

## Tajik Linguistics

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**Editor**

Alireza Korangy

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# Tajik Linguistics



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Shinji Ido and Behrooz Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari

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# List of contributors

**Leyli R. Dodykhudoeva**

Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences  
1 Bolshoy Kislovsky pereulok  
Moscow, 125009  
Russia  
leiladod@yahoo.com

**Dilia Hasanova**

School of Journalism, Writing, and Media  
The University of British Columbia  
205-1873 E Mall  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1  
Canada  
dilia.hasanova@ubc.ca

**Mirzo Hassan Sulton**

Lexcography and Terminology Division  
Institute of Language and Literature  
21 Rudaki Avenue, 734025 Dushanbe  
Tajikistan  
sulton\_66@mail.ru

**Shinji Ido**

Nagoya University, Nagoya  
Japan  
ido@nagoya-u.jp

**Sepideh Koohkan**

Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran  
Iran  
sepideh.koohkan@gmail.com

**Behrooz Mahmoodi-Bakhtiari**

University of Tehran  
College of Fine Arts,  
Department of Performing Arts  
Enghelab Avenue, Tehran  
Iran  
mbakhtiari@ut.ac.ir

**Roohollah Mofidi**

Imam Khomeini International University  
Qazvin  
Iran  
mofidi@hum.ikiu.ac.ir

**Negin Mohammadi Nafchi**

Imam Khomeini International University  
Qazvin  
Iran  
mohammadinegin65@gmail.com

**Justin M. Power**

Department of Linguistics  
University of Texas at Austin  
305 E. 23rd Street, Stop B5100  
Austin, Texas 78712  
USA  
justin.power@utexas.edu

**Lutz Rzehak**

Central-Asian Seminar,  
Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Unter den Linden 6  
10099 Berlin,  
Germany  
lutz.rzehak@hu-berlin.de



Lutz Rzehak

# 1 How Tajik was made into a national language

**Abstract:** The establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia, among many other social spheres, greatly changed the ethnic and linguistic realities. Based on contemporary publications from 1919 to the late 1920s, this chapter examines how the Persian-speaking population of Central Asia tried to orient itself under the new political circumstances. Already in 1919, the Bolsheviks appealed to the local population to organize into so-called “national sections” but only selected Persian-speaking groups in Samarkand responded to this appeal and founded a “Persian section” whereas other groups in mind did not feel addressed by this appeal. As an argument to join the “Persian Section”, the ideologeme of “mother tongue” was introduced. The historical roots of this ideologeme are questioned here and its function in the language-political debates of those years is examined. It is asked why the originally planned project of a “Persian nation” could not prevail and was soon abandoned. Attention is drawn to the question how the established practice of bi- and multilingualism and the competing project of a “Turkistani nation” affected the language policy debates of the period. It is argued that the territorial-administrative reorganization of Central Asia in 1924 brought about a change in the attitude of many Persian-speaking groups toward their first language what was subsequently accompanied by the emergence of a Tajik national consciousness. The new political circumstances meant that a language once considered the leading language of culture, education and Islamic religion in a multilingual milieu was transformed into a language whose function was largely reduced to its role as the first language of a speech community defined according to newly introduced ‘national’ criteria. Outwardly, this change in the function of a language manifested itself in the change of the language’s name: “Persian” became “Tajik”.

The Persian language has existed in Central Asia for centuries in a multilingual society, where it held a leading position in the fields of religion, science, literature, administration, correspondence, and trade according to the principles of a functional hierarchy of languages.<sup>1</sup> After the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia, this medium of communication underwent a fundamental trans-

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a shortened and revised translation of chapters 3 and 5 of Lutz Rzehak, *Vom Persischen zum Tadschikischen. Sprachliches Handeln und Sprachplanung in Transoxanien zwischen Tradition, Moderne und Sowjetmacht (1900–1956)*, Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2001.

formation into a language whose function was largely reduced to its role as the first language of a speech community defined according to a newly introduced ‘national’ criteria. This article describes the linguistic change, which manifested itself in the change of the language name: Persian into Tajik.

## 1 Language and revolution

### 1.1 In search of a unity of language and nation

In early 1918, Russian railroad workers from Tashkent proclaimed the Soviet Republic of Turkistan. However, they were cut off from Soviet Russia by the Orenburg Cossacks, and their influence was limited to a few cities. In much of Central Asia, therefore, the revolution took the form of conquest by the Red Army, which imposed the same forms of centralized party and military control on these areas as on the rest of Russia. By 1920, the awareness was gaining ground that conquest alone would not be sufficient to control non-Russian territories unless constant resistance from the native population was accepted. The recruitment of “national” leaders was intended to give Soviet power in these areas a “national” veneer and blur the impression that it was a new form of Russian domination. The 10<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in March 1921, therefore, adopted a resolution calling for the promotion of “national” cultures.

The “solution of the national problem for the multinational peoples of Central Asia” (Varejkis and Zelenskij 1924: 3) was given an importance that extended far beyond the borders of this region. The successful construction of the newly created states in Central Asia was to serve as a model for other countries in the Asian region and thus encourage further revolutions.

In the tension between social-theoretical and real-political and strategic considerations decisions were made and facts created in the few years between 1917 and 1928. These were decisions that would have a lasting effect on the development of the Persian/Tajik<sup>2</sup> language until today. Drawing on contemporary press

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<sup>2</sup> In this article, the language name “Persian” is used whenever (but not, of course, in direct or indirect quotations) it refers to the corresponding temporal varieties of the written and, in part, the spoken language that were widespread in the territory of Transoxiana. The designation “Tajik” stands for spoken varieties which were called *tojik* by their speakers, and for the temporal varieties that began to develop with the first reference of this name to written language from 1924. The combinatorial designation “Persian/Tajik” should make clear that in the respective context the totality of all historical forms of existence of this language is meant, which existed in the investigation period and in the investigation area.

publications, the following discussion will show what irritations the nationality and language policy of those years had initially caused among the groups that used the Persian/Tajik language and how these people eventually managed to cope with the newly created national orders. We will see that ethnic identities and linguistic loyalties are neither natural nor unchangeable givens, but rather confessions that could also be changed depending on the social conditions – not arbitrarily, but within the framework of certain decision-making alternatives. Years of upheaval like these are characterized by a particularly dynamic development. Within a few months, ideological guidelines and political directives, but also their understanding and associated misunderstandings, could change fundamentally. For this reason, a strictly chronological presentation seems appropriate.

