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Cultural Life in the Ferghana Valley Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

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The Transformational Social Role of Cultural and Religious Groups in the Ferghana Valley

Each field views the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s in the USSR through its own lens. Political scientists and historians see this era of Khrushchev and Brezhnev as a time when the top-down administrative system actually worked. Sociologists see it as a time when the state provided a generous safety net to the population. Artists recall the time "of the Thaw," while economists treat these years in terms first of reform and then of stagnation. Whatever one's perspective, the changes that Moscow introduced in these years clearly shaped the cultural life of the Ferghana Valley.

The process of transformation in Central Asia started as soon as Russia annexed it. But the region's communities felt no desire to be modernized or to change; hence they continued as before until the early 1900s and later. Traditional Central Asian communities were slow to come to terms with the changes that came with the establishment of Soviet rule. In the long run this limited the application of the Soviet model of accelerated economic modernization in Central Asia and the Ferghana Valley. This occurred because during the initial stages of Russification and Sovietization, Moscow relied on Russian-speaking migrants from Russia and the western republics. In the end, Soviet-type modernization fostered large-scale urbanization, compulsory secondary education, large-scale changes among elites, and profound changes in the region's way of life. But modernizing values in the Ferghana Valley and elsewhere in Central Asia often clashed with traditions, which undermined popular support for Russification and Sovietization. Yet the Ferghana Valley society did not systematically reject Soviet

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cultural trends. Instead, it received them but at the same time encapsulated them in a separate cultural space distinct from their own Central Asian customs and rites, which continued to thrive in the bosom of families, neighborhoods (*mahallas*), and local communities.

Soviet policy continued to concentrate industry in Russia and the western regions, and by the end of the 1980s the Ferghana Valley and Central Asia lagged behind the rest of the Soviet Union. Industrial development and urbanization therefore proceeded slowly in the Ferghana Valley. Even though there was some effort in the 1970s to equalize regions, most parts of the Ferghana Valley had far less industry than the republic capitals of Tashkent and Frunze (now Bishkek). Only Tajikistan's part of the Ferghana Valley had strong industrial centers, for example in Khujand and Isfara. The paradox is that the Leninabad (now Khujand) region preserved many traditional institutions and values, including religious networks, until the present, and at the same time it served as the industrial center of Soviet Tajikistan. This is doubtless due to the reality that Ferghana natives exercised far more political influence in Dushanbe than their counterparts from the other two sectors did in their respective capitals.

Internal economic disparities within the USSR began once again to broaden after the 1970s. The clearest manifestation of this in the Ferghana Valley was the reinforcement of the cotton monoculture, which doomed all three sectors of the valley to remain rural, poor, and backwards. As late as 1970, some 34 percent of the population in the Kyrgyz section of the valley, 38 percent in the Uzbek sector, and 42 percent in Tajik parts of the valley remained dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods.[1] The USSR became the world's third largest producer of raw cotton, but neither in the Ferghana Valley nor in Central Asia as a whole did the locals do more than grow the raw material for processing elsewhere. Together, the towns of the valley, including Ferghana, Margilan, Andijan, Leninabad, and others, processed only about 8 percent of the fiber grown locally. Most other local products, including grain, silk, wool, karakul, vegetable oil, fruits, and vegetables, were also processed elsewhere.

By 1970 the valley's population density soared to more than 200 people per square kilometer,[2] with high fertility being the main cause of growth. What urban growth occurred took place in towns of fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, most of them built around new industries. Even though their numbers were few, these communities helped raise the quality of life across the Ferghana Valley.

For all its poverty between 1960 and 1980, the Ferghana Valley populace did not face economic ruin and did not feel compelled by desperation to migrate to the capitals. This preserved many traditional patterns of life even amid the growth of the non-agrarian sectors. The fact that Russians and other migrants filled many industrial jobs further preserved traditional ways among the indigenous people. In 1987, Uzbeks constituted only 53 percent of industrial workers in Uzbekistan, Tajiks comprised 48 percent of the total in Tajikistan, and Kyrgyz only a quarter of those in Kyrgyzia.

