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The author begs the reader’s indulgence for the typographical imperfections (especially in phonemic symbols) that occur in the article; the journal evidently did not have suitable fonts, and he was not given the opportunity to repair them.
Script and Scripture: The Three Alphabets of Tajik Persian, 1927-1997
John Perry
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"Persian is absolute child's play. Were it not for that damned Arabic alphabet in which every half dozen letters looks like every other half dozen and the vowels are not written, I would undertake to learn the entire grammar within 48 hours."
—F. Engels

"The Latin alphabet is the Revolution in the East!"
—V. I. Lenin

Well aware that the pen is mightier than the sword, the Bolsheviks resolved from the outset not only to appropriate the pen, but to trim it to their own specifications, not once, but twice. As a result, if their stated language policies are implemented, the newly-independent Turkic-language republics of the former USSR and the Persian-language republic, Tajikistan, will share the dubious distinction of having switched alphabets three times within living memory. Around 1929 their Arabic writing systems were latinized; in 1939 these were in turn replaced by modified Cyrillic systems; and since 1989, in the wake of perestroika and the demise of the Soviet Union, all of them have enacted legislation to revert to the Latin alphabet (in the case of the Turkic republics) or to the Arabic (in the case of Tajikistan). These transitions and the new orientations in overall language policy that accompanied them obviously had immediate and far-reaching effects on education, communications and publishing. Less obviously, such were the cultural and affective connotations of the respective writing systems—and the extent to which these subjective ties distorted the practical linguistic and social issues—that a balanced, critical examination of this whole chain of events and its ethnocultural repercussions is still wanting.

Ideological and sociological aspects of the first two changes have indeed been scrutinized by both Soviet and Western scholars from their separate perspectives, and are now subject to revision by a new generation (notably of indigenous turcophone and persophone writers) with a different set of axes to grind. However, since both linguistic and sociopolitical issues vary from one speech community to another (and especially as between Turks and Tajiks), coverage of the whole field is still patchy. As concerns the Turkic languages under Soviet rule, where the announced goal was not only the attainment of universal literacy but also the invention of a unified (Latin) Turkic alphabet, the techniques and the politics of latinization and cyrillicization have been documented extensively—notably, as concerns latinization, by Baldrud (1993) and, for Uzbek, by Fierman (1991)—and criticized in general terms by Henze (1974), among others. Documentation of the change to Cyrillic in Soviet sources is uniformly meager. The case of Tajik (Persian of Central Asia), which a thousand years ago provided the model for the adaptation of Arabic to other languages of the region, and for which the central issue remains whether or not to keep the culturally freighted Arabic script, has been the preserve of Soviet scholars (Russian and Tajik) and post-perestroika nationalist-revisionists; the contrast in rhetoric (in some instances, by the same individuals) is, of course, revealing. The only critical commentary by an outsider seems to be that of Werybo (1976, 1994)."
One Arabic orthographic reform of the period did succeed in establishing a standard and has maintained itself, within limits, to this day. Kazak intellectuals began after 1906 to emancipate their national culture from Tatar tutelage, and between 1913 and 1924 developed a phonographic Arabic alphabet (i.e., one character consistently represented one sound; see Fig. 1), which not only dispensed with redundant letters, even in Arabic borrowings, but observed Kazak phonological reflexes of general Turkic consonants. This development is significant as an instance of a reformed Arabic orthography specific to a national language, both preceding and running counter to the bid for a unified Turkic Latin alphabet. The psychological and religious inhibitions against such a radical change were less strong for the Kazaks than for Tatars or Azerbaijanis. As quite recent emulators of Tatar and Chaghatay literary culture (and comparatively recent adherents of organized Islam), they had no large and valorized literary corpus, and had not yet identified their national selfhood with the traditional Arabic script. Their reformed alphabet was thus tantamount to a first adaptation of Arabic to the Kazak language. Radloff, the leading Russian turgulologist, expressed his admiration for the system. In Soviet Kazakhstan, of course, it was scrapped together with its nascent literature (including textbooks for the 1925-28 school year) in favor of a Latin orthography from 1929 onward. For a time it was widely adopted also by Kyrgyz, Uzbeks and Uighurs in both Western and Eastern Turkestan; it is still used in Xinjiang and by émigré groups publishing in Turkey.

By 1920, the Latinization movement in Azerbaijan and Turkey had gathered enough momentum to be adopted by the Bolsheviks as a progressive cultural program applicable to all the nationalities in their domains that used a version of the Arabic script. In Central Asia, the Soviet government had confiscated all presses in 1918 (barely a year after the first one was permitted in Bukhara), and effectively ended the culture of lithography, both traditional and Jadidist. Over the next few years Arabic typographical presses were introduced, together with a concerted program of child and adult education aimed at achieving universal functional literacy, bolstered by a corpus of new indigenous and translated literature tailored to the needs of the new ideology. Although they soon repudiated the Jadids’ initiative, the Bolsheviks conformed to their approach, attempting first to expand literacy and inculcate new cultural and intellectual habits before replacing the writing system. The stated political agenda was the short-lived korenizatsii (“nationalization”), the rapid formation of a native intelligentsia and bureaucracy for each of the new national Soviet republics.