### 1.1.1 The project of a “Persian nation”

In Stalin’s concept of nationality, which he had developed in 1912/1913 in his “Marxism and the National Question” (Stalin 1950: 272), and which became the basis of the Bolsheviks’ nationality policy in the non-Russian territories, language played an overriding role alongside the territorial principle. Nationality was defined primarily by language, and when Stalin speaks of the “community [commonality] of language”, he naturally means the commonality of *one* language. Multilingualism was not envisaged in this concept. If multilingualism was perceived at all, it was only seen as a deviation from the norm, and a rather unwelcome one at that.

In the multilingual milieu of Central Asia, Persian did not simply coexist with other languages. In a functional set of priorities, Persian existed and competed with other languages. On the one hand, Persian served as the first language for members of various ethnic groups. These included the sedentary inhabitants who were referred to by others – at least in the cities – as *tojik* in the catchment area of Zarafshan, Amu Darya, and Syr Darya, as well as in the foothills of the Pamirs. But Persian was also used by other inhabitants of the cities who were bilingual or had even abandoned their previous idioms in favor of this language, and according to their place of residence called themselves simply as *Buxoroi*, *Samarqandi*, or *Xujandi*. Persian/Tajik was also the first language of Central Asian Jews, some Arabs, and Éroni, as well as Afghans and exiled Iranians residing in Bukhara and Turkistan. On the other hand, Persian was used as a second language by many other inhabitants of Central Asia, in its capacity, as a language of faith and as an established high-level language for literature, religious purposes, correspondence, or in school education. Transoxianian multilingualism was characterized by a functional coexistence and hierarchy of Persian, Turki, and other languages. Against such a background, the idea that nationality was defined by a common

language was bound to cause great confusion. Even those who sympathized with the new rulers from the beginning and supported their activities were not exempt from such irritations. In early 1919, when a bitter civil war was still raging in large parts of Central Asia, the first “national sections” were established at the Commissariat for National Affairs in Tashkent: instructions were issued to the corresponding commissariat in the controlled cities to establish such “national sections” as well.

#### 1.1.1.1 The initial initiative of the *Éronī*

In this wave of founding “national sections”, a telegraphic instruction arrived in early May 1919 in Samarkand, the most important urban center in the Turkistan area of distribution of the Persian language (Bukhara was still under the rule of Amir Olim Xon and formally independent at that time). In the instruction, the founding of a “Persian section” was demanded. The corresponding message published in the revolutionary weekly *Šū”lai inqilob*<sup>3</sup> “Flame of the Revolution” (see Figure 1), allows some insights into how the Bolsheviks’ concept of nationality was understood:

The Persian section (*šū”ba-ji fors*) (that is: *éronī, afğon, tojik*) opened in our center Tashkent at the Commissariat of National Affairs, has sent a telegram these days to the Commissariat of National Affairs of Samarkand, proposing the opening of such a section in that authority. It has also recommended the opening of schools, clubs, reading rooms, and the printing and publishing of literature for the *fors* and in the *forsi* language. On behalf of all our *forsi*-speaking brethren, we express our gratitude to the Center from the bottom of our hearts.

(*Šū”lai inqilob* 12, 15.5.1919, 8)

As we can see, language was taken very seriously as a decisive criterion for defining this “national section”. The “Persian section” was addressed to all Persian speakers: *Éronī, afğon* and *tojik* are mentioned by name. Left without mention and thus without consideration are such important Persian-speaking groups as the indigenous (also: Bukharan) Jews, some Arabs, or representatives of the Pamir peoples.

The ranking of the groups mentioned, at least as far as the naming of the *Éronī* in the first place is concerned, is no coincidence, but an expression of the political conditions at that time. From the beginning, most of the *Éronī* from Samarkand had supported resolutely the goals of the Bolsheviks and their nationality policy more than representatives of the other Persian-speaking groups in Central

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<sup>3</sup> In the text of this article, a Romanized transcription system for proper names and Persian/Tajik words is used, which for reasons of uniformity and recognizability is based on the pronunciation standard valid today, as fixed in the Cyrillic writing system of Tajik.



Figure 1: The journal *Šū'lai inqilob* from 20.8.1919, section of the title page.

Asia and had worked in the Communist Party. Ēronī of Samarkand established the journal *Šū'lai inqilob* as the first Persian-language press publication of the Soviet period, which appeared with some interruptions as a weekly in Samarkand from April 10, 1919, to December 1921. The official publisher was the Samarkand Regional Committee of the Communist Party.<sup>4</sup> The magazine was created at the suggestion of the Committee of Communist Workers of Boği šamol, a predominantly Ēronī-inhabited district of Samarkand. Its director and editor-in-chief was Sayyid Rizo Alizoda (1887–1938), who himself belonged to the Ēronī of Boği šamol and had already published in the journal *Oyina* a few years earlier (Alizoda 1913).

<sup>4</sup> Information about the editorship of press products of this period should be treated with great caution. Only a nominal editor was named on the front pages. Under the conditions of the civil war, all press products were de facto published jointly by the party and revolutionary committees as well as the councils and political departments of the Red Army (Abdullaev 1989: 7).

It is not surprising that the individual Éronī quickly identified with the goals of the revolution and became politically active in a prominent position. In the Sunni-dominated environment, the Éronī defined themselves primarily through their Shiite denomination. The core of the Éronī (also: *marvī* < Marv) were descendants of the Persian-speaking Shiites of Merv, who had moved to Bukhara after the destruction of Merv in 1785. Some of them stayed in Bukhara, and others moved on to different cities of Turkistan and came to Samarkand. Later migrants, who came from Persia and other parts of Central Asia until the beginning of the 20th century, also joined the group of the Éronī. The Éronī of Bukhara were predominantly Persian-speaking, whereas the Samarkand Éronī maintained active bilingualism. In addition to Persian, they spoke an idiom – still poorly studied – that is said to be very close to the Oghuz-Uzbek dialects of Khorezm or Azerbaijani (Suxareva 1966: 153–165). In 1919, 15,000 of the Éronī population lived in the Samarkand district of Boği šamol. They were generally not considered wealthy, and the memory of earlier expulsions and oppression had become firmly imprinted in their minds. After the bloody Shiite-Sunni clashes had taken place in Bukhara in 1910, some of the Éronī population of Bukhara began to refer to themselves not as *éronī* but as *fors* (Suxareva 1966: 153). This name (Fors) was intended to emphasize the similarities with the rest of the population, i.e., the common Persian language; and to push the confessional differences to the background.