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Thus isolated from industrial work, the traditional society preserved its rural way of life. This included tribal and kinship links, the perception of individuals in terms of their place in family structure (and hence restrictions on their individual freedom), and the unequal status of women. Though covered with a veil of "official socialism," structures such as the family, clan, village community, or urban *mahalla,* all continued to thrive. This reality emerged from the shadows after the collapse of the USSR, and gave rise to tensions and conflicts across the region.

This is not to deny the many efforts made during Soviet times to promote development in the region. Soviet researchers often noted the many ways in which the population of Central Asia compared favorably to advanced countries in the West and Asia. Thus, by 1989 more than 84 percent of Central Asians over fifteen years of age had a secondary or higher education. During both the Khrushchev-era Thaw and the later decade of Stagnation, similar attention was accorded to women's issues.[3] The many factors contributing to the low status of women in the Ferghana Valley were fully recognized: patriarchal families, ethnic traditions tracing to oases and steppes, polygamy and the resultant rivalry of senior and young wives, and Islamic factors. To neutralize these, the government provided women with jobs in collective farms, labor groups, and industrial enterprises. During these years the organization of specifically female enterprises was common in the Ferghana Valley, as elsewhere in the USSR. These included various collectives that wove carpets, sewed robes and quilts, made skullcaps, and so forth. Women in Namangan, Margilan, Kokand, Leninabad, and other parts of the Ferghana Valley also worked at industrial enterprises that primarily used female labor, such as spinning and weaving mills. *Likbez* (campaign against illiteracy) and cultural-enlightenment work were conducted in women's clubs. Female educational institutions and training colleges were established across all republics, which enabled both urban and village women in the Ferghana Valley to receive an education.

Wherever they worked, women were told of the government's policies and instructed in how to create a socialist way of life. Some analysts argue that by the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, women were as important to the local labor force as men. Data from 1984 indicate that women reached 43 percent of all workers in Uzbekistan, 49 percent in Kyrgyzia, and 39 percent in Tajikistan, as compared to an all-Soviet average of 51 percent. In the same republics women constituted from 44-50 percent of all collective farmers.[4]

Women followed many professions in the cities and villages of the Ferghana Valley. In the Uzbek part of the valley they comprised 56 percent of all teachers, 51 percent of cultural workers, and 70 percent of healthcare providers. In the Tajik sector, Tajik and Uzbek women worked in scientific institutions, arts and entertainment, the Communist Party, and public organizations. All this led to important changes in the status of women and to new relationships within the family.

In spite of this, there remained many non-working but able-bodied women from among the indigenous nationalities. During the 1970s nearly a quarter of all Uzbek

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urban women were not employed,[5] and this percentage did not diminish during the 1980s. This is traceable to the need to care for large families. R.H. Aminova showed that many of those women who did work in these years did so on a seasonal basis. She also noted that "The absence of child-care centers and their slow construction forced many thousands of women to sit at home."[6]

Archival data from Leninabad province collected by Tajik ethnographers[7] show that by the beginning of the 1980s the employment picture for women had changed further. Many women found work at silk farms, as cotton pickers, and as carers for newborn lambs to be extremely demanding. Staying within the law, they tried to find ways to avoid the most backbreaking jobs. Demographers note that by the 1980s birth rates in Uzbek and Tajik families rose, affording women a chance to devote more time to childcare.[8]

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In spite of changes in marriage and family life that occurred during the process of Soviet urbanization, many researchers from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have noted that Tajiks and Uzbeks clung to traditional attitudes supporting early marriage, large families, and strong family ties. It is useful to speak of two phases in family relations in the Ferghana Valley prior to perestroika. During the first, extending through the early Soviet period, females remained fully dependent on husbands, fathers, and brothers. The second, beginning with Khrushchev's Thaw, saw dramatic changes in the fate of women, and especially in health care and education.

