 January, 1900.

⁴⁸ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 107.

Medicine

While imperial education policies were directed towards a younger generation and an investment in the future stability of the colony, healthcare was in many ways a more immediate issue that reached out to broader swathes of the population. Turkestan presented particular problems unfamiliar to Russian administrators such as high rates of malaria, familiar ones that had been all but eradicated in other areas of the Russian Empire such as leprosy, and problems that were familiar to Russians and quickly adopted by natives such as prostitution and alcoholism. As the colonial government established itself in Central Asia, medicine represented a way to win over the native population, an obligation, and occasionally even a liability, as in the case of the Cholera Riots of 1892. Most importantly, however, Russian medicine slowly took hold in Central Asian towns and even native resistance to Tsarist medical practice indicated that the medical terrain was becoming a Russian one.

Russian administrators were quick to realize the benefits of establishing a medical system that could care not only for the growing Russian population but for the native population as well. Fedor Karlovich Girs, an advisor from St. Petersburg sent to conduct an inspection of Turkestan in 1883, observed, “Teaching Russian doctors to cure local diseases, thus raising our medical authority in the eyes of the natives, would facilitate the rapprochement of the two peoples that we so desire.”⁴⁹ While government ministers could see potential for increased trust in the expansion of medical facilities and treatment in the region, caring for the sick was also interpreted as a symbol of Russians’ civilized

⁴⁹ Girs, *Otchet*, 165.

achievements and Christianity. An editorialist in *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* concluded a piece on the newly opened Russian-Native Clinic in Bukhara, “The numbers... show what a beneficial influence, not just in the sense of fighting with disease, but also in the broader sense of beneficial action is undoubtedly provided by such a high-Christian and truly helpful project.”⁵⁰ Thus healing, like schooling, furthered the colonial project in two ways. On the one hand, the power to alleviate pain and prevent illness was a method through which the tsarist administration could attract the native population and win its trust. Simultaneously, importing Russian and European medicine to Central Asia enforced the image of the Russian imperial project as one that was bringing enlightenment and, for some, Christianity to a backward province.

Yet unfamiliar diseases and an unfamiliar population hampered Russian doctors attempts to achieve these goals. Discovering the cures for local diseases was only a small part of the task that Russian doctors had before them. The next step was to convince natives that Russian doctors could and would help them. K.K. von Palen, who followed Girs in reviewing colonial Turkestan in 1910, found that, “In the first years after the annexation of the province, natives treated Russian doctors with complete mistrust. Only with time did they begin to apply for the help of the Russian doctors, and the numbers of those applying is now increasing with every year.”⁵¹ Even as the rate of natives soliciting

⁵⁰ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 30 July, 1900.

⁵¹ K.K. Palen, *Otchet po revizii Turkestanskogo Kraia, proizvedennoi po vysochaishem povelenniu senatorom gofmeisterom grafom K. K. Palen* (St. Petersburg: Senatskaia tipografiia, 1910), 430.

Russian treatment increased, administrators repeatedly acknowledged the particular challenge faced in persuading native women to seek Russian help. Upon finding that the mortality rate among Bukharan men was much higher than that among women, a Russian observer wrote, “this can easily be explained by the fact that native women do not willingly enter hospitals.”⁵² The reluctance of Muslim Central Asian women to present themselves to Russian employees of the tsarist government for inspection was a problem encountered in spheres beyond medicine. When the 1897 empire-wide census announced its findings for Turkestan, where the male population was found to outnumber the female population by roughly ten-percent, *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* explained this discrepancy “by the fact that they are less active in society and harder for the government to see on account of the suspicion with which they regard non-Muslim census takers.”⁵³

To cope with the disinclinations of natives to make use of the medical services being offered to them by the tsarist government, Russian hospitals and clinics were willing to make significant concessions. At the outpatient clinic in Tashkent, Palen found that whereas Russian women were charged 20 kopecks per visit, native women were treated free of charge. At the lepers’ settlement outside Tashkent, a small mosque was constructed with state funds for the invalids.⁵⁴ These efforts to encourage native use of Russian facilities show a tsarist state willing to sacrifice both money and the Christian aspect of healthcare in order to attract native patients.

⁵² *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 30 July, 1900.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 16 September, 1905.

⁵⁴ Palen, *Otchet*, 396.