Latin

When Akhundov devised his mixed Cyrillic-and-Latin alphabet in 1873, it was intended for the salvation of a vaguely-defined millet, an international community stretching between Baku, Istanbul and Tehran that was basically Islamic (though including among its intellectuals Christians, Jews and atheists) and predominantly Turkish (though extending well into the Iranian sphere). The change of script was to emancipate the region from Western imperialism by using the West’s own weapon against it. One of the main hindrances to implementation of this or any of its competing systems turned out to be the lack of political unity within the millet. It took a further generation to admit that the cultural matrix of the eastern Islamic world (despite sporadic appeals to the caliphate) no longer possessed the institutional basis to push through a common ideological revolution. When the next crop of proposals surfaced in the 1920s, new national-political entities had come into being with the compactness, revolutionary fervor and coercive zeal to implement their systems separately: Kemalist Turkey, and Bolshevik Azerbaijan.

The decision to Latinize, taken at the All-Union Turco-Linguistic Conference of February 1926 held at Baku, was an endorsement by Moscow of the movement by Turkish intellectuals from various lands (but by this time concentrated in Baku) to provide a uniform alphabet for all the Turkic literary languages which had so far used Arabic script. In its appropriation as an article of Soviet nationalities policy, Latinization underwent some subtle changes. The first proposal in Soviet Azerbaijan, in 1922, had introduced the letters ʂ, for [ʃ], and e, for [ɛ] (by contrast to the accepted principle that the plain letter should represent the more frequently-occurring sound and the augmented letter the less frequent one); it was adopted in the Turkish Republic a few years later, in Turkey, though invited to send a representative to the Baku conference, withdrew from participation at the last moment. In the form it finally took in June 1928, the New Turkish Alphabet (NTA) diverged noticeably from that adopted by Ataturk’s republic in November of the same year: e.g., the values of the characters ɛ and ç were reversed, NTA 樯 was Turkish چ, and the voiced uvular fricative [ɣ] was ɑ̃ in NTA, ғ in Turkish. The NTA was intended to be adapted to a number of non-Turkish languages of the Soviet Union, notably Tajik.

In the case of Tajik it is easy to see how the project could be pushed through without protest, despite the lack of a pan-Iranian Latinization lobby. From 1924 to 1929 the Tajiks, a rural minority concentrated in the mountainous southeast, constituted an Autonomous SSR within the new Uzbek SSR; the northern oasis cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, traditional centers of Tajik urban population and culture, were assigned to Uzbekistan. Doubly subordinate to Tashkent and Moscow and isolated from their traditional intellectuals, the Persian speakers of Dushanbe and its dependencies had little choice but to follow what some of them saw as pan-Turkist and pan-Turanian political ambitions as expressed in the drive for a unified Turkic script. Letters angrily denouncing Fit’at’s alleged pan-Turkism (seen in his avowed preference for NTA symbols) were published under the pseudonym "Tojik" (with an editorial disclaimer) in Rahbari doni, the organ of the People’s Commissariat for Education.

Reformers of the Arabic alphabet had taken two principal directions. The first, the typographically-friendly method of using only the independent forms of consonants, with the vowel diacritics next to them instead of in the form of super- and subscripts, was nowhere officially adopted. The second, which was that of the reformed Kazak orthography, adapted Perso-Arabic vowel and consonant diacritics and other traditional graphemic conventions to display and disambiguate the full range of sounds, while basically retaining the cursive ductus. Universally applicable, and adopted successfully in several language-specific forms, it was in principle as practical as the modified Latin orthography which ousted it, and arguably more so (as we shall see) than the Cyrillic.

Unlike the Turks, who took up Lenin’s slogan with alacrity (indeed, they had inspired it), the Persians were reluctant to initiate any kind of change. Reformed Arabic alphabets were not actively adapted to Persian at that period, since Arabic script is considerably less ambiguous in Persian than in Turkec. The Perso-Arabic system has had a whole millennium to establish itself, and the language is phonetically well suited to a morphographic system such as Arabic. Words are short, or may be written as morph in segments; the lexical and grammatical morphology is evenly distributed as prefixes and suffixes—not, as in Turkish, clustered at the ends of (frequently long) words. There is no significant vowel or consonant harmony. Moreover, whereas the eight-vowel system of Turkish cannot be adequately represented by the maximally six vowel signs of Arabic; the six vowels of Classical and modern literary Persian can be regarded as corresponding to the three long and three short vowel signs of Arabic. (The vowel system of modern spoken Tajik Persian is a different problem, of which more below.) The large Arabic loan vocabulary, written as in Arabic except for a few very systematic modifications, comprises a stratum of logographs readily recognized and reproduced by educated people; for even the less religious and more cosmopolitan Persian reader, any proposal to “reform” these familiar forms generally evoked snorts of ridicule.
After a half-century of prudent silence, this charge has resurfaced as a blanket nationalist-revisionist condemnation of latinization as part of the Uzbek plot (abetted by Moscow) to deny the Tajiks their national identity. There were, however, proponents of the latinization of Tajik (not all of them ethnic Tajiks) who took an enthusiastic, independent, and even a truculent anti-Uzbek line. When, at the second plenum of the All-Union Central Committee for the New Turkic Alphabet (VCKNTA) in January 1928, chairman Ramzi of Uzbekistan’s Nar Kompros proudly reported on the progress of latinization among the ethnic minorities of his republic (which included the Tajiks, both of the Uzbek SSR and of the Tajik ASSR), committee member I. Zhirkov objected that the Tajik Latin orthography was the business of Russian Tajik, not of Uzbekistan, and warned that Ramzi’s initiative might be construed as interference in Tajik national affairs. And indeed, the Tajik delegate Uigurov took umbrage at the Central Committee’s failure to acknowledge the activities of Tajikistan’s CKNTA, which had been active since the first plenum at Samarkand in 1927, when the resolution to latinize Tajik was adopted. Thereafter, the Jadis-turn revolutionaries, Abdurani Firtat (an Usbek), Abdulohid Munizim (a Tajik) and other Turkumian intellectuals—together with several Russian orientalists and the Iranian émigré, Lahuti—threw out the details of the new Tajik orthography through two further conferences (Tashkent, 1928, and Dushanbe, 1930) with scant reference to the parallel latinization of Uzbek.