Being an ethnic and confessional minority, the Éronī had enough reasons to pin their hopes on the Bolsheviks when they promised – with their style at the time – liberation from their yoke to all working people, the poor, destitute, and the oppressed. At the beginning of July 1919, the *šū”bai fors* ‘Persian Section’ was founded at the Commissariat for National Affairs in Samarkand according to the Tashkent model. The chairman of this section was Alizoda.

### 1.1.1.2 The ideologeme of the “mother tongue”

In a contribution to the journal *Šū”lai inqilob*, Alizoda (1919: 1) put all his journalistic skills at the service of the idea of a “Persian nation”. He enthusiastically explained the nationality policy of the Bolsheviks, which allowed everyone, everywhere, to speak in his own language and obliged every assembly to provide an interpreter even if a single participant wished to express his thoughts in a language different from that of the majority. Without going into the conditions in Turkistan in more detail, he refers to the chauvinistic language policy of the Tsarist regime using the example of Poland. In order to explain how he imagines a “Persian nation” and who, in his opinion, should belong to this nation, Alizoda coined those words in this contribution, which often was transfigured and with other intentions were also quoted later with pleasure:

Language is the great pillar of a nation, and once the language disappears, the nation that converses in that language will also disappear and perish. No nation in the world can ensure its existence and survival unless it guards and protects its mother tongue.

(*Šū"lai inqilob* 12, 10.7.1919, 1)

Alizoda has masterfully reproduced the given equation of “language” and “nation” and the term *zaboni modari* ‘mother tongue’ experienced the beginning of a linguistic ideological process that continues to this day in relation to the Persian/Tajik language of Central Asia. Characteristically, this concept remains as undefined as the concept of nation. It is pretended that mother tongue and nation are primordial givens that define groups in a natural way and therefore beyond a shadow of a doubt.<sup>5</sup> The very question of the Bukharan Jews, who were left out of Alizoda’s project of a Persian nation, would have exposed the equation of “mother tongue” and “nation” as a construct, since the Bukharan Jews also have sufficient claim to regard Persian as their “mother tongue”. Furthermore, it remains unclear in this context whether Alizoda intended, for example, those Turkic tribes of Central Asia to be part of the “Persian nation” who were known as *tojik-čigatoy* and inhabited hundreds of settlements between Širobod, Baysundaryo, Surxandaryo, Kofarnihon, and Qyzyl-Su. Most of them used Persian/Tajik idioms, referred to themselves as *tojik*, but all the same saw themselves as belonging to various Turkic tribes (see *Materialy po rayonirovaniyu* 1926: 231–232). Cases are known from Urgut district where the members of such a tribal lineage spoke Persian/Tajik or Turki idioms, depending on the village they lived in, but still felt they belonged to one group (Suxareva 1966: 128).

It was undoubtedly useful for Alizoda’s argumentation not to define the concept of “nation” or “mother tongue” as in many cases this would have been difficult to do. The situation in the bilingual milieu of Samarkand may have allowed a more or less clear distinction between who had learned Persian “from his mother” and who had learned Turki. But the spoken language in the distribution areas of the northern Tajik dialects exhibits so many Turkic features in lexicon, morphology and syntax that its speakers, especially if illiterate, hardly notice the shift to the neighboring Turki dialects. In a concept where the question of “mother tongue” is linked to an either-or, there is no place for the speakers of these – later called by Doerfer (1967: 57) “Turkic language in *nascent state*” – Northern Tajik dialects. The incompatibility of the Bolshevik concept of nation

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5 An identity of “mother tongue” and “nationality” was already pretended by the Russian side with the census of 1897, when information on the “mother tongue” (*rodnoj jazyk*) was primarily intended to register the nationality of the persons surveyed. See Bauer, Kappeler, and Roth (1991: A, 144–146).

with the traditional bi- and multilingualism of Transoxiana will concern us repeatedly in the following.

Nevertheless, the term “mother tongue” is particularly well suited as an ideological vehicle, because the combination of the words *modar* ‘mother’ and *zabon* ‘tongue’ refers to more than the person from whom one learned the basics of the so-called “mother tongue” in early childhood. The term “mother tongue” also implies a strong moral call to respect this idiom, and to respect it as one respects one’s mother. To say “mother tongue” is to call for nurturing and preserving that idiom. This deontic connotation comes to the fore when this term is addressed to persons who, for practical, pragmatic, or other reasons, but in any case, as a result of their own decision, predominantly use another idiom in everyday communication. In view of widespread bilingualism and against the background of Central Asian Turki having had become increasingly attractive to many Persian speakers of Samarkand and other areas of the Zarafšon Valley about fifty years after the Russian conquest of Central Asia, there is reason to believe that Alizoda chose the term “mother tongue” because of its moral weight.

There are no indications of how the term “mother tongue” was received and understood at that time: that is, in July 1919. A glance at the press of August 1924, however, yields some conclusions. On the immediate eve of the “national delimitation of Central Asia” and more than three years after the ideologeme “mother tongue” had been introduced into the discourse, a contributor for the newspaper *Ovozi tojik* used the following phrase in this context: “In the provinces Turkistan and Farğona, as well as in Eastern Bukhara and Masčoh, there are many Tajiks who generally speak Tajik at home and in the bazaar, that is, their ordinary language (*zaboni oddii išon*) is Tajik” (*Ovozi tojik* 4.9.1924: 1). Although the term “mother tongue” would undoubtedly be appropriate by today’s standards, it is instead said that a language is spoken “in general” and is therefore “ordinary language”. Obviously, *zaboni modari* “mother tongue” was not at all part of the general and ordinary vocabulary of the implied Persian/Tajik “native speakers” at that time. A few lines later, this word does appear in the same text. The author uses it when he explains that in the schools of Samarkand there are some children who understand faster in Uzbek, though others understand faster in Tajik, and concludes from this that one learns knowledge faster *ba zaboni oddi va modari-ašon* “in one’s ordinary and mother tongue” (*Ovozi tojik* 4,9,1924: 1). So even in 1924 the ideologeme of the “mother tongue” still required an additional explanation as “ordinary language”, i.e., an adaptation to the general contemporary use of language.