Free service for native women, however, could only be offered in a very small number of locations. Overall, hospitals, clinics, and doctors were scarce in Turkestan and chronically under-funded. When Girs conducted his review of the province in 1883 he found that only three cities – Tashkent, Novyi Margelan, and Samarkand had city doctors. This meant that all other doctors were *uezd* doctors, responsible for traveling the region to which they were assigned. The lack of proper health services was the source of frequent complaints to *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*. In 1881, a Russian soldier wrote from Andijan, “Here are stationed the 16th Turkestan line battalion, an artillery battery, the 3rd Cossack regiment and many other civilian and military commands, where married officers and officials alone add up to between 30 and 40 families, yet we have only one doctor.”⁵⁵ That lone doctor, as the author pointed out, was also responsible for overseeing the native hospital. The situation wasn’t much better fourteen years later, and the complainer from Andijan might have felt himself lucky with one doctor if he’d been able to read the letter to the editor of one Tashkent resident who lamented, “It’s already been a whole month that sick people have been applying to the city outpatient hospital in vain for medical assistance at the appointed hours, since the doctor himself is sick, and another has not yet been sent.”⁵⁶ It is this juxtaposition of the grand aspirations for the role of medicine and the lack of funding and personnel, most often highlighted in the

⁵⁵ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 17 February, 1881.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 30 January, 1900.

critical evaluations of administrators and unsatisfied patients, which is taken as typical of the medical project in Turkestan.⁵⁷

Yet to focus only on these shortcomings would neglect the extent to which Russians doctors and administrators did change the language and treatment of health and sickness in Turkestan. One area in which the Russian government was particularly active was the attempt to combat the prevalence of malaria. According to Palen's report, in the years between 1905 and 1907, Turkestan averaged 80,000 malarial infections annually.⁵⁸ The Russian government and press often linked malaria to rice-fields – fields which yielded one of the staples of the native diet. While Palen admitted, "There is no concrete proof linking malarial infections to proximity to rice fields," others were less concerned about the need for solid evidence.⁵⁹ In 1896, Governor-General Grodekov prohibited the Russian settlement of Nikolsky from growing rice on account of its "ties to the spread of malaria."⁶⁰ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* wrote of malarial epidemics in a way that could only support the conclusions that Grodekov had already drawn. When reporting a rash of infections that resulted in 19 deaths in 1905, a reporter noted, "The majority of those who

⁵⁷ See Cassandra Cavanaugh, "Backwardness and Biology: Medicine and Power in Russian and Soviet Central Asia, 1868-1934" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2001).

⁵⁸ Palen, *Otchet*, 412.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ A.A. Polovtsov, *Otchet chinovnika osobikh poruchenii pri Ministr Vnutrennikh Del A.A. Polovtsova, kommandirovannogo v 1896-7 gg. dlia sobraniia svedeniia o polozhenii pereselenchiskogo dela v Turkestanskom Krae* (St. Petersburg: 1899), 109.

became sick during this period lived close to the rich rice fields of Maidantalsky *volost*.”⁶¹ Nor was the tsarist concern with malaria unwarranted. The pharmacy in Bukhara dispensed more quinine and iodine than any other form of medication – for the treatment of malaria and syphilis respectively. Malaria had certainly existed in Central Asia before the advent of Russian rule; and, as the natives had struggled to treat the symptoms, the tsarist government distributed quinine. However, in contrast to native practices that dealt solely with the effects, Russian authorities sought preventative measures that eliminated the cause of diseases, such as the prohibition of rice cultivation.

The preventative approach was true for the second most common of illnesses treated by the Bukharan pharmacy: syphilis. As malaria was attributed to the cultivation of rice, high rates of syphilis were blamed on the spread of prostitution. Interestingly, this vice was one for which the Russian authorities placed the blame upon themselves. In his review, Palen observed that strict Muslim codes of morality contributed to the “strikingly low number of suicides” and a low rate of alcoholism.⁶² But it seemed that Muslim morality did not protect Central Asians from an appreciation of Russian forms of commercial sex. Palen regretted, “The establishment of professional prostitution in the oblast was connected with the arrival of the Russian population. At all points where Russians established themselves there appeared professional prostitution.”⁶³ Unfortunately, the natives learnt by this example. By 1910, an entire ward of the

⁶¹ *Turkestanские Vedomosti*, 23 August, 1905.