By the 1960s and into the 1970s, the Ferghana Valley enjoyed an extensive network of medical treatment and preventive facilities equipped with advanced medical equipment. Indeed, in the Tajik part of the valley alone there were more than 24 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants. Similarly, during this same period one rarely met a person in the Tajik sector who could not read and write. Both the Tajik and Uzbek sectors compared favorably with advanced Western countries in rates of completion of secondary school and other key educational indicators. In the Tajik part of the Ferghana Valley there were nearly 120,000 men and women with higher or vocational secondary education working in economic or cultural institutions, with similarly large intelligentsias in the Uzbek and Kyrgyz sectors. During the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras this led to interesting developments in such diverse fields of expression as music, art, poetry, belles lettres, and cinematography.

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In the Ferghana Valley one can note such famous poets and writers as Ulugzade, Sator Tursun, Juma Odiana, Aminjon Shukuhi, A'zam Sitky, Ozod Aminzade, Rahim Jalil, Toji Usmon, and Pulat Tolis, all of whom gained distinction both for their poetry and their readings, as did a number of other poets and novelists from the valley, not to mention various actors, popular singers, and artists. All of them originated in the Ferghana region but went on to gain national reputations in the USSR. This rapid development of European-type culture came quickly after the establishment in the 1920s of theaters in all the major cities of the Ferghana Valley, including Andijan, Ferghana, Kokand, Namangan, Leninabad, and Osh. The Leninabad theater of musical comedy became especially popular. Shortly after the establishment of these national theaters a Russian Dramatic Theater was opened

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in the old tsarist capital of the valley, Ferghana. These new theaters were housed in some of the best buildings in the Ferghana Valley. For example, the provincial theater in Ferghana was housed in the former residence of the colonial governor of the Turkestan region, General M.D. Skobelev. The Andijan Theater was housed in an equally beautiful building in the city center. Thanks to such generous support, theater immediately gained a high social status and came to symbolize the new Soviet culture.

Because the theaters symbolized the emerging secular culture, they came under attack. In the 1920s a new theater in Bukhara was burned, when religious zealots torched it following the performance of a play, by the Azerbaijani playwright H. Dzhavida, which told of the love between a Muslim boy and a Christian girl. During the attempted fundamentalist putsch in Andijan in 2005, religious zealots headed straight to the theater to burn it.

By the 1970s and early 1980s relations between theater and government had sunk into a state of mutual contentment, with the theaters avoiding anything that would engender discontent and the government happy with the results. A few years earlier all theaters in the valley had celebrated their silver anniversary. But the repertoire already had become standardized and unoriginal, repeating whatever was playing in Tashkent. Soon the balance tipped, creating a situation in which the official censors could relax because both writers and producers had internalized the censorship. As George Orwell wrote in *1984,* coercion turned into conviction. Meanwhile, theater was no longer viewed as an important conduit of propaganda, which robbed it of all the ritual significance it previously had enjoyed. Films, literature, and television were pushing theater aside.

Research on the Tajik part of the Ferghana Valley has shown that many residents had no access to theaters or museums in these years due to inadequate transportation. Few rural residents, for example, had the opportunity to enjoy the Pushkin Theater in Leninabad. But this did not mean they were without a vital cultural life. Prior to the rise of European-style theater, the Ferghana Valley boasted its own developed system of entertainment. This included theatrical forms involving the cycle of life, the calendar, and religious holidays, as interpreted through such diverse theatrical forms as various puppet shows and oral folk theaters, called *masharaboz.*[9]

The *masharabozes,* known as *kizikchi* in the Ferghana Valley, were male Tajik and Uzbek folk actors who performed comic and satirical sketches, mummery, dances, and songs. *Kizikchi* theaters drew on both conventionalized subjects and improvisation, and presented their performances in the same cities and towns of the Ferghana Valley where the leading European-type dramatic theaters had been established. With respect to the depth of their repertoire, their originality, and their skills in execution, the *kizikchi* theaters of the Ferghana Valley stood well above other local theaters.[10] If *masharabozes* from other areas of Uzbekistan based their art mainly on mimicry and mummery, the Ferghana Valley *kizikchi* emphasized wit and pointed speech. The same could be said of the unique Ferghana Valley genre of oral folk poetry known as *askiya.* Somewhat resembling the Anglo-Saxon

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Limerick, the *askia* tradition survives to the present and gives rise to competitions among local improvisers.