Already in July 1919, when Alizoda introduced the term “mother tongue” into the debate and declared it to be the “great pillar of the nation”, he himself still had great linguistic difficulties in clearly formulating the idea of a nation based

on the Persian language. In the above-quoted text, the expressions *millati fors* ‘Persian nation’, *millathoi fors* ‘Persian nations’, *forsiyon* ‘Persian[-speaker]s’, and *forsho* ‘Persians’ are used alternately without any discernible logical connection; although these are quite different in content. Such linguistic inconsistency is, of course, closely connected with the conventional use of the word *millat* ‘nation’ which until then had denoted anything but a linguistic community. Therefore, Alizoda could not avoid naming the population groups he had in mind with their established appellatives: *tojik* ‘Tajiks’, *éroni* ‘Éroni’, *afğon* ‘Afghans’, *hindi* ‘Indians’.

### 1.1.1.3 Limited acceptance for the project of a “Persian Nation”

The real evil of the ideologeme of the “mother tongue” was that identities were assumed to be natural phenomena that existed only as constructs. Therefore, again, only Éroni felt truly addressed. Following the call of the “Persian Section”, some of them founded the *anjumani muovanati éroniyan* ‘Society for the Representation of Iranians’ on July 15, 1919. The word *éroni* was used here with a narrower nuance. This society saw itself as the representative of those Iranians with Iranian citizenship and who wanted to look after their interests until which point there would be diplomatic representation (*Šū”lai inqilob* 13, 17.7.1919, 8). These were merchants from Iran who resided in Samarkand – but also younger Iranian migrants. The vast majority of Samarkand Éroni, who could also be called *marvī* because of their descent from Merv, and who had been living in Samarkand for over a hundred years, were not among them. Transcending religious and denominational differences this society wanted to unite all Iranians (in the aforementioned legal sense) of Samarkand. At the founding meeting ten Muslims were elected to the fifteen-member presidium. Five additional positions were reserved for Jews, Bahais, with the Iranian-Armenians to be elected at a later date.

In August 1919, the national affairs administration in Samarkand declared that the following “national sections” existed: a Persian section, an Uzbek section, a Jewish section, an Armenian section, a Ukrainian section, a Tatar section, and a Turkish (Azerbaijani) section (*Šū”la-yo inqilob* 18, 20.8.1919, 7). The “Persian section” published another appeal at that time whose desperate tone already reveals a growing resignation:

Brothers! Speakers of the same language (*hamzabonho*)! You should know well that everyone cries over his own grave. No nation knows your needs and sorrows like yourselves... How many *fors* and *tojiks* are there in Samarkand and how many Persian schools do they have? Now we have abolished the classes and reading rooms! If you are fed up with your mother tongue, if you have renounced your mother tongue, then tell us officially so that we can close our store.

(*Šū”lai inqilob* 18, 20.8.1919, 7)

The refusal of the numerous Persian speakers to join the project of a “Persian nation” is closely linked to the attractiveness of another project, which was based on the historically developed priority of regional identities over ethnic or linguistic identities; and was pursued during this period by notable representatives of the Central Asian Enlightenment. This project was primarily not linguistically, but regionally, oriented and can be summarized under the keyword *millati turkiston* ‘nation of Turkistan’. Such a project had already been propagated in the magazine *Sadoi Turkiston* ‘Voice of Turkistan’ from 1914 to May 1917. The great uprising against the forced recruitment among the Central Asian population – which Tsar Nicholas II had decreed in 1916 – helped Turkistan’s patriotism achieve its final political breakthrough. Such an understanding of *millat*, based on the Turkistan region, had received further impetus when the Autonomous Republic of Turkistan was established on April 30, 1918. Turkistani patriotism began to transform into Turkistani nationalism. The Bolshevik idea that the formerly oppressed peoples of Russia first needed a national revolution before they could tackle a social one must be seen against the background of the awakening of Turkistan’s nationalism, which, incidentally, could also be instrumentalized for ideas that extended beyond the spatial borders of Turkistan.<sup>6</sup> Linguistically, this change manifested itself in the fact that on the pages of the journal *Šū’lai inqilob* too, the word *turon* “Turan” began to be used more and more often than the word Turkistan.

At that time, the idea of Turkistan patriotism that would unite all Muslims in Turkistan, could inspire even those who primarily used the Persian language. Sadriddin Aynī, who, unlike other linguists and contemporaries, had never completely renounced the Persian/Tajik language composed a *Turan-Marsh* in the Turki language at that time, in which he called on Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tatars, and Turkmen to be united and unified (Komatsu 1989: 129).

Against this background, the *anjumani doniši forsiyon* ‘Knowledge Society of Persian Speakers’, which was founded in Samarkand in early September 1919, also went largely unnoticed. This society addressed all Persian speakers of Samarkand and the surrounding area, with its commitment to educational issues and the publication of Persian-language literature. Despite the comprehensive claim made by the name of this society, this organization was also exclusively a child of the Éronī of Boği šamol.

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<sup>6</sup> For more details on Turkistan nationalism see Zenkovsky (1960: 225–253), Komatsu (1989), and Allworth (1990: 173–209).

#### 1.1.1.4 Early misunderstandings around the ideologeme “national language”

However, by this time the political learning process in the Bolshevik sense had progressed further: When the journal *Šū”lai inqilob* reported on the founding of the “Knowledge Society of Persian Speakers”, the term *zaboni milli* ‘national language’ was probably introduced for the first time with direct reference to the Persian language of Central Asia (*Šū”lai inqilob* 19, 11.9.1919, 7). Where the concept of nation was so strongly fixed on language as in the understanding of the Bolsheviks at that time, the term “national language” could not be long in coming. When the expression *zaboni milli* was written down in September 1919, and disseminated through the medium of the journal, it was at first no more than a formal copy of the then very common Russian expression *nacional’nyj jazyk*. But the Russian original had a somewhat different meaning in the vernacular of the time than did its Persian replica. Again, the Turkistan nationalists construed a different meaning with the term “national language”.