⁶² Palen, *Otchet*, 414.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 453.

Ashgabat hospital was taken up by prostitutes.⁶⁴ In Samarkand there were ten public houses, of which eight were native.⁶⁵ In addition to treating those who succumbed to syphilis, the tsarist government instituted a program whereby prostitutes were forced to register, have their activities monitored, and regularly get checked for venereal diseases. As with their response to malaria, tsarist officials tried to cope with syphilis by controlling what they saw as the source of the disease.

Russian medical policies, however, were not operating on uncontested ground. As with the construction of a mosque at the Tashkent lepers' colony, doctors and clinics were frequently forced to negotiate in their dealings with natives. These negotiations were never a zero-sum game. Girs hoped for the benefits of cooperation, "One can not help noting with disappointment that the local administration has not encouraged doctors in its employ to study native medicine and pharmacy."⁶⁶ Yet most often it was natives failing or refusing to comply with Russian expectations. Palen found that the Turkmen had very particular ideas about the kind of treatment that they expected,

The natives demand that treatment come in the form of prescriptions.

They are completely ambivalent to advice of a sanitary or hygienic nature.

Turkmen only give their consent to serious and even relatively minor operations in the rarest cases – when the pain is absolutely unbearable.

Application for the help of a midwife would be an extreme rarity.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 438.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 402.

⁶⁶ Girs, *Otchet*, 165.

While avoiding Russian clinics and requesting specific treatment were the most common forms of modifying colonial medicine, Central Asian resistance had the potential to become violent, as it did in the Tashkent Cholera Riots.

In the summer of 1892, a cholera epidemic spread north from Herat and Kabul, with the first outbreak reported in Tashkent on June 7th. Within a week, the main hospital had been transformed into a cholera ward, but Russian plans for coping with the disease were more extensive than that. To prevent the epidemic from spreading, departure from town was restricted, all dead in Tashkent were to be examined by city doctors, and all cholera victims were to be buried in a specially designated cemetery outside the city.⁶⁷ On the 24th of June, a Muslim holiday on which many natives were outside anyway, a large crowd gathered and moved in protest towards the residence of the town's military commander. After a short exchange between the commander and the crowd, troops and armed members of the Russian population drove the Central Asians back, resulting in the death of at least sixty-five natives. As presented both in a written statement addressed to the military governor and in the court proceedings afterwards, the primary grievance was the stipulation that cholera victims be buried in a designated cemetery.⁶⁸ This

⁶⁷ V. Zysin, *Vosstanie v Tashkente v 1892 g.* (Moscow: Obedenie gosudarstvennikh izdatelstv, 1932), 14.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 20. This claim is corroborated by Jeff Sahadeo, who also cites the Muslim tradition of burying families together in neighborhood graveyards (of which Tashkent had 74) as being violated by the orders to bury the dead outside the city. Jeff Sahadeo,

requirement, along with the orders regarding corpses, prevented Muslims from performing traditional rituals that involved carrying the deceased by hand to the site of burial. The Cholera Riots of 1892 were by far the most serious opposition to any of the social programs which the tsarist state implemented in Turkestan.⁶⁹ Yet not a single Russian was injured, nor was any Russian or Imperial property damaged.

All told, the history of Russian medicine in Central Asia is a mixed one. Attempts to establish a Russian system of hospitals, clinics, and doctors able to treat both Russians and natives were plagued by a scarcity of funds, inadequate personnel, and native resistance to European notions of treatment. Over the course of fifty years, however, despite all the obstacles, Russian medicine made significant inroads. By 1907, Russian doctors in Tashkent were treating 30,000 male and 12,000 female Central Asians a year.⁷⁰ While the process of negotiating forms of treatment indicates that natives were not accepting Russian medical practices wholesale, it also shows that natives were beginning to inhabit a Russian world. Even the Cholera Riots questioned not so much the authorities' right to handle the epidemic as it did the particular measures enacted that infringed on Muslim religious practices. Sadriddin Aini, Tajik poet and author, provides

Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1923 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 97-98.

⁶⁹ The uprising of 1916 was the most violent and threatening opposition to Russian rule, but this came in response to a decree that drafted Central Asians into the Empire's World War I service corps and required natives to leave their homes.