The Soviet government issued endless prohibitions against *masharaboz* performances. As a result, by the 1950s and 1960s researchers had difficulty finding traces of this type of theater even in remote villages of the Ferghana Valley. European-type theaters completely marginalized *masharaboz* theaters and pushed them to the periphery of social and cultural life. At the same time, a traditional musical genre known as *katta ashulla* survived intact in the Ferghana Valley throughout the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras. This involved musical chanting, and was performed exclusively by men during school and *mahalla* social gatherings. Performers delicately controlled the sound of their voices with Chinaware held to their mouths, which enabled them to perform even the ancient Persian works of so-called *shashmakom*.

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Thus, notwithstanding all the Soviet achievements, the Ferghana Valley continued to live its mundane, self-sufficient existence throughout the period under study. However, just under the surface mounting internal strains and tensions existed. These manifested themselves in what might be called a "culture of resistance" that began to form as early as the 1960s. The first signs were brief theatrical sketches that benignly derided Soviet conditions, and poetry that called on people to appreciate their culture and preserve their traditions. These arose not amid conditions of economic decay and "stagnation," as the Brezhnev era later would be termed, but of rapid cultural integration with the Soviet Union as a whole. This occurred despite the ideological pressure on cultural life in those years, and despite the fraudulent statistics that were issued, including the supposed existence of large libraries in the Ferghana Valley. The USSR was closed to the outside world in the 1970s, but in the Ferghana Valley the information space was rapidly expanding.

The combination of extensive official information on cultural events throughout the USSR and of unofficial but readily accessible information on independent trends created a yeasty cultural environment throughout the Ferghana Valley. Talented natives of the valley, such as S. Alibekov, a noted painter and maker of animated films, or M. Churlu, a painter and weaver, sought a fresh cultural synthesis, and in the process gave rise to a new Ferghana school of art. Soon there also arose a distinct "Ferghana School" of poetry, inspired by S. Abdullaev and A. Haidara, both of whom spent their childhood and adolescent years in the Ferghana Valley. Today this informal association of writers and painters enjoys prominence far beyond the borders of Uzbekistan. The play *The Iron Woman* by O. Salimov emerged out of this uniquely Ferghana synthesis, and would become the most famous Uzbek drama in the perestroika era. Full of humor and bitter grievance, it relates the difficulties a typical Ferghana farmer (*dehkan*) undergoes while trying to reclaim his self-esteem. In spite of the different genre and style, the wonderful lines by the Ferghana Valley poet Abdullaev epitomize everything written about the valley in these years, and could serve as the epigraph for Salimov's play:

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> We believe, and will continue to believe, that the Ferghana Valley, if useless genius is given its due even out of spite, can become, at least for an hour or one dazzling noon, a mesmeric land, where impressions turn into destiny despite the acrimoniousness and swirling uncertainty of our lives.[11]

By the mid-1970s and beginning of the 1980s, institutions of higher learning were firmly established in the main cities of the Ferghana Valley, along with schools and vocational colleges. Also functioning there were polytechnic institutes and a branch of the Tashkent Agricultural Institute, while medical, foreign language, and pedagogical institutes existed in Andijan. Pedagogical institutes also could be found in Leninabad, Osh, and Kokand. Moreover, many young people of the Ferghana Valley traveled to Tashkent, Dushanbe, Frunze, Moscow, and other cities throughout the USSR for higher education.

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From the eras of Stalin through Brezhnev, the Ferghana Valley produced many famous figures in the world of modern learning. Prominent among them was the orientalist and diplomat Bobojon Gafurov, from the town of Sovetabad (now Bobojon Gafurov in Sughd province). Besides his scholarship on Tajiks and other peoples of Central Asia, Gafurov had a distinguished diplomatic career. From the career of Gafurov and others, one can see that the traditional society allowed for the spread of "modernity" into politics, economics, and culture, as well everyday life. Industrialization and urbanization were initially successful, and gave rise to an urban intelligentsia that largely accepted Russification and Sovietization. They welcomed the new holidays and various departures from the traditional religion. But this assimilation was superficial and did not lead to a new cultural equilibrium.