In the pre-revolutionary period, the Central Asian languages were usually summarized by the Russian authorities in a way that – out of imperial posturing – did not further differentiate them with the attributes signifying *tuzemnyj* ‘native’, *musul’anskij* ‘Muslim’, or *inorodčeskij* ‘foreign-born’, the latter being used preferentially for writing and school systems. It is essential to note that such designations grouped all other languages together without further distinction and contrasted them with Russian.<sup>7</sup> Although the Bolsheviks pursued different political intentions in 1919 than the tsar’s officials previously had, they had no better knowledge of the ethnic and linguistic situation in Central Asia. With regard to Central Asia, therefore, the “solution of the national question” was no more than an abstract idea in those months. This is shown by the fact that national oppression and Russian chauvinism at the time of the tsarist empire were always clearly noted in the Bolshevik propaganda intended for the Central Asian population – only on the basis of examples from the European part of Russia, but never on the basis of Central Asian examples. Preference was given to the persecution of Jews and the situation of Poles and Ukrainians.<sup>8</sup> Examples from Central Asia would certainly have been much more convincing but they were not given, probably because the situation in Central Asia was not known well enough. In these years, however, day-to-day politics was essentially determined by the civil war, and surveys or detailed investigations on the “national question” – or the language situation – in Central Asia were a distant dream before the arrival of *Turkkomis-*

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7 A veritable treasure trove of appropriate formulations is offered by a report on the education system of the Syr-Darya province, submitted by the then director of elementary schools of this region, S. Gramenidskij (1916).

8 See *Šū”lai inqilob* (1, 10.4.1919 and 12, 10.7.1919,1).

*sija*, which will be further elaborated on. For this reason, some of the Bolsheviks' formulations initially differed from the language of the tsarist era only in appearance, but not in content.

The term *inorodčeskij* was considered a taboo for the Bolsheviks because of its imperial connotations, but other terms – *tuzemnyj* more than *musul'manskij* – were also identified with the language of yore and therefore increasingly replaced by the word *nacional'nyj*, which corresponded much better with their political ambitions. But when the Bolsheviks first mentioned *nacional'nyj* in Central Asia in 1919, it initially often meant nothing more than an indifferent “native”, or “non-Russian”. At that time, for instance, the term *nacional'naja pečat'* ‘national press’ was used to refer to all publications in Central Asian languages to contrast them with the *rususkaja pečat'* ‘Russian press’, without further distinction. As late as 1923, *nacionalizacija* ‘nationalization’ was used to describe the inclusion of indigenous forces in public administration (Abdulloev 1989: 7). The republics founded after the territorial reorganization in Central Asia were grouped together in contemporary language use under the designation *nacional'nye respubliki* (or *nacrespubliki*) ‘national republics’, and as contrasted with Russia. Therefore, *nacional'nyj jazyk* also often meant nothing more than “indigenous language” or “non-Russian”.<sup>9</sup>

But for Alizoda and the other Éronī who had founded the “Knowledge Society of Persian Speakers” in Samarkand in September 1919, the expression *zaboni milli* formed after a Russian model, obviously, had a concrete meaning. They did not necessarily see the term “national language” as an antithesis to “Russian”, although such usage could not be ruled out. First and foremost, this term was intended to mark a new status for their own idiom, which henceforth wanted to assert a right to exist, be nurtured, and promoted.

The Eroni in particular, perhaps more than other groups, sought an answer to the question of what the term “national language” should mean, because, from a linguistic point of view, it was mainly Central Asian Turki that could benefit from a Turkistan nationalism that was very popular at the time. In the Soviet republic of Turkistan, proclaimed in 1918, Turki was, along with Russian, de facto the predominant administrative language, whereas Persian could only maintain its last stronghold in the Emirate of Bukhara. Against this background, the then already

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<sup>9</sup> This meaning of the word *nacional'nyj* has survived situationally until the recent past. The departments of Russian libraries in which literature in the languages of the non-Slavic peoples of the former Soviet Union is kept are called *otdel nacional'noj literatury* ‘department of national literature’. Members of Central Asian peoples may also be referred to in everyday speech as *nacionalny* ‘nationals’ and, without further differentiation, may be grouped exclusively in their capacity as “non-Russians” or “non-Europeans”.

widespread conviction that Turki was the language of the new civilization and Persian the language of the past was given new impetus. The members of the language and literature circle *Čiğatoy gurungi* ‘Chaghatai Discussion Circle’ around Abdurrauf Fitrat tried to develop a literary language on the basis of Central Asian Turki in order to do justice to the changed political and social status of this idiom (Baldauf 1991: 83). The definition of this conceived literary language took place in conscious demarcation against Persian, and it was pursued in corresponding purisms.<sup>10</sup>

As a general lingua franca, as well as with its acceptance in the administrative system of Turkistan, Turki had thus long since received the status of a “national language” – in this Turkistani understanding. This status was also to be asserted against other languages of the region.

When Alizoda and the other activists of the “Knowledge Society of Persian Speakers” henceforth called for the rights of a “national language” to be claimed for Persian as well, the intention was to prevent this language from continuing to be seen only as a “language of faith” and discredited as a “language of the past”. However, as aforementioned on the founding of this society, it was only limitedly called *zaboni millii éroniyon* ‘national language of the Éronī/Iranians’. The original idea, formulated in May 1919, to unite all Persian speakers of Central Asia into a “Persian nation” was thus already abandoned in September of the same year.

The project of a “Persian nation” was finally doomed to failure. The journal *Šū”lai inqilob*, which propagated this project, and was intended for the members of this imagined “Persian nation”, had to bid farewell to its readers on October 16, 1919, after a brief existence of only six months. Despite repeated advertising and agitation campaigns, the necessary number of 1,000 subscribers was not reached. The expenses became an unsurmountable burden, and the Party Committee of Samarkand was not ready to provide more support. There was a shortage, not only of subscribers but also of authors. In six months, only six Persian-language articles from outside had reached the editors (*Šū”lai inqilob* 22, Oct. 16, 1919, 8). It should probably be considered a consolation when, alongside the editorial board’s farewell letter, an advertisement was printed for the Persian-language newspaper *Najot* ‘Salvation’, which was published by the “Muslim section” of the

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**10** A comprehensive account of Fitrat’s transformation into an anti-Persian Turkistani language nationalist for several years is offered by Komatsu (1989: 123–128). At the end of the 1920s, Fitrat was again very committed to the Persian Tajik language in connection with Latinization and the discussion about the development of a national literary language.