The linguistic justifications for latinizing Tajik were simplistically exaggerated by politicians. The chairman of Nar Kompros declared that the thirty-three letters of the (Perso)-Arabic alphabet each have three different forms, which means there are in effect ninety-nine letters to learn, over three times as many as in Latin. Actually, each Arabic letter maximally has four forms, and several only have two; counting all configurations of shape, dots and ligatures as separate “letters,” they total 118. More literally, if we discount ligatures (which are just idiomatic in cursive handwritten Latin) and count only shape “families” (without distinguishing the differential dotting of, e.g., ā, ĕ, ě, ē — to be represented in Latin script by a, e, i, x) there are no more than twenty-nine distinct forms. This would be no consolation to such as Engels, who evidently expected more by way of differentiation than combinations of dots; but even he would have to concede that the Latin alphabet has thirty-nine “letters” if we include each capital that is distinctively formed in comparison with its lower-case equivalent.

The social benefits to be derived from the change were no less energetically envisaged. Arabic was a luxury script for the exploiting classes, not a practical medium of education and communication for the toiling masses; the difficulties presented by the Arabic alphabet made it “a brake on progress,” which would accelerate with the attainment of universal literacy. Numerous caricatures in the press, and a poem by Munizim, exploited the vehicular analogy, portraying the Arabic alphabet as an oxcart (“arab”) or a donkey, and the Latin alphabet as an automobile or airplane. Abroad the latter, the backward peoples of Central Asia would be enabled to communicate with the advanced nations of the world, and realize their full potential. Centralized agitprop left very little for the national committees to debate; but the Tajik committee, at least, took the task of designing a new alphabet very seriously and devised some ingenious solutions to unexpected linguistic problems.

The foundation of the NTA was to be the phonographic principle, i.e. one sound (phoneme) be represented by a single letter (grapheme). Ideologically, this reflected both the Marxist elevation of the vernacular, the living language of the proletariat, above the orthographically fossilized language of the old elite, and the nationalist rejection of Arabicate forms and rules in favor of a “true” representation of the language of the ethnos. It was thus a logical concomitant of national communism, a Trojan horse within the gates of the new Byzantium; though it was never officially repudiated, the neglect and perversion of this principle in the process of cyrillicization (see below) ought to surprise no one. Linguistically speaking, it was no less compromised. For the benefit of a single, circumscribed speech community, phonemic transcription is feasible and desirable (it is in fact how most alphabetic systems began); but for a widespread literary language with a long historical tradition, and even more for a cluster of related literary languages, to impose it de novo can be disastrous.

Since literacy in Arabic script had been the privilege of the ousted élite, the spoken vernacular was the pride of the proletariat; the feitishization of the letter was replaced by feitishization of the phoneme, the dictatorship of a traditional, near-universal system of transcription gave way to that of an ad hoc series of narrow, dialect-specific transcriptions. It may seem to us axiomatic that a literary language must be designed for maximum comprehensibility across regional and social variations, should allow for elements of morphographic spelling. That is, just as the plural morpheme /s/ in English stands for either /s/ (as in cat) or /z/ (as in dog), it would be more economical to write the Turkish word for “book” as kitab in all positions, rather than kitabim, kitaplar, etc.; the proficient reader would have no trouble intuited the appropriate contextual or dialectual rules of pronunciation. But phonology has generally been the hobby-horse of the self-righteous “scientific” linguist, and in the simultaneously idealistic and mechanistic environment of the 1920s a “regular” or “natural” (i.e., phonetically over determined) national orthography became one of the hallmarks of a socialist consciousness—and not only for the Bolsheviks. In England, G.B. Shaw, in other ways a paragon of literary sensibility, succumbed to the “alphabetical fallacy” (the assumption that phonographic writing is intrinsically superior to logographic or morphographic writing), preached a radical reform of English orthography along strictly “phonetic” lines, and left a generous bequest that resulted (in 1960) in a project for a forty-eight character non-Latin alphabet for English that would have challenged Chomskian.

The only point of real controversy in Tajik concerned the vowels. Since the new literary language was to have a vernacular base for its lexicon and grammar, all agreed that its new writing system should also reflect contemporary pronunciation, not an idealized vowel system based on spurious Persian of a thousand years ago. At the turn of the century the phonetic alphabet had been created by a Russian scholar, A.A. Semenov, was rejected as inadequate. (Semenov’s project had two basic flaws, as criticized by Firtat: it departed from the phonographic principle by including digraphs, and it ignored the “self-evident necessity” for the new Tajik alphabet to be as close as possible to the New Turkic Alphabet).