The country lived in a world of stereotypes engendered by the top-down system. But beginning immediately after Stalin's death and the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, these fostered currents of dissent among the intelligentsia, and particularly in the worlds of art and culture. Political controls relaxed and ideological dogmas gradually disintegrated, especially in the arts. During the Thaw, the goal was not to abolish socialist dogmas but somehow to get around them in the arts. This engendered unofficial art, underground presses, recordings on x-ray plates, and new poetry, films, and theatrical performances. Such dissent, however, faded in intensity the further one traveled from Moscow and Leningrad. The Ferghana Valley experienced all this as ripples caused by tossing a stone in the water in Moscow. The government's vigilance flagged, as it closed its eyes to ideological offenses taking place in what it considered the peripheral void of the Ferghana Valley. As a result, the valley continued to live a largely self-sufficient and mundane life, free of political incidents but with the various economic and cultural stresses gradually mounting.

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Islamic education was largely banned during the atheistic Soviet era, with Muslim teaching continuing only within families. Tajiks and Uzbeks continued to observe Muslim traditions in private, with the rural population being particularly slow to adopt the new Soviet ideology. At the same time, apathy toward

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religion was also making headway, especially in urban environments. The result was a certain duality throughout the Ferghana Muslim community, with families living fully in the Soviet world but continuing to mark life-cycle events in the traditional Muslim manner. In the countryside Islam evolved at a snail's pace. Across the Ferghana Valley a kind of spiritual dualism existed, with a correspondingly complex organization. Islam had proved itself not only capable of sanctifying the old order but of maintaining itself under the new political and social conditions. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that a sort of "underground" piety arose in the Uzbek and Tajik communities of the valley by the end of the 1970s.

As detailed in Chapter 13, the first portents of such an underground appeared in the Ferghana Valley cities of Namangan, Andijan, and Ferghana with the creation of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and then the appearance of Hizb ut-Tahrir. Another religious movement, Bayat, operating in Isfara became active in Tajik areas of the valley. This happened not because the government's "all-seeing eye" became less vigilant, but because it considered the Ferghana Valley so peripheral that it could offer no ideological danger. And indeed, under Khrushchev and Brezhnev the valley was relatively free of incidents of this sort. It had no political role of its own and lived a fairly self-sufficient and mundane life, even though internal stress was mounting all the while. By the time a multitude of tough problems arose in the late 1980s Soviet ideology had withered, leaving people to rely on the religious heritage that had managed to survive.

Social Changes and Traditions

Both urban and rural residents of the Ferghana Valley are descendants of the indigenous people known until early Soviet times as Sarts. Some pre-revolutionary Russian Orientalists considered Sarts to be Tajiks, others thought them Uzbeks, and still others considered them a mix of Tajik and Uzbek.[12] Soviet ethnographers tended to consider Sarts as descendents of the settled Iranian population,[13] but many saw them also as the core of the Turkic Uzbek people.[14] While this debate continues, researchers in Kazakhstan recently have amassed new data on such nomadic groups as the Qarluqs and Kipchaks,[15] of whom there were 42,000 in the Ferghana Valley in 1917 and 70,000 today.[16] Divided into four large groups in the early twentieth century,[17] the Kipchaks, or Toza-Kipchaks as they called themselves, began during the Khrushchev era to identify themselves simply as Uzbeks.

Even though the single term Sart died out, Uzbeks and Tajiks in the valley continued to maintain close contact and enrich each other culturally. Even a common Tajik-Uzbek terminology denoted such topics as residence, clothing, and cuisine. During the post-Stalin era both groups accepted certain common features as their own, at the same time as their separate forms of self-awareness grew more pronounced.