⁷⁰ Palen, *Otchet*, 392.

an ideal example in his memoirs of the process through which Russian medicine took hold in Central Asia. Aini recounts suffering repeatedly from guinea worm disease as a child. Each time he took ill he went to a local barber who was able to remove the worm, but the affliction frequently left him incapacitated for up to several months at a time. At some point, Russian doctors came from Moscow and St. Petersburg, conducted experiments with specimens of the guinea worms, and concluded that the source of the disease was contaminated water. According to Aini, the doctors recommended to the Emir of Bukhara that steps be taken to purify the city's supply of water, advice which he did not heed. Aini bitterly condemns the Emir for his inaction, "For eleven years I suffered the pains associated with this disease – a disease of which there is no longer any trace in Soviet Bukhara."⁷¹ Aini's story illustrates the novelty of the Russian approach to medical problems in Central Asia. Whereas Bukharan barbers had dealt with the product of the disease, Russian scientists identified the source, leading to the disease's eventual elimination from society. Aini's relationship with the Russian Imperial and the Soviet government was one that fluctuated, but in his memoirs he displays unqualified gratitude for Russian science's eradication of guinea worm disease in Bukhara.

⁷¹ Sadriddin Aini, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, v. 5 (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1974), 355-361.

Policing

Medicine could alleviate pain, education could open up opportunities. While Russian courts might bring redress for grievances suffered, colonial law and the new system of punishment had little about it that was intrinsically attractive. Nonetheless, Central Asians had the least choice in dictating their dealings with the disciplinary institutions of the imperial government. Neither side had any illusions about who had a monopoly on force. Russian rule in Central Asia was founded on military strength down to the collapse. The province remained for forty years under the jurisdiction of the ministry of war, garrisons were maintained throughout Turkestan, and Cossack regiments were only a whistle away in case of unrest. In 1905, when a disturbance arose between Russian civilians and Persians in Bairam-Ali, mounted Cossacks were quick to subdue both sides. Yet Russian administrators were aware of the fragility and expense of a system based on such heavy-handed displays of power. On questions of day to day order, the colonial government deferred to existing native judicial structures. Petty disputes between natives were arbitrated in the same way that they had been before Russian rule was established in Turkestan. However, natives convicted by native judges served in Russian jails. Native judges did report to the colonial authorities and the most serious verdicts were subject to scrutiny by the Governor-General. It was a system with which neither side was entirely happy. The imperial government was far from achieving its grand plans for a rational, ordered system of disciplining the public. Natives found plenty of ways to defy orders and incarceration. But the overall outcome was neither a failure of the imperial project, nor solely an opportunity for native resistance. Over time, discipline in Turkestan came to rely on Russian institutions.

Upon arrival in Turkestan, many imperial officials had high hopes for the import of Russian order. Fedor Girs hoped that natives, “having spent a long time at the hands of Central Asian despotism, would, upon finding in our courts defense, justice, and fairness, sympathize in a political sense with their new government.”⁷² Such optimism was coupled with a realization that even under despotic rule law did exist, and importantly this law was grounded in Islam. At the time of Girs’ review, 253 *kazii* – judges operating according to sharia – were serving in Turkestan. Of these 253, only three were illiterate and only twenty-five had not attended a madrasa.⁷³ In light of established practices, founded in the tenets of Islam, Russian authorities feared that “any interference by Russian authorities in the affairs of the *kazii* would be interpreted by the fanatic elements of the native population as an assault on their religion.”⁷⁴ But the imperial government did assert its authority at the pinnacle of the justice system. The most severe crimes were tried in Russian courts. Russian rule also broadened the options open to *kazii* in their sentencing; *kazii* could now sentence offenders to exile. Such sentences were reviewed by the governor-general. Out of thirty-eight cases in 1883, the governor-general approved only eight.⁷⁵ Thus, native courts maintained much of their autonomy while conforming to a hierarchy in which Russian Imperial courts held the highest place.

⁷² Girs, *Otchet*, 203.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 326.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 327.