Fig. 2 Genesis of the Tajik Latin Alphabet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Long&quot; vowels</th>
<th>Majhul vowels</th>
<th>&quot;Short&quot; vowels</th>
<th>Non-standard consonants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firtat: a ɪ û e ɒ i u</td>
<td>b ɛ y j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final version: o [t ʊ] ɛ ʊ a l u</td>
<td>b ɛ y j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiman: o ɪ û e ʊ a l u</td>
<td>b ɛ y j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Arabic: ا و ئ و)
non-Latin character is that for the consonant /b/, which is realized even in lower case by an upper case B, like the Russian letter for /v/ (presumably so as not to clash with NTA B, a vowel character also Cyrillic in inspiration; which was then included in the Uzbek Latin alphabet). Capital letters were additionally adopted, over the objections and others, not because they were linguistically justified, but because the FCKNTA had sanctioned them.\(^{28}\)

The designation of the vowels /i/ and /u/ as unstable, i.e. subject to different realizations in terms of length and/or stress in different environments, and the consequent decision to treat them as allophones and allocate them one symbol each (except for the orthographic alternations mentioned above), was considered an economical and generally unambiguous solution to a synchronic linguistic problem; it remains a part of the official description of the Tajik sound system.\(^{23}\) The most respected Tajik literary figure, Sadriddin Aini (though not on the Tajik alphabet committee), expressed himself enthusiastically in favor of latinization. However, he affirmed against the majority that Tajik did have two "long" vowels phonemically distinct from "short" /i/ and /u/, and pointed out that reducing these to one graph each and expecting the reader to interpret between "unstable allophones" was precisely the sort of ambiguity they were endeavoring to avoid by replacing the Arabic script with Latin. He insisted that this distinction was no fancy of his Classical Persian upbringing, but could be heard today, even (though less marked!) in the speech of the uzbekized Tajiks of Bukhara and Samarkand.\(^{30}\)

In retrospect, it is ironic that Aini’s poetic ear was dismissed as a bourgeois anachronism (particularly since at least one Soviet Russian linguist has noted that in some languages vowel length may be distinctive even though vowels may not be heard as consistently long or short in speech)—and that Aini himself apparently failed to make the crucial point: that in ignoring the prosodic values of the "long" variants of these sounds, which in literary Persian are canonically long (and systematically distinguished in the Arabic alphabet), and which contrast with the "short" variants in traditional scansion, the latinitizers literally destroyed Tajik poetry. Admittedly the poetically sensitive (a class that was much larger than the merely "literary") would for some time yet intuit and reproduce the appropriate meters, regardless of the orthography. But these new rules were imposed into Cyrillic, and with the ultimate death of a generation brought up on the rules of classical prosody (arca, traditional verse (which still accounts for virtually all Tajik poetry) can no longer be taught, learned or appreciated in the current orthography of the "Tajik literary language."\(^{31}\) Errors of scansion in the verse of younger poets, and even in quotations from the classics, readily confirm this today.

The drafting stage of latinization was characterized in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan by a lively discussion of modalities and details, followed by enthusiastic implementation in education and publishing, despite minor incompatibilities such as a shortage of Latin type. The propaganda campaign stressing the international character of the Latin alphabet had diminished its threat to Tajiks as a pan-Turkic strategy. The FCKNTA dropped the word "Turkish" from its title. Proponents of latinization daily expected to hear that Iran and Afghanistan, too, had declared for the new orthography, the key to the twentieth century and Western-style progress. It was even suggested in 1930, by Lunacharsky and others, that Russian should switch from Cyrillic to Latin.\(^{32}\) The likbec ("liquidation of illiteracy") campaign of adult education that followed latinization achieved truly remarkable results: in Tajikistan overall literacy rose from 3.8% in 1926 to 82.8% in 1939.\(^{33}\) This was popularly attributed to the change of alphabet.\(^{34}\)

Cyrillic

No sooner had the latinitizers installed their systems than there was a complete reversal of policy, and their hard-won revolution was consigned to the dustbin of history. From 1930, questions of script were centralized in Moscow; influential articles published in 1933 and 1934 proclaimed the Russian alphabet as the alphabet of revolution and progress, expressing "the unity of the great Soviet people, brotherhood and Stalinist friendship." Again the Tatars, materially and psychologically, were hit hardest. Their president welcomed the cyrillicization decree of 1939 as "a tremendous and joyful event" issued "in response to the petitions of the toiling masses." Over fourteen million school textbooks and two million copies of the Marxist-Leninist classics printed by Turgosizdat since 1935 alone, it is claimed, were dutifully destroyed.\(^{35}\) The wonderful yangal (“new alphabet”) presses and typewriters that could print materials in the 39-letter NTA for more than a dozen languages were rendered redundant.

Stalin explicitly endorsed the change only in 1937, but it had been foreshadowed by his vision of a new Russian empire as articulated in his 1925 speech on "building socialism in one country." By the Brezhnev era, the volce-face had acquired a glib justification for the nationalities at large and the Tajik writing system in particular: latinization had been the right choice initially, as an immediate answer to pressing cultural problems, since the Russian alphabet was still tainted with the brush of Tsarist oppression and could only be accepted as a base for national alphabets in the course of the historical rapprochement of the Soviet peoples.\(^{36}\) Fitrat’s design of his Latin alphabet for Tajik to correspond as far as possible with the NTA as adopted in Uzbek is patronizingly criticized: Fitrat did not realize that the “unity of literature” he espoused meant not only the literatures of the Tajiks and Uzbeks but those of all the Soviet peoples (Fitrat was tried and executed in 1937). Having sparked a cultural revolution in the East, the Russian people were now ready to help their brothers “draw nearer” in science, economy, etc.; for this, the nationalities needed to learn Russian; and this would be much easier if they did not have to learn a second alphabet.\(^{37}\)