During the 1960s and 1970s the population of the Ferghana Valley also included

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Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars, Meskhetian Turks and others from the Volga basin and Caucasus. Most were new arrivals who had been exiled there or who had moved there to staff the cotton monoculture or new industries. There were also a few Arabs, Baluchis, Kurds, Gypsies, Central Asian Jews, Uyghurs, Dungans, and Koreans. Russian became the lingua franca of the region, which in turn stimulated efforts at the local level to preserve indigenous languages. As a result, many non-indigenous people learned to speak Uzbek, Tajik, or Kyrgyz. Russification and Sovietization became the norm in the cities. But even while specific national distinctions were less evident in professional life, and had been all but nonexistent in the traditional practice of Islam, they remained important in social structures, consumption patterns, leisure activities, and manners.

At the time of the 1917 Revolution the Ferghana Valley had been extremely backwards, which made its subsequent transformation all the more complex. Large extended families were the rule, and often incorporated non-relatives. In these durable units were preserved many important values, including the primacy of the family, group upbringing of the young, mutual support, and respect for elders. Yet extended families also absorbed innovations. Sovietization, for example, standardized a later age for marriage, even though early marriages remained common in the valley until the 1980s. Interethnic marriages also become more common than formerly, with frequent Tajik-Uzbek unions and also, in the cities, many marriages with Russians and other groups.

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Socialism also brought changes in wedding ceremonies. Not only did they more frequently take place in the homes of the bride's family (*choigashtak*)[18] but there were Red weddings (*Kizil-toi*) and Komsomol weddings (*Momsomol-tui*) in all three sectors of the valley. At the same time, the practice of marriage payments continued, with fees up to 10,000 rubles. The mass media attempted to uproot the practice of bride price (*kalym*), but to the extent they succeeded the same money was spent on lavish weddings, gifts, and dowries. These transformed bride payments became measures of prestige and reached enormous sums, forcing common workers into debt for years to come. During the 1960s and 1980s, women's councils and neighborhood committees attempted to propagate more modest weddings that also preserved national traditions, but these efforts largely failed. Similarly unsuccessful were attempts to curtail the tragic inter-family conflicts that often arose over the amount and forms of marriage payments.

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Meanwhile, the number of nuclear families in the Ferghana Valley grew, and gradually they supplanted the extended patriarchal families, with all their ancient customs and authoritarian features. The share of extended families including two or more married couples is still high in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, but many of these were modified during this period, with only part of the salary of the married couple going to the head of the family to pay for joint feasts and other expenses. Nuclear families continued to cooperate, however, with women jointly handling their household gardens and supporting each other in cooking, laundering, and childcare. These close family ties represent the best traditions of the Ferghana

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Valley. True nuclear families were also coming into being, not as a result of the breakup of extended families but on their own.

The growing heterogeneity of both urban and rural families was new to the Ferghana Valley. The greater professional diversity of family members enlarged people's contacts and opened them to innovation, and the role of youth expanded. Yet the overall rate of urbanization was low throughout the period, and this limited the spread of these new phenomena, at the same time preserving high birth rates, extended families, and the practice of including non-family members in the circle of complex families.

Interactions Between Traditional and Soviet Forms of Identity amid Social Change

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Even when such continuity existed, the heads of households lost some of their absolute control over family budgets, as well as the unquestioning obedience of family members. Education and the growth of professional skills brought financial independence, which in turn modified relations between spouses, parents and children, and with daughters-in-law. The influence of schools on family life grew. Of course, husbands and fathers retained much authority, and household heads still needed to exercise justice and resolve. But when they could not, or when a married son or another family member was more educated and active than the traditional household head, a kind of dual leadership emerged. Yet far from destroying the best traditions of mutual support, attention to the upbringing of children, and care for the elderly, such practices helped preserve these traditions, and enabled them to extend beyond the circle of the family into the world of co-workers and the larger public. Thus, families in the Ferghana Valley experienced various changes during the 1960s and 1970s, even as they preserved in recognizable forms the psychology and ideology of communal solidarity that had existed over the centuries. Whatever the state did not deliberately change tended to keep its earlier forms. This contradicted the beliefs of Soviet scholars, who assumed that old patterns of family life that differed from Socialist ideals were rapidly dying out. But newer research confirms the vigorous survival of the former solidarity in family and kin groups, neighborhood *guzar*s, *mahallas,* and adult associations. L.F. Monogarova has demonstrated the continuing importance of ties of kinship,[19] while A. Kochkunova examines the role of family groups in her thesis on a Kyrgyz family.[20] T. Tashbaeva and M. Savurov consider Uzbek family and kin ties in their book, but not in relation to the continuing tradition patriarchy.[21]

