

*Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan's Soviet Past.* Timur Dadabaev. New York, NY: Routledge. 2016. 226 pp. (ISBN-13: 9781138831469)

Central Asia went through fundamental changes from its annexation by the Soviet Union in 1917 until its independence after the demise of the Soviet system in 1991. However, independence was the beginning of further transformations through puzzling political, legal, economic, societal and ethnic dilemmas. Indeed, the former Soviet Central Asia is going through some structural alterations vis-à-vis a religious awakening, historical inspirations and cultural legacies symbolizing the ever-changing social fabric of society. In that sense, the book under examination offers a vital avenue to understand how to reconcile with the Soviet past in order to cope better with the current transformative movements in post-Soviet Central Asia.

To this end, Timur Dadabaev in *Identity and Memory in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Uzbekistan's Soviet Past* provides a full account of the rapport between the governmentally-approved official history during the Soviet period and people's private lives and beliefs. Consequently, the author tries to improve our understanding regarding how people remember their Soviet past and the memories of experiences that they formed during that period of Uzbekistan. Dadabaev rightly argues that it is imperative to compile and record memories from the older age group because these citizens are the only ones who remember the social environment of Soviet times. Taking into consideration the current level of life expectancy in Uzbekistan, the number of senior citizens who observed the Soviet period is shrinking very rapidly. Accordingly, failing to do so would mean the loss of valuable/unique data resulting in misinterpretations, false assumptions and erroneous speculations without having the prospect of establishing archival authenticity. Consequently, the author argues that recording, preserving and disseminating qualitative data on people's experiences in their lives and their relations to the ideology and political structure of the Soviet government and the Communist party is an urgent task. The book relies on critical discourse analysis to evaluate the views of people regarding their Soviet past and their present situation. By analyzing these particular data, the author strives to decipher the present day transformations in Central Asia and Uzbekistan in particular.

The volume consists of nine chapters. In the introductory chapter, the author provides the methods of inquiry and the main aims of the book. Chapter 2 stresses the practice of reconstructing and re-interpreting history by analyzing the relationship between ideology and public practices in order to determine the people's memories of their Soviet past and Soviet life, which in turn accentuates the differences between the official interpretation of history and public historical perceptions based on everyday needs, identifications and experiences. Chapter 3 delves into the Stalinist period of Uzbekistan to apprehend the impact of Stalinist policies on people's everyday lives in order to explain the formation of public memories concerning the traumatic political practices, economic policies and social life of the period. Chapter 4 investigates the memories associated with World War II. It concludes that the people's attitudes towards World War II constitute the only example of positively describing the Soviet period through official historiography in Uzbekistan in post-Soviet years. Chapter 5 explores the public reactions of ordinary citizens to Stalin's death, indicating a positive image with deep appreciation

and respect for his strong will and leadership in the difficult years of World War II. Chapter 6 highlights the post-Stalin years of development in Uzbekistan in terms of recollections involving peculiar nostalgic inclinations towards a feeling of security, social welfare, order, and hope for the future and the Soviet modernization process. Chapter 7 examines Soviet ethnic policies and shows the emergence of a new group of Russophile people from the indigenous population, adapting themselves entirely to Soviet realities as a logical outcome of the Sovietization policies put in practice by respective Soviet administrations. Chapter 8 reviews religious traditions and rituals through memories of the anti-religious policies of Soviet times in order to understand their impact on society and argues that these Soviet experiences also affect the current religious situation in Uzbekistan. The final chapter looks at the changing nature of *mahalla* (an indigenous institution deemed essential for social capital construction) identity in Uzbekistan by focusing on ordinary citizens' post-Soviet recollections of the Soviet-era *mahalla* community. Equally, the chapter investigates how and to what extent the *mahalla* can be considered a government-affiliated unit or an indigenous non-governmental network since political authorities have often tried to control and contain these institutions to reinforce the state's legitimacy on the ground. This sort of behavior has challenged the fundamental nature of residents' connectivity to their local communities.

Indubitably, this volume by Dadabaev on the everyday life experiences of people in Soviet Central Asia significantly contributes to enhancing our comprehension of Soviet policies in the Central Asian periphery. This timely book is a valuable addition to Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asian studies. The valuable/unique dataset has immeasurable value to shed light on the Soviet period in Central Asia/Uzbekistan. It will benefit specialists as well as graduate students of international relations, area studies, and Silk Road studies.

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