To force the pace, in 1938 Russian was made a compulsory school subject in non-Russian schools among the nationalities, and in January 1939 an orthographic reform of the Uzbek Latin alphabet re-ordered the letters in virtually the same sequence as that of the Russian alphabet. For the change in Tajik, only one linguistic justification was proposed: the new Cyrillic alphabet, it was claimed, reflected the peculiarities of the language more faithfully, since it built upon linguistic research in the intervening decade.\(^{38}\) The few editorialists and letters to address the issue in the national teachers’ journal lashed the policy in principle, and confined their comments to questions of detail, such as whether to retain the obviously redundant soft sign (it was, of course, retained).\(^{40}\) Aini, one of the few old lads who have survived the purges, did not venture an opinion. No concerted educational campaign was proposed to mitigate the instant illiteracy visited upon adults who had mastered the Latin script but knew no Russian.

The “fairytale-like” reporting— that the new alphabet was adopted by popular demand and without any major problems\(^{41}\) illustrates the extent to which this second change was a fait accompli foisted by Moscow upon a public intimidated by the purges, and implemented locally by over-zealous bureaucrats responsive more to the inquisitorial atmosphere of Stalinism than to need or common sense. The grand international adventure of socialist idealism was over, replaced by the political requirements of a centralizing, pan-Soviet elite, which set itself up as the sole mediator between its subjects and the outside world.\(^{42}\)

The political result of the cyrillicization of 1939 and the concomitant language reforms was to obscure the last vestiges of a unified Turkic writing system, to bind each national enclave separately to Moscow by minimizing the ability of Tatars, Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbeks, etc. to read each other’s writings or those of Turks from outside. For Tajiks, this had already been achieved in 1929, since Iran and Afghanistan continued to use the Arabic script. Whether this result was consciously sought and centrally planned is still debated. Western scholars of the Cold War era and post-perestroika Central Asians are convinced that it was, Soviet linguists maintain that they acted in good faith, if not as diligently as they might, and Western scholars of more recent vintage (perhaps experienced in the ubiquity of Murphy’s Law) seem prepared, reluctantly, to give them the benefit of the doubt.\(^{43}\) Certainly the turcologist Radloff, as early as the 1870s, favored an exact transcription of each Turkic language, and pointed out that this would hamper political unification.\(^{44}\) According to Zeki Velidi Togan, in 1920 he read a Comintern resolution for the guidance of Bolshevik operatives in Central Asia and the Middle East (which was not distributed to representatives of the indigenous peoples) where it was stated: “It is necessary to exploit cleavages already in place … These rivalries ought to be supplemented through the use of differentiated languages, as the educated strata [sic] among the target populations is a thin one and it would not be difficult to break the population free of their
influence. Finally, a closer look at the specifics of the Tajik Cyrillic alphabet and its relation to that of the Uzbeks and other neighbors surely reveals not merely a lack of coordination but a conscious policy to differentiate the national writing systems.

Fig. 3 Comparative Alphabetical Order of Central Asian Cyrillic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Included in (Russian) alphabet</th>
<th>Appended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kazak:</td>
<td>й, і, ы</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyz:</td>
<td>Ю, і, ы</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen:</td>
<td>й, ы</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek:</td>
<td>Ж, ы</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik:</td>
<td>Г, ы</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the forms of the supplementary letters and/or diacritics, what is politely called "different [graphic] solutions to the same phonetic problem in different languages" entailed the deployment of seventy-four Cyrillic characters to replace the thirty-nine of the NTA. The duplication implicit here may be exemplified as follows in thirteen of the Turkic languages involved (excluding Azerbaijan and Tajik: six separate forms to represent [k], three forms for [t] (including Tajik [s]), and two each for [g], [y] and [h]). It is hard to believe that, if a comparatively decentralized group of alphabet committees in the late 1920s could achieve virtual uniformity with half the number of signs, a centralized authority ten years later—which in most instances merely had to change by fiat the same NTA character across the board to a Cyrillic character—produced such wasteful inconsistency merely out of incompetence. Even more surprising is that the conventional alphabetical orders of the national Cyrillic alphabets do not match. In eight of the languages examined, including Kyrgyz and Turkmen, the supplementary letters for non-Russian vowels and consonants are included in the body of the alphabet immediately after the related Russian letters. In the five others (Volga Tatar, Kazak, Uighur, Uzbek and Tajik), they are appended after the last Russian letter, although character for corresponding sounds in different languages (whether of the same form or not) are not in the same sequence (Fig. 3). The two systems which come closest to corresponding are those of Tajik and Uzbek, where three modified characters are identical and another almost so; but except for x, (h), they are appended in reverse order. Given the near-identity (94%) of the sound systems of Tajik and Uzbek, the high rate of bilingualism of their speakers and their general cultural interdependence (the ethnic Uzbek Fitrat served on the latinization committees of both republics), the similarities are inevitable, and the differences of diacritics and ordering seem all the more deliberate and petty.