Communist Party in Ashgabad. *Šū"lai inqilob* was the only Persian magazine in Arabic script published in Transoxiana in early Soviet time.<sup>11</sup>

### 1.1.2 The project of “bilingualism”

The priority of regional identities over linguistic or ethnic ones expressed itself politically as a strengthening Turkistan nationalism, about which many Persian speakers were also enthusiastic at that time. Hence another path appeared to promote the Persian language and literature – at least temporarily: it seemed, at the time to be more promising than the failed project of a “Persian nation”. This way consisted in the conscious continuation of the traditional Turki-Persian bilingualism, which already had characterized the journal *Oyina* in pre-revolutionary times.<sup>12</sup> The editor of this journal Mahmud Behbudī declared in the first issue: “Turkistanis need to know *turki*, *forsi*, Arabic and Russian. *Turki* is necessary because the majority of the Turkistani population speak *ūzbaki*. *Forsi* is the language of the madrasa and of literature. [. . .] Persian poetry will never lose its elegance. [. . .] *Turki* is the language of modern learning which opens the way to Tolstoy and Jules Verne, Kepler, Copernicus, and Newton.” (*Oyina*. 1, 20.8.1913, 12, quoted after Baldauf 1992).

#### 1.1.2.1 Custom and habit became a project

The project of “bilingualism” was a foregone natural deed for those who pursued it. When it was undertaken, it was associated with two names in particular during the years 1919–1921: Sadriddin Aynī and Hojī Muin.

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<sup>11</sup> From the end of 1919, wall newspapers for the native population of Turkistan were published under the title *Rost* on the initiative of *Turkkomissija* (Abdullaev 1989: 12). Pestovskij [1927, 427] and Sajidūf (1931 b, 1) refer to a wall newspaper of the same name, which was published or distributed free of charge in 1920–1921 by R. Badalūv for Bukharan Jews, i.e., also in Persian, but in Hebrew script.

<sup>12</sup> From August 1913 to October 1915, Mahmudxoja Behbudī (1875–1919) published the magazine *Oyina* ‘Mirror’ in Samarkand which published 68 issues. It played a major role in the dissemination of Enlightenment ideas and, if one disregards some advertisements in Russian, appeared as a bilingual paper in Turki and Persian. However, these two languages were represented to varying degrees in this journal. The dominance of Turki is evident in the fact that about one-third of all contributions were in Persian and all others in Turki. A clear functional division is also evident in the selection of texts that were printed in one language or the other. New text genres such as news reports, which were created with the medium of the journal in the first place, were published exclusively in Turki. This also applied to editorial and scientific contributions. Persian, on the other hand, was the language of essays and more abstract treatises of a philosophical or similar nature.

Hoji Muin ibn Šukrullo Samarqandi had already made a name for himself in the 1910s as a teacher, school founder, author, and translator, as well as one of the most important publishers of New Methodist textbooks and Enlightenment literature in Samarkand. In 1914 he appeared on the scene as the author of a Persian poetry collection for New Methodist schools (Hoji Muin 1332), and a religious textbook *Aqidai islomiya* ‘Islamic view’. In 1916, his three socially critical plays appeared in Turki with the titles *Juvonbozlik qurboni* ‘Sacrifice of Boy’s Love’, *Eski maktab – yangi maktab* ‘Old School – New School’, and *Turkiston maišatidan: Kūknori* ‘From the Life of Turkistan: The Opium Smokers’. As early as 1911, Hoji Muin had also translated Fitrat’s *Munozara* from Persian into Turki and published it first in the newspaper *Turkiston viloyatniñ gazetisi*, and two years later in his own publishing house as a book. In 1914 (or 1915) Hoji Muin became temporarily the editor of the journal *Oyina*, where many of his contributions also appeared. Between 1914 and 1917, Hoji Muin also published in the newspaper *Sadoi Turkiston* (Baldauf 1992: 9–10; Allworth 1990: 179–180).

Ayni’s journey from exclusively speaking Persian to becoming bilingual has already been alluded to. After a six-month recuperative stay in Tashkent, Ayni returned to Samarkand on October 22, 1918, where he taught language, literature, and history classes, in Persian and Turki, in a school founded by the Soviet authorities (Ayni 1958a: 102).

Among the political conditions to be considered in this context, the arrival of the *Turkistanskaja komissija* (*Turkkomissija*) ‘Turkistan Commission’ must be mentioned, which had been appointed by Lenin on October 3, 1919, and was directly subordinate to the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The *Turkkomissija* arrived in Tashkent on November 4, 1919 with a large staff of party workers. Among other things, a special commission was formed to prepare a report on the state of the Soviet administration in Turkistan, concluding that the imperialist policies of the tsarist era had been continued in many places by cruel methods under the pretext of waging class struggle. On the initiative of the *Turkkomissija*, the abolition of Islamic jurisdiction, which was decreed in 1918 was withdrawn and mosques were (temporarily) removed from under the yoke of Soviet control (see Figs 1989: 750–751). An announcement in the magazine *Šū”lai inqilob* shows how this event was received in Samarkand at that time. In contemporary diction it was said:

Yes, after the October Revolution, Soviet power was established in Turkistan as well, and parties and organizations had been formed in the name of the Communists and the downtrodden. But those brothers who had taken the lead in the name of the downtrodden, and in the name of the Party of Communists mostly did not act according to the program of the Communists. That is why there were many improper appearances, unjustified requisitions,

and the like. Therefore, our European brothers still presented themselves as the upper class, cultivated a bad image about the Muslims and denied them equal rights. Then, if one of the Muslims stood up and demanded the rights of the Muslims, he was attacked with the words “You are a nationalist! You are a reactionary! You are a supporter of the rich!” . . . Now that the military actions on the road from Tashkent to Orenburg have ended, and railroad traffic has been restored, a commission has come from Moscow to correct the affairs in Turkistan. The mentioned commission has full authority to do anything it wants to do.