One sphere did provide uncontested material for Russian methods. If a person was convicted, native or Russian, he or she was sure to go to a Russian jail. As a result, the imperial administration displayed a keen interest in the workings of Turkestani jails. Girs, Palen, and Governor-General Teviashov, who carried out an inspection in 1905, all remarked upon the state of work among the natives. Teviashov publicly criticized the main jail in Samarkand, where bedding was not removed from cells during the day, “which gives the inmates the opportunity to lie around all day.”⁷⁶ Girs, in his earlier review, had harsh words for prison authorities that permitted idleness, demanding the construction of workshops, so that inmates might learn a trade and learn to work. Labor was, in this context, a redemptive pursuit. Teaching criminals to work would eradicate the tendency to idleness that had produced the criminal act in the first place.⁷⁷ Labor also provided profit. Jails were an expensive burden for the Empire, and convict labor offered the opportunity to recover some of the expenses laid out. The question of how best to profit from labor performed by those incarcerated rises repeatedly in the report submitted by Palen.⁷⁸

The ability to extract some revenue from the labor of convicts was important for a state that could barely be able to fund the jails themselves. As poor finances hindered tsarist efforts to educate and cure the population, so did they inhibit the construction of proper jails. Governor-general Teviashov complained that the building housing the jail in Novyi

⁷⁶ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 13 March, 1905.

⁷⁷ Girs, *Otchet*, 197.

⁷⁸ Palen, *Otchet*, 106.

Margelan, as was true for the hospital and the school, was not designed for its current purpose, but converted from some previous function.⁷⁹ Such improvisation did not even meet the standards required by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1882, which stipulated that guards' quarters should have no contact with the actual prison buildings. Structural deficiencies were compounded by overcrowding: in 1883, Girs found the Tashkent jail, designed to hold 200 inmates, housing 349.⁸⁰ The situation did not improve with time as Palen found the same jail holding 397 people, with political prisoners often sharing cells with common criminals.⁸¹ Fiscal struggles frustrated tsarist plans for an effective penal system and were also exploited by inmates. In 1905, inmates of the Tashkent jail rioted during a period of exercise, throwing rocks and breaking up to fifty windows. Among their demands was a request for better food.⁸² Inmates at the Ashgabat jail managed to dig a tunnel out of the prison, although all were caught during the process of escape.⁸³ Clearly, justice and incarceration were not imposed as the Russian administration would have hoped. Ultimately, however, the Russian jail became a central edifice in the towns of Turkestan. Russian punishment took a form that emphasized obligation to the state whether in terms of serving in a state jail or even performing labor there, in contrast to

⁷⁹ *Turkestanskije Vedomosti*, 10 April, 1905.

⁸⁰ Girs, *Otchet*, 195.

⁸¹ Palen, *Otchet*, 12.

⁸² *Turkestanskije Vedomosti*, 1 March, 1905.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 22 June, 1905.

native systems of justice that had underscored an offender's duty to compensate the aggrieved, often in monetary terms.⁸⁴



⁸⁴ On native systems of justice, see Martin, *Law and Custom in the Steppe*.

Political Economy

While components of the Tsarist medical, educational, and penal programs were directed specifically towards natives, perhaps the developments that most affected native lives were drawn up without Central Asians in mind. Among these developments was the official encouragement of the growth of cotton. Russian conquest of Central Asia coincided with the American Civil War and a significant interruption in the supply of Russia's most important supply of cotton. Turkestan, which had grown small amounts of cotton for centuries was perceived by tsarist officials to be an ideal place for cultivating the Empire's own stock of cotton, independent of the vagaries of the international market. Furthermore, focusing Central Asian energies on cotton provided the region with a role in an integrated imperial economy where most regions played a defined role. Tsarist minister of agriculture, A.V. Krivoshein, famously pronounced upon the desirability of growing cotton in Central Asia,

Every extra *pud* of Turkestan wheat provides competition for Russian and Siberian wheat, while every *pud* of Turkestan cotton provides competition for American cotton. Thus it is better to import bread, even if it is expensive, so as to free irrigated land for the cultivation of cotton.⁸⁵

From von Kaufman's tenure and the first years of Russian rule in Central Asia, imported foodstuffs were subsidized in order to create a market for cotton. New varieties of cotton were imported from America and their introduction in Turkestan proved successful. The percentage increase in land sown with cotton during the fifty years of

⁸⁵ A *pud* is 36 pounds. Quoted in Sadykov, *Kolonial'naia politika tsarizma*, 6.

colonial rule in Central Asia is staggering. In 1870, 9,700 *desiatina* were planted with cotton. By 1912, 466,000 *desiatina* in the same region were producing the crop – a leap of nearly fifty-fold.⁸⁶ As Krivoshein had surmised, such growth came at the expense of food crops. Unlike America's expansion into the West, Russia expanded into a well-populated Central Asia that could not sustain further intensive agriculture. Cotton farming strained already scarce water supplies, forcing increased construction and regulation of irrigation. Even local newspapers realized the fragility of the cotton economy, clamoring for stricter controls to prevent misuse of water and resources.⁸⁷ Russian demand for cotton changed the very landscape of Turkestan, transforming the region from a culture based on subsistence agriculture to one producing raw material for an external market.