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The important organizational and regulatory role of rural and neighborhood groups is reflected in rituals that continue to the present. No wonder that from the late 1950s on, officials tried to engage *mahalla* elders and committees when they invented new holidays or built parks, schools, or amenities—and often abused this practice.

Another old institution common to diverse peoples, the family-kinship group,

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managed to adapt with little change to contemporary conditions. Earlier, these groups incorporated ten-fifteen related families who shared a common ancestor three-to-five generations back and had taken his name. Each such extended family engaged in a single type of work and practiced mutual support. Only nowadays are the numbers of such groups dwindling. T.H. Tashbaeva reports that in the 1960s and 1970s such groups consisted mainly of the families of uncles and cousins,[22] but much more remote relatives were also included, provided they claimed a common ancestor. During these years such groups became markedly more active, convening family meetings, raising money for *kalym*, dowries, and funerals. L.F. Monogarova showed that Tajik extended families were handled the cost of all traditional ceremonies, but A. Kochkunov has showed that such compulsory payments grew less common among the Kyrgyz. Thus, while such family-kinship groups came to differ in the authority they wielded over constituent families, they remained an institution common to all groups in the valley.

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Notwithstanding all the changes that have occurred, family events among all people of the Ferghana Valley still tend to be handled in the traditional manner. Marriages are communal affairs, and all communities have the same traditional offices, beginning with the "white beard" (*aksakal*) or elder. Community-mandated rules continue to define duties in building houses, weaving and quilting, wedding ceremonies, circumcisions, and other activities. Important decisions are reached by the entire community, with elders and mullahs maintaining their influence. Thus, even as they have acquired something of a relic character,[23] archaic traditions continue to manifest themselves most forcefully in the family; for example, through the 1980s there were women whose job was to find wives for marriageable males.

These *khodims* (Tajik) or *kaivonas* (Uzbek) were generally appointed from among the most senior members of poor families. They were also responsible for collecting money from women for wedding ceremonies, for deep-frying the traditional wedding flat breads (*katlama*), and for breaking and distributing them in the manner prescribed by tradition and religion. She (*khodima* or *kaivona*) also would distribute the wedding gifts, sew special shirts for the bride and groom, and would pronounce the blessing (*fotiha*) at the end of the ceremony. On the wedding day the *khodim* was the most active person in the house of the bride, receiving and entertaining guests, passing apricots and sugar, pouring tea, and making jokes. Finally, she embroidered the curtain (*kusha bitish, chimildyk,* or *chodar*) for the wedding night, when the couple slept on one side and female elders on the other to confirm that the bride was a virgin. *Peikals* and *khavarchis* performed a similar range of ceremonial functions for the male half of the house.

As the community's respected fiduciary, the male elder (*aksakal* or *katkuda*) played an even bigger role. He would announce engagements and speak on behalf of the bride's father. The female elder or *kaivoni* fulfilled similar functions for the female half of the house. The *aksakal* or *katkuda* exercised both religious and civil powers, organizing community events and resolving conflicts. Over time their powers narrowed, however, and consisted mainly of organizing events. Adult male

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associations, called *gaps, gashtaks, dzhuras,* or *ziefats,* helped with the work of husbandry and construction.[24] Female associations[25] (*mushkil-kusho, mavliud,* or *bibi-seshanbe*) did not have the same degree of coherence as male ones but fulfilled a religious role, especially pertaining to the cults of nature and of fertility.[26] The Soviets tried to suppress them, but they lived on. Similarly, the local mullahs read suras from the Qur'an at all family and communal activities, causing these events to be regarded as Muslim even though nearly all had pre-Islamic roots. Higher Muslim leaders—the *saiids, hodjas, turas,* and *ishans*—enjoyed still more respect and continue to do so today, as do their offspring and descendents. Traditional spiritual instructors, or *pirs,* functioned only in the underground during this period, but their adherents, or *murids,* looked to them for guidance on all life questions.