The phonographic correspondences of the Latin alphabet were in theory carried over into the Cyrillic. The main advantage of the Cyrillic over the Latin alphabet, declared its advocates, was that it had six more letters, the better to represent sounds not found in European languages. This argument is specious: eight of its characters (the yotated vowels, the hard and soft signs, and n) are usually redundant outside Slavic, while the existence of special letters for [j], [f], [s] and [t] is balanced by the absence of letters for [b], [d], [g], [l] and [w]. Over and above such details is the fact that the Latin alphabet is a neutral, international base system, which has been in scholarly use since the 1850s to transcribe languages from other writing systems and from speech in accordance with regular (but adaptable) conventions. Language-specific peculiarities, such as жу for /k/ or x for /ks/ may be dispensed with and their components reassigned when adapted to a different language. Cyrillic certainly has similar potential, and was adapted to languages other than Russian in pre-Soviet times. However, the Cyrillic system that was proposed as a placement for the NTA was Russian-specific, the minimal orthographic reform in 1918 had not changed its essential Russianness, and in 1937 considerations of cultural hegemony, as well as political expediency, required that its embedded peculiarities be carried over into the Turkic languages and Tajik.

The colonial aspect of Cyrillicisation was emphasized by the requirement that Russian loanwords (including so-called "international" vocabulary processed through Russian) be spelled strictly as in Russian, even where the native language had the phonetic resources (and often the historical precedent) to write such words in its own way, and had even assimilated them into its morphology, e.g., Tajik жехел ("hegelization," for Russian жехелизм, not *хелелизм). This decree recapitulated the essentially morphographic convention of writing Arabic loanwords as written in Arabic, which was one of the reasons for latinization, the word of Stalin, like that of God, was literally immune to alteration. The usually inaccurate term "loanword" (vocabulary is normally given and taken for keeps) was for once appropriate, since Russian took back its "loan" by rescinding its phonetic and orthographic assimilation into the national languages, the better to promote its own, and denied its protoges the use of French, German and other lexical funds except through the Russianized forms.

Fig. 4 Orthographic Inconsistencies in Tajik Cyrillic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>я: янн, яна, яна (najian)</td>
<td>я: ы, порад, сэрех (jxdr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ж: жим, порд, сэрех (jxdr)</td>
<td>ж: бас, баш, баш (jxdr)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>т: тик, тарак, тарак (taik)</td>
<td>т: таин (тaин), нход (нход)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>у: узбек, узбек, узбек (узбек)</td>
<td>у: курд, афрон</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>в: вш, веш, веш (веш)</td>
<td>в: вш, веш, веш (веш)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>е: е, е, е (веш)</td>
<td>е: е, е, е (веш)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>о: о, о, о (веш)</td>
<td>о: о, о, о (веш)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>я: я, я, я (веш)</td>
<td>я: я, я, я (веш)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In transferring sound-equivalents from a context-neutral Latin alphabet to the Russian Cyrillic system, redundant characters in the pairs of normal and yotated vowels (а/а, о/о, и/е, е/ы, у/о) and orthographic auxiliaries (the hard sign and soft sign) were forced to serve the quite different requirements of Tajik phonology. The five yotated vowels (in Russian, devices to indicate that a preceding consonant is palatalized) all served to represent the combination of consonant /y/ and a following vowel, while н and й additionally represented simple /н/ and /й/ Consonant /y/ was written sometimes as ж, the hard sign ж stood for the old Arabic жин (the apostrophe in the NTA) and the soft sign ж was used in accordance with Russian orthographic rules irrelevant to Tajik. Figure 4 illustrates eight cases where what had been a single consistent spelling of the same sound sequence in latinized Tajik had to be spelled in two or three different ways to accommodate Russian (ostensibly "Tajik") Cyrillic orthography. There are no fewer than twenty-four different forms generated by the eight required in Latin orthography, not counting the complex cases needed for reduplicated /y/ or the semantically-dependent interpretations required for lexical compounds and syntagms. All these cause difficulties in both reading and writing. Subsequent spelling reforms have done little to improve this hybrid system. Nevertheless, cyrillicisation was blandly hailed ever thereafter as "a great event in the development of a culture national in form and socialist in content for the Tajik people; the new alphabet and its graphic possibilities helped accurately to reflect the grammatical norms and fundamental character of modern literary Tajik."

In light of this solicitude, it seems not to have struck anyone as ironic that the Cyrillic typewriters provided for Tajik use were (and are) almost entirely Russian-keyboard models, without the six modified characters of Tajik. Scholarly publications from the 1950s to the 1990s were often reproduced from poor-quality typescript, with the hooks and slashes added by hand and by means of half-spaced
The use of cursive instead of the standard script for some characters was also noted. The army had been expanding, and this was seen as a way to improve efficiency. The use of a new script was also seen as a way to modernize the language and make it more accessible to a wider audience. However, some doubted the wisdom of such changes, arguing that the traditional script was an important part of the country's cultural heritage.

Protests did break out in a few cities, but they were quickly quashed by the authorities. The army was deployed in large numbers to maintain order. Despite the opposition, the changes were implemented, and the new script was gradually introduced throughout the country.

The modernization efforts continued, and the country saw significant changes in the next few decades, with the script playing a key role in the development of the country. However, the tradition of cursive script was not completely forgotten, and it continued to be used in certain contexts, such as in literature and formal documents.
mise with the nastaˈliːɡ esthete as a reader. The rounded, well-proportioned neo-naskš letters of modern Iranian typography are esthetically acceptable to most, and the layout and formatting conventions that go with any other modern alphabet (paragraphs, punctuation, indexing, etc.) are well established. Code switching is becoming increasingly common in writing: quotations, citations of names, terms, references, etc. in Latin script permeate texts in Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Chinese, Japanese, etc.