Russia's Central Asian holdings gradually occupied the role of a colonial market. To support the production of cotton, food was imported from Russia. By the outbreak of World War I, fifteen percent of Turkestan's grain came from Russia.⁸⁸ Increasing dependence upon imported food not only changed life under normal conditions, but also had the potential to dictate life, and death, during times of crisis. With the outbreak of

⁸⁶ A *desiatina* is 2.7 acres. John Whitman, "Turkestan Cotton in Imperial Russia," in *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 15, No. 2 (April, 1956), 194.

⁸⁷ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 23 March, 1900.

⁸⁸ Marco Buttino, "Politics and Social Conflict During a Famine: Turkestan Immediately After the Revolution," in *In a Collapsing Empire: Underdevelopment, Ethnic Conflicts, and Nationalism in the Soviet Union* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1993), 260.

war in 1914 and the stresses that mobilization placed on Russia's supply system, food imports to Central Asia faltered. During the Civil War, when White armies severed the rail ties to Turkestan, imports virtually ceased. Having artificially created a society that was dependent upon foreign food, the economic policies of the Russian Empire triggered a famine in Central Asia. Between 1915 and 1920, the population of the region fell by a quarter, with an estimated one and a half million unnatural deaths.⁸⁹ Particularly striking about these numbers is the fact that Central Asians did not see combat service during the war. Russian Imperial policy with regard to cotton was not driven by a concern for the lives and fates of natives. While the famine was the last thing that tsarist administrators would have wanted, it was the unplanned product of an economic program that sought raw materials for one of Russia's industries.

Key to the success of trade between Central Asia and the economic heartland of the Russian Empire was the construction of railroads. The first railways in the empire were completed just a decade before the capture of Tashkent. By the last decade of the nineteenth century, multiple spurs had been opened in Turkestan.⁹⁰ The railroad helped to break the perceived isolation of Russia's new territories. Before their construction, Fedor Girs worried, "Turkestan Province, separated from the grain producing regions of European Russia and Siberia by a vast distance, spread out over a waterless steppe, the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 258.

⁹⁰ Matthew J. Payne, *Stalin's Railroad: Turksib and the Building of Socialism*

(Pittsburgh:

University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 16-17.

majority of which is not developed, without waterways or railways, is completely isolated.”⁹¹ Pavel Zenkov, in a pamphlet promoting the construction of a railroad to Turkestan argued that stable links to Russia were necessary to overcome the challenges presented by nature in the region. Zenkov warned of the risks of struggle with a hostile climate,

This is a battle that we have begun, because we can not and do not want to become nomads under the pressures of the surrounding climate. More than that, we do not want to become parasites, feeding on the large, healthy body of our beloved fatherland, hoping for material help from the heartland for our remote province.⁹²

Zenkov’s secondary fear of parasitism indicates the degree to which railroads were tied to the production of cotton. Zenkov, like many Russian administrators, was aware of the amount of money administering Turkestan was costing the Empire. While railroads threatened to absorb even more of the budget, they offered the prospect of quick delivery of raw materials to the metropole. With its construction, the Orenburg-Tashkent railway cemented Turkestan’s position within the imperial economy. The railroad facilitated the economic interdependence that proved so costly during the Civil War when these very railroads were captured by White armies.

⁹¹ Girs, *Otchet*, 358.

⁹² Pavel Zenkov, *Turkestanskaia zheleznaia doroga, i svyazi ee s drugimi ekonomicheskimi voprosami kraia* (Moscow: 1881), 5.