These traditional functionaries and groups, which survived to the late Soviet period, demonstrate the close links between community and family—and the primacy of the former. They played a significant role in managing change at the community level during extremely trying times, and in many respects still do today.

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The Relationship of Official and Popular Culture in the Ferghana Valley

Nikita Khrushchev introduced partial decentralization and a more tolerant policy in language and culture, yet he did so unwillingly and inconsistently. He believed in a "merging" (*sliianie*) of nations and cultures, yet still held the Marxist belief that time would solve the national question in the USSR. He put a stop to the repatriation of exiled peoples, and the comparative flexibility and leniency of his early years hardened over time, leading to purges in many republics and to enforced teaching of Russian throughout the USSR.

Khrushchev's reforms also affected education. Instead of higher education reserved just for the middle class and wealthy families, he extended secondary education, lowered university admission standards, and opened more university positions to workers and those with work experience. But because they were poorly planned and financed, these and other reforms virtually collapsed, leading to declining competence among graduates of all but a few elite institutions in the capitals. Social inequalities widened. These developments were reflected in the Ferghana Valley.

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Regarding the intelligentsia, Khrushchev and his cohorts relaxed restrictions on contacts with the West, published some heretofore banned works, and allowed some new journals and films. But censorship continued in a weakened form, propaganda still blared, many ideologues continued to wield power, and liberalization was limited to what the Communist Party could accept. At the same time, the supply of goods grew rapidly to meet the huge unsatisfied demand, with a trebling of agricultural production alone.

It was an era of contradictions. Beginning at the end of the 1960s, the Ferghana Valley's cities saw the construction of many new apartment houses, schools, and

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hospitals. Yet the farming folk who inhabited the new apartments were still denied passports even to travel within the USSR. Religious believers were tolerated, but scores of mosques were closed and a bellicose atheism remained in force. If there were better clothes in the stores, it was at the price of suffering by the sun-scorched women who picked the Ferghana cotton. If some exiled peoples had earlier been allowed to return to their homes, the Meskhetian Turks who had been deported to the Ferghana Valley were not, with fatal consequences.[27] Finally, overall production rose, but at the cost of driving most of the traditional arts and crafts of the Ferghana Valley to the verge of extinction.

The demographic situation in the country also changed. The birth rate among European peoples of the USSR rapidly fell, but continued to rise in the case of Soviet Muslims. After 1967 more Russians and Slavs moved out of the Ferghana Valley than migrated into it, while the indigenous peoples of the Ferghana Valley experienced a "demographic explosion."

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The mind-set of the authorities and the endless orders they issued brought them into conflict with local cultural values, which the rulers viewed as outdated anachronisms. Economic and social modernization went forward, but failed utterly to foster a sense of Soviet identity among peoples who spoke more than a hundred languages. Efforts by Khrushchev and Brezhnev to forge a "Soviet people" diluted some aspects of ethnic identity among people in the Ferghana Valley, but at the same time strengthened their defense mechanisms against Russification. Far from being a paradoxical outcome, this result appears to have flowed naturally from the erosion of identity, for the simple reason that so many of the social realities in which individual identity was grounded remained and were there to be embraced.[28] Tajiks and Uzbeks in the Ferghana Valley did particularly well at allowing some Soviet elements into their lives, while still preserving their languages, core traditions, and national identities.

The period of relative calm that prevailed in the Ferghana Valley under Khrushchev and Brezhnev ended with the advent of Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, to which we must now turn.

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