(*Šū”lai inqilob* 29, 9.2.1920, 1)

The *Turkkomissija* also attached great importance to press and publications. Under the leadership of its member M. K. Trojanovsky, wall newspapers (*Rost*) with political statements, appeals, and news reports appeared regularly. After Trojanovsky sent a copy of the first issue of these wall newspapers to Moscow, a telegram arrived from Moscow with the following message: “Develop this matter further. Lenin is especially in favor of newspapers in local languages. Money will be given as much as necessary” (quoted after Abdullaev 1989: 12–14).

Under these changed political conditions, the journal *Šū”lai inqilob* was also to be given a second chance. On December 7, 1919, barely two months after its farewell to its readers, it appeared again. In an editorial contribution, Alizoda informed that some like-minded people, especially Hojī Muin, had not come to terms with the end of this journal and had lobbied for its reappearance. The necessary material resources were requested from the Samarkand provincial Committee of Muslims and delivered to where they were needed. In addition, comrades Aynī, Muxtorī, and Muhammadi had agreed to cooperate (*Šū”lai inqilob* 23, 7.12.1919, 1).

Aynī simultaneously took up work in the Turki language newspaper *Mehnatkašlar tovuši* ‘Voice of the Working People’, and wrote his poems and essays during this period in both Persian and Turki. Ostensibly to give the impression of authorial diversity because of the shortage of literati, Aynī signed his essays with different initials, at that time (Aynī 1958a: 103). In contrast to the historical model of the journal *Oyina*, bilingualism was no longer cultivated within one publication organ, but rather in separate newspapers that appeared in different languages: but to which the same people could contribute. However, only one journal in Persian existed whereas numerous publications of several kind existed in Turkic-language.

Nevertheless, the spell seemed to have been broken. With such a prominent advocate as Hojī Muin – Aynī was still relatively unknown at the time – the journal *Šū”lai inqilob* could no longer be regarded merely as the exclusive enterprise of the Ēronī of Boġī šamol. In the unmistakable hope of gaining as many Persian speakers as possible as readers, from then on, all formulations that would indicate a claim to a “Persian nation” were dispensed with. Moral appeals to the need

to nurture a “national language” were also abandoned. When Aynī explained the necessity of a Persian-language journal in his first essay for this journal (*Tanviri afkor* ‘Enlightenment of Thought’, *Šū”lai inqilob* 23, 7.12.1919, 1–3), he therefore used – in accordance with the new claim – only innocuous expressions with the meaning “Persian speaker” (mostly: *forsizabonon*, only once: *forsiyon*). Not by reminding of any “national feelings” or again straining the deontic concept of the “mother tongue”, Aynī hoped to win new readers for this magazine. He pointed instead to the general benefits of reading periodicals and addressed the hoped-for readers with the simple remark that this periodical is, after all, *ba zaboni xudaton našr mešavad* ‘published in your own language’. The article states in detail:

In the two years since the revolution, all our Uzbek brothers have become acquainted with newspapers. In the cities, there are hardly any people who can read and do not know about newspapers.

But we Persians, unfortunately, still stand as spectators in the alley of cluelessness, thinking that the press and newspapers are only there to make money for the publicists. When there was no Persian newspaper in Turkistan, speakers of Persian could be forgiven for not reading newspapers. With the six-month existence of *Šū”lai inqilob* magazine, there is nothing to forgive. We have been forced to acknowledge that Persian speakers do not yet know what newspapers are. Even though vast sums of money are spent to print a single magazine, no one wants to buy it even for just one-eighth [of the production price], which is almost free.

But since the entire care of the Soviet Government and the Party Committee is devoted to enlightening the minds of the downtrodden, it was decided to continue *Šū”lai inqilob*. For all downtrodden speakers of Persian, the door to this traveling school [to newspapers – L.R.] remained open.

Now I turn to the Persian-speaking brothers with all my hope and in my deepest sincerity:

Brothers! Devote one hour of your life every week to reading this newspaper, and use this newspaper, written in your own language, as best you can, so that in return for this one hour you may get back that life which you have lived in cluelessness”.

(*Šū”lai inqilob* 23, 7.12.1919, 2–3)

The self-image that this journal began to convey in the following was even more clearly *mo turkistoniyon* “we Turkistanis” or occasionally *mo tūroniyon* “we Turanis”. The journal *Šū”lai inqilob* considered itself responsible for those Turkistanis who used the Persian language exclusively or primarily.

In contrast to 1919, there is no evidence of the term *millat* ‘nation’ having been used explicitly in connection to the Persian/Tajik language in 1920 and 1921. Most often, the word *millat* was related to “Turkistan”. This confirms the wide acceptance Turkistan nationalism received at that time, even among Persian speakers. In such a sense, Alizoda wrote on the occasion of Behbudī’s death in April 1920:

The martyrdom of Mahmud Xoja has not only put the people of Samarkand into mourning and gloom, but has affected and saddened all ten million [members] of the nation of Turkistan (*millati turkiston*). Today, the whole of Turkistan participates in this general misfortune and national grief, is wrapped in black clothes, and is gripped by desperate pain.

(*Šū"lai inqilob* 35, 8.4.1920, 1)

In an analogous way, referring to the whole of Turkistan without linguistic differences, Aynī also used the word *millat* when he writes, for example:

As a result of the general war [World War – L. R.], the enslaved of Russia have carried out an uprising and overthrown the Tsar's throne with belongings, given freedom to all poor toilers and enslaved peoples (*millat*), and also given us Turkistanis a republic as well as separate autonomy.

(*Šū"lai inqilob* 40, 17.6.1920, 1)

However, the understanding of *millat* was not as clear-cut as these examples would lead one to believe. An exclusive reference to the Persian language was ruled out, but *millat* could still be understood in the conventional sense as a "community of faith" and used accordingly:

Since the Soviet rule was established in Turkistan, the way to this kind of education is open for the whole population, the materials for it are available. But, unfortunately, we Turkistanis do not use these benefits, do not collect the ripe grain sheaves. And yet, of all the peoples (*millat*) living in Turkistan, we Muslims need knowledge and education the most.