While railroads significantly contributed to the transformation of Central Asian agriculture, they changed native lives in other ways. The Trans-Caspian spur aided Muslims in their completion of the hajj. Judging by rail tickets purchased, *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* estimated that 50,000 Central Asians made the trip to Mecca and Medina in 1912.⁹³ Indeed, the railway station often became a focal for the end of the journey. The Tashkent newspaper reported that Andijan and the other cities of Ferghana took on a festive atmosphere during the second half of April as returning pilgrims were welcomed at stations all along the track.⁹⁴ Of the many functions planned for the railroads by tsarist administrators, assisting Muslims in the completion of their spiritual obligations was unlikely at the top of the list. Colonial authorities, however, seem to have been willing to accommodate natives in their use of new infrastructure. In 1905, *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* reported that city trams would be running on extended hours in the old city during Ramadan. The trains and trams brought in by the Russians were thus adapted by Central Asians to meet their own needs, indicating at least a superficial acceptance of the changing nature of Turkestani society.

Rail and cotton were among some of the most influential changes that accompanied Russian rule in Central Asia, but there were many other visible novelties

⁹³ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 2 February, 1913. Konstantin von Kaufman had established a toleration of the hajj, even offering subjects of the Russian Empire a guarantee of protection for their trips abroad. Brower, *Turkestan and the Fate of the Russian Empire*, 33-34.

⁹⁴ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 8 November, 1905.

that came with the Russians. *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* reported the installation of the first kerosene-fuelled street lamps and the opening of stalls selling chilled drinks during the summer.⁹⁵ The newspaper's pages were full of editorials complaining about the irresponsible behavior of that most dreaded menace to society – the bicyclist. One outraged Russian officer wrote about the audaciousness of owners of these new contraptions, "The failure to observe the laws of motion by bicyclists has already reached such a degree that they ride on the boulevards not just during the day, but at night without lamps."⁹⁶ Perhaps in response to such complaints, or perhaps out of a personal concern for the well-being of society, the mayor of Tashkent introduced bicycle inspectors.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, even five years after their work had begun, these inspectors had not managed to negotiate a peace between bicyclists and the newspaper's readership, one of whom wrote in bitterly that bicycle-owners were continuing to disobey the posted signs in parks, presenting a grave danger to pedestrians.⁹⁸ None of those who wrote to *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* were natives, but the impact of street lamps and bicycles must have been at least as great on them as it was on Russians.

Tracking native responses to increased bicycle use is difficult, but one can, on occasion, find glimpses of Central Asians reacting to the more prosaic aspects of Russian rule. Sattarkhan Abdugafarov, a native who learned Russian and became first a teacher

⁹⁵ Ibid., 23 February, 1905 and 14 May, 1900;

⁹⁶ Ibid., 18 May, 1900.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 16 July, 1900.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 29 July, 1905.

of Russian and then a translator for Turkestan's official Uzbek-language newspaper, wore "European" clothes and built himself a "European-style" house with his earnings.⁹⁹

Turkestanskii Vedomosti recounted the story of a young Uzbek kid who showed up at the Tashkent Russian-native school on the first day of classes. Upon receiving the Russian-style school uniform, he promptly "ran away to show off his Russian clothes on the streets of the old city."¹⁰⁰ This young student and Abdugafarov found both distinction and prestige in imported clothing; others had less choice in adopting Russian and European ways. Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky, a pioneer of photography who captured the tsar's imagination and won a commission to photograph various regions of the Empire between 1909 and 1912, took hundreds of shots in Turkestan. Prokudin-Gorsky captured on film several native sentries and police officers in imperial employ, all wearing European-style uniforms.¹⁰¹ As perceptions of appropriate attire changed, so they did of morality. *Turkestanskii Vedomosti* reported the arrest of a Kyrgyz merchant found leading his camel in an appropriate fashion. While his bridle did not violate the recent rule prohibiting the insertion of an iron rod through the beast's nostrils, he was held to be breaking the letter of the law by fastening under the animal's head "two metal plates, to each of which were attached five metal spikes."¹⁰² Russians brought with them

⁹⁹ A. P. Savitskii, *Satarkhan Abdugafarov - Prosvetitel'-Demokrat* (Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1965), 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 18 February, 1905.

¹⁰¹ See attached photographs, especially figure 1.

¹⁰² *Turkestanskii Vedomosti*, 13 May, 1905.

their own notions of dress, architecture, and the treatment of animals, some of which were tried with interest by natives, others of which were imposed.