In any case, the written word is no longer so important a means of communication across frontiers, or between individuals or communities, as it was until about the 1940s. Radio and television have long made a mockery of Stalinist attempts to protect curious citizens from foreign influences by censorship, import restrictions, or changes of alphabet. The telephone has taken over many everyday communications tasks. Both functional and recreational literacy are on the decline in some “advanced” societies. Hindi and Urdu, Serbian and Croatian, have demonstrated (intermittently, to be sure) that the same speech community may use different alphabets. It is not inconceivable, in an age when the nation-state appears to be up for renegotiation, that the Tajiks and similar communities might continue to function quite adequately for an extended time in two parallel writing systems, chosen in accordance with religious, political or cultural orientations.

Conclusions

In sum, it may be said that the Arabic writing system as used for Central Asian languages before the Soviet period was not intrinsically a major handicap to education, publication or the dissemination of new ideas. Even the Chinese and Japanese writing systems, which take longer to learn and pose considerably greater problems than Arabic in phonographically representing vernacular usage or foreign words, have come to serve modern industrialized states without more than supplementary recourse to Latin letters. In 1897, literacy in the western, Latin-alphabet provinces of the Russian empire was indeed far ahead of Arabic-script Asia (96.2% in Estonia, 79.7% in Latvia, and 69.7% in Estonia, as against 2.6% in Turkestan). But the rate for the Cyrillic-writing area corresponding to the RSFSR was dramatically lower than that of the Baltic lands (29.6%), and Armenia and Georgia, each with its own national alphabet, at least 10% literacy, were closer to their Muslim, Arabic-script neighbours than to the Lutheran Latin-writers of the Baltic coast.45 Obviously, factors other than the mere forms of the alphabets were in play, both then and later, when Soviet language planners spared the Russian, Armenian and Georgian scripts but scrapped Arabic.

A strong and committed ideology such as was Communism in the 1920s and 1930s could conceivably have achieved its social reforms without changing the writing system for Muslim Asian languages, provided it had secured the trust and cooperation of the indigenous intelligentsia. The common goal, universal literacy, was not disputed. Tataria, cradle and proving-ground of the Jadids, already enjoyed about 40% literacy in the Arabic alphabet by 1926; with the switch to Latin, tens of thousands were demoted to the status of illiterates.46 It is true, however, that though the Perso-Arabic system was well adapted to Persian, and an established factor in Iranian cultural unity, it was graphically and politically less well adapted to the Turkic languages. Latinization was already a rallying call in the Turkic Jadid movement before the Bolsheviks appropriated it. Arabic script, as the vehicle of a traditional culture deemed backward and stagnant, was doomed to play the villain opposite the progressive, international Latin alphabet of a brave new world.

For Persian, latinization was no panacea. The overdetermination of vowels foregrounded dialect differences that were properly irrelevant in a thousand-year-old literary koine, and obscured pertinent prosodic features; in these respects, the traditional Arabic script was superior. Conservative cavets of this kind were overruled in the rush to modernity and the call to revolutionary duty. Ironically, the one undeniable advantage of the Latin alphabet, which was its international character, swiftly became a liability to the Soviet regime once exporting the revolution took second place to establishing control over the neo-Russian empire.

The solution to this problem, cyrillicization, was politically successful in tightening the bonds between the nationalities and the center, segregating adjacent Turkic peoples and reducing foreign literary influences. In most cases, however—especially that of the Tajiks—the Russian-specific system used was linguistically and orthographically inferior to the Latin alphabet, and so shoddily implemented as to be culturally retrogressive in its effects. The changeover was not accompanied by a reform and expansion of education, as the latinization program had been, and many Tajiks without a higher education acquired only a smattering of Russian and a poor grounding in (and loss of respect for) literary Tajik.

The turcophone republics of the NIS, like Turkey, have definitively abandoned the Arabic script. However, both for symbolic and pragmatic reasons, their leaders are promoting a reversion from the Cyrillic to the Latin alphabet: this will purportedly help sever their vestigial subservience to the defunct but still potent Soviet nexus, revive the pan-Turkic cultural area and link them with their new Western partners in democracy and commerce. This sounds like another Ataturk’s hat law, which legislated a symbolic change of cultural orientation in the expectation that sympathetic magic would transform it into a reality. The probability is that—once again—no two alphabets will be alike, confirming the exercise as yet another stage in a pointless scriptural vendetta. Globe-trotting academics and business people of the NIS who wish and need to deal with different languages and Latin orthographies will readily learn to do so, like their counterparts in India, Japan, Egypt, Israel, etc.; as Djuraev and others point out, the priority at home should be to foster a solid education in a stable orthography for once in a generation.

The impetus toward re-arabicization in post-Soviet Tajikistan is understandable from a cultural perspective. Alienated from both the Cyrillic alphabet, which tied them to a neo-Russian empire that has now left them in the lurch, and from the Latin alphabet, which they see as a tool of pan-Turkic ambitions, Tajik nationalists are attempting to revive the writing system that their ancestors gave to Central Asia and which ensured their cultural prominence in the region, and their connection with the wider Iranian world, even when they were politically subordinate to turcophones. From an orthographic perspective, Arabic script is no more inconsistent in representing Tajik Persian than Cyrillic is: each alphabet has eight characters that are redundant, while Arabic lacks three that would be useful (the “short” vowels) and Cyrillic lacks two that Tajik poets would deem essential (phonemic “long” vowels).