Conclusion

Through education, medicine, a colonial economy, and new technology, tsarist rule brought a revolutionary transformation to Turkestan. For some, what the Russians brought was modernity, for some civilization, and for others colonial oppression. A British journalist wrote home from Tashkent in 1914, “Europe extends now as far east as Tashkent.”¹⁰³ He justified his claim with a report of the playbill at the local theatre: “The Taming of the Shrew” and “A Doll’s House.” But it was not just foreign observers who recognized the shift that had taken place. Few in Central Asia were unaffected by Russian rule; for everyone there were benefits and drawbacks.

Historians who work on the early Soviet period in Central Asia have found a preponderance of Russian-educated natives and liberal Muslim reformers entering the ranks of the Bolshevik Party. Adrienne Edgar found the Soviet government relying on a native elite, many of whom had been educated in Russian colonial schools, to develop the idea of a national republic in Turkmenistan.¹⁰⁴ Marianne Kamp’s study of “the new woman” in Uzbekistan led her to the period before 1917 because “prerevolutionary ideas for the reform of women gained ground in Uzbekistan because many of those who espoused them joined the Communist Party and were able to harness state power behind

¹⁰³ Quoted in Pierce, Richard A. *Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 104.

¹⁰⁴ Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 8.

their modernizing agenda.”¹⁰⁵ The Jadids, liberal Muslim reformers who are the subject of Adeeb Khalid’s work, learned from their pre-Revolutionary failure “the importance of the state as an agent of change.”¹⁰⁶ After this lesson, “The main political strategy of the Jadids came to focus... on a struggle for participation in the new regime and its fledgling institutions.”¹⁰⁷ Most of these Central Asians were less than enthusiastic about the prospect of continuing to listen to orders from Moscow, but one sees a phenomenon not unlike that which Peter Holquist describes in the Don region, where “the events of 1917 caused Russia’s political class to despair over the people’s capacity for self-development, predisposing many to side with the tutelary program of the Soviet state, even when they did not sympathize with Bolshevism as an ideology.”¹⁰⁸ Sadriddin Aini worked within the framework of the Soviet state to promote Tajik and Uzbek literature, acknowledging

¹⁰⁵ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 9.

¹⁰⁶ Adeeb Khalid, “Nationalizing the Revolution in Central Asia: The Transformation of Jadidism, 1917-1920,” in *A State of Nations*, ed. Ron Suny and Terry Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 149.

¹⁰⁷ Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform*, 286.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914-1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 285.

that it was the printing press introduced to Turkestan by the Russians in 1868 through which his books would be released.¹⁰⁹

Finally, in addition to the fruits that the tsarist transformation had to offer, it also had its threats. By 1914, the Central Asian economy had been thoroughly integrated into a larger, imperial one. The famine of the Civil War years was not necessary to prove that Russia and Russians were vital to the viability of the region. Railroads carried Turkestani cotton to Russia and returned with grain that was necessary for survival. All but a few non-skilled employees of the railroad industry were Russian; over ninety percent of those working in the cotton industry were Central Asians.¹¹⁰ Not only did Russians bring with them the technology that facilitated the growing interdependence of Russia and Turkestan, in 1917 they still staffed all of the key posts – the railroads, the telegraph, the printing presses, and, of course, the garrisons. In 1916, it was the soldiers of this last institution that suppressed the imperial regime's greatest challenge in Central Asia, but it was the foundations laid by the gamut of changes that tsarist rule occasioned that made it so hard for Turkestan to throw off Muscovite hegemony in the aftermath of the Revolution, and, in some cases, to accept it.

¹⁰⁹ Asia Kasymova discusses the history of the first Turkestani printing presses in *Turkestanskii Sbornik* (Tashkent: 1984), 8-10.

¹¹⁰ E.N. Vlasova, E.A. Deeva, L.N. Kravets, Z. Faizera, *Formirovanie rabocheho klassa v dorevolutsionnom Turkestane* (Tashkent: Fan, 1979), 55.



Figure 1. Sentries in Samarkand. Photograph from the Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky Collection of the Library of Congress.
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/gorskii.html>



Figure 2. Native school (“Sartskaia shkola”). Photograph from the Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky Collection of the Library of Congress.

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/gorskii.html>



Figure 3. Cotton mill in Tashkent. Photograph from the Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky Collection of the Library of Congress.
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/gorskii.html>



Figure 4. Central Asian prison. Photograph from the Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin-Gorsky Collection of the Library of Congress.
<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/empire/gorskii.html>

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