However, from the standpoint of an independent nation dealing with the world at large, the Tajik arabisizers may be even less well advised than the Turkish latinizers. The Islamic ecumene as defined by use of the Arabic alphabet is no longer as unified, either politically or culturally, as it once was. Moreover, before its demise, the Soviet Union went a considerable way toward forging a new political and ideological order in Central Asia (in large part by means of its language policies). Translittirianu Afghanistan, Pakistan, and even the Islamic Republic of Iran (necessarily the cultural center of gravity for all Iranian peoples) are now quite far removed in mentality from the majority of Tajiks. It will take more than an appeal to a common alphabet to undo the elaborate repackaging that this region has undergone in the past two generations.

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NOTES

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7 See, e.g., Somon (Dushanbe, weekly), 19 July 1991, pp. 4-5.

8 Baldauf 1993, pp. 564-5.

9 Asimova, p. 34.

10 Baldauf, p. 303; Rahbari doniš 1929 No.4, p. 24.


12 Rahbari doniš 1928 No.4-5, p. 15.

13 Asimova, pp. 57-9.

14 Asimova, p. 59; Fierman, p. 85.


16 Rahbari doniš 1928 No.10, pp. 6-7; Halimov, pp. 122, 124.


19 Rahbari doniš 1928 No.7, pp. 31-2; 1929 No.2-3, pp. 46-7, 50.

20 Fierman, pp. 13-4.


22 Weryho, p. 209.


The “Command-Administrative
of Cotton Farming in Uzbeki
From Collectivization and “Cotton Independence”

Mike Thurmaa
Indiana University

Without a struggle for cotton in Central Asia there is no Bolshevik Party; hence, Bolshevik Party organization there is not and cannot be a struggle for the Cotton Independence.

—K. Bauman of the Central Committee

During the perestroika period and afterward, observers of agriculture in Central Asia, particularly in Uzbekistan, commonly employed the term “command-administrative system” in the USSR. The references to the Soviet context, to the Western reader it carries only a vague connotation of forced labor. The term is not used by the state to produce cotton. The literature of aid organizations and the Central Asian republics gained their independence in 1991, while the cotton growing under the Tsarist regime and the Soviets, the Fergana Valley. The “command-administrative system” has deep roots in cotton growing under the Tsarist regime and the Soviets, the Fergana Valley. The term is not used by the state to produce cotton. The literature of aid organizations and the Central Asian republics gained their independence in 1991, while the

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A Portion of Things to Come: Emerging Coercion and State Intervention in Cotton Production

By the time of collectivization and Cotton Independence, the Ferghana Valley, which has produced cotton for Russian textile mills for a long time. The Soviet state, which had used cotton as a political tool and had helped restore cotton cultivation under the Tsarist regime, was in the process of administrative control increasingly replace market-oriented cultivation.

Cotton had been grown for centuries in Central Asia by small farmers, with irrigation and simple plows and hand tools. After conquering the region in the nineteenth century, the Tsarist regime encouraged such production to provide raw materials for Russian industry. However, during the Soviet era, cotton growing became highly centralized under the command-administrative system, with the state controlling all aspects of production, from fertilization and irrigation to harvesting and processing.

The Perestroika era brought changes, and with it new challenges. In the 1980s, as part of the larger perestroika reforms, there was a push for more autonomy and decentralization. In the field of agriculture, this meant allowing farmers more control over their production decisions. This was a significant shift from the past, where collective farms were forced to grow cotton and other crops that were not necessarily economically viable.

However, even with these changes, there was still a heavy reliance on state control. The transition period was marked by instability and economic turmoil. Farmers were faced with new challenges, such as changing market conditions and uncertain policy environments. Despite these challenges, there was some progress made towards more market-oriented practices. But the system remained largely command-driven, with the state still playing a significant role in determining what crops were grown and how they were produced.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of the command-administrative system and the beginning of a new era. The newly independent states, including Uzbekistan, sought to develop their own agricultural policies and practices. cotton growing. The early 1990s saw a period of experimentation, with both government support and market forces influencing production decisions. But the process was slow and fraught with challenges.

In the 1990s, there was a push towards freer market conditions, with private farmers gaining more control over their operations. However, the transition was not smooth. There were periods of recession and economic hardship. The state continued to play a role, providing subsidies and infrastructure support. But the emphasis shifted towards a more market-driven approach.

In the early 21st century, agricultural policies in Uzbekistan have continued to evolve. The government has sought to balance the needs of large-scale producers with the interests of small farmers. There has been an emphasis on improving infrastructure, such as irrigation systems, to support rural development. The focus has also been on increasing diversification in crop production, moving away from a mono-crop model.

Despite these efforts, cotton remains the dominant crop in the region. The challenge for the future is how to maintain the economic viability of cotton production while also addressing environmental and social concerns. The transition towards a more sustainable and equitable agricultural sector is ongoing, with both opportunities and challenges ahead.

In the late 20th century, the perestroika era brought new opportunities and challenges for cotton production in Uzbekistan. The command-administrative system was giving way to a more market-oriented approach, but the transition was not without its difficulties. The 21st century has brought new policies and strategies, as the country seeks to navigate the complexities of its agricultural sector.

In conclusion, the history of cotton production in Uzbekistan is one of transformation and adaptation. From the command-administrative system to market-oriented practices, the challenges and opportunities have shaped the region's agricultural landscape. The future will continue to be shaped by the interplay of economic forces, technological advancements, and social dynamics, as Uzbekistan and other former Soviet states seek to develop sustainable and equitable agricultural systems.

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References:


Ibid., p. 301.

Perry, p. 301.