(*Šū"lai inqilob* 44, 26.7.1920, 2)

The poem *Xitob ba tūroniyon* 'Call to the Turanis' by Mullo Nodiro, published in the journal *Šū"lai inqilob* in March 1920, not only confirms a synonymous use of the term *millat* referring to the Islamic religious community. It also shows us how well the use of Persian language could be united with a Turkistan or Turan-oriented self-awareness in the understanding of the time. It states:

*mekunam ay aziz bo [sic] tu bayon  
ki ba ahli basirat ast ayon  
kist on modare ki asli tust?  
xoki poki muqaddasi tūron  
millatat ċist? millatat islom!  
hodiyat kist? hodiyat qur'on!*

O beloved, I say to you,  
what is clear to perceptive people.  
Who is that mother from whom you come?  
The pure holy earth of Turan.  
What is your nation? Your nation is Islam.  
Who is your guide? Your guide is the Quran.  
(*Šū"lai inqilob* 33, 8.3.1920, 5)

### 1.1.2.2 Persian/Tajik indifference

In Persian language usage, as it has come down to us in the form of the journal *Šū"lai inqilob* from the years 1920 and 1921 (from 1922 to 1924 there were no Persian press products in Turkistan), two circumstances stand out that should be of particular importance for the following development:

First: The Persian language is referred to exclusively as *forsī* “Persian”. The term *tojik(i)* “Tajik” does not occur as a language designation. This corresponded to the linguistic habits known from pre-revolutionary times. *Forsī* was a general designation for the written Persian language and a proper designation for the idiom spoken in the cities of the Zarafšon plain. Only Turkic-speaking groups in Central Asia referred to all groups of people as *tojik* who belonged to the Islamic community, led a sedentary lifestyle, and did not have tribal structures. However, *tojik* was not used as a self-designation by all who could be so called by others. Only the inhabitants of the mountainous regions, for example in and near Khujand, in the Zarafšon Mountains, and in Qarotegin and Darwoz, called themselves *tojik*. In Falğar and Darwoz, *tojik* was used both as a self-designation and as a foreign name by the neighboring Jağnobi. In the upper reaches of the Panj, speakers of East Iranian Pamir languages could also refer to themselves as Tajik, while their Persian-speaking neighbors in Darwoz, who saw themselves as *tojik*, were referred to by them as *porsigūy / forsigūy* “Persian speakers” (Andreev 1925: 156).<sup>13</sup> Hence, the self-confidence of Persian speakers living in the mountains, many of whom were quite wont to refer to themselves and their language as *tojik* and *zaboni tojikī*, had virtually no influence on the formation of the opinions of Samarkand publicists. The use of the term *forsī* also testifies to a linguistic independence from the Russian-dominated Soviet power, since the term *tadžikskij*, derived from *tojik*, had already established itself in Russian usage at the time with a meaning similar to that in the Turkic languages of Central Asia.

Second: Unlike Persian speakers, Turki speakers were not grouped together as such, being called instead *ūzbekon* ‘Uzbeks’ and also defined as a group in word compounds such as *maktabi ūzbekiya* ‘Uzbek school’ or *toifayi ūzbek* ‘Uzbek people’. Their language continued to be called *turkī*. The Persian-speaking groups of Turkistan, on the other hand, are still defined exclusively by their language and grouped together as *forsizabonon* ‘Persian speakers’ (more rarely: *forsiyon*). From a historical perspective, the complete absence of any formulations with the word *tojik(i)* is remarkable. Aynī also did not use any wording during this period that would indicate an identity as a *tojik*.

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<sup>13</sup> Regarding the origin, semantic change, and especially the – historically seen – predominantly social-cultural meaning of the term *tojik*, reference is made to the summary accounts in Bartol’d (1964), Fragner (1989, 1999: 19–21, 41–43, 2021: 24–29), Lentz (1933: 9–15), and Schoeberlein-Engel (1996: 123–172). Lorenz (1964: 574–579) offers an overview of etymological attempts at interpretation from the 19th and early 20th centuries, some of which proved scientifically untenable, but which continue to inspire a wide variety of persons in Central Asia, as well as Iranian and Afghan intellectuals.

In other words, the primarily Turkic-speaking inhabitants of Turkistan began to develop a group identity as “Uzbeks”, which – despite the absence of a generally recognized literary language and their tribal or socio-cultural diversity – was able to unite both linguistic commonalities and the regionally based self-image as “Turkistanis”. The term *ūzbek/oʻzbek* was originally reserved only for the semi-nomadic population, who were considered descendants of the Dašti Qipčaq conquerors and, unlike the inhabitants of the cities, had preserved tribal structures. After this word was first used in a broader sense, probably by the Russians, it was soon able to gain increasing appeal as a proper designation for individual representatives of settled Turkic-speaking population groups in Turkistan (with the exception, of course, of Turkmen, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz) (Baldauf 1991: 86–89).

Primarily Persian-speaking Turkistanis in the cities, who had long been called *tojik* by others and were also listed as such in Russian statistics, unlike the inhabitants of the mountains at the time, preferred regionally based identities. They did not reveal a group identity, which would have combined a linguistic, ethnic and a regional self-image, at least in the press or in exposed political positions. Together with other Persian-speaking groups, which were very different in ethnic and religious terms and in part also had different regional origins (one thinks, for example, of the Éronī and Afghans), they were seen “only” as a linguistic unit and were combined with them to form a linguistic community.

Therefore, it certainly corresponds to a certain – or more correctly: a missing or unarticulated – self-image when the constitution of Soviet Turkistan, which was adopted in 1920, named only *kirgizy* ‘Kirghiz’, *uzbeki* ‘Uzbeks’ and *turkmeny* ‘Turkmen’ among the *korennye nacionalʹnosti* “long-established nationalities”, but not “Tajiks” or, for example, “Persian speakers” (Bartol’d 1925: 111). “Tajiks” had not identified themselves as a separate group – at least in the cities. In the mountainous areas, where this might have been expected because *tojik* was accepted as a self-designation, anti-Soviet sentiments dominated during this period. The military activities of the Basmachi, which were centered there, continued in part until the end of the 1920s. “Persian speakers” were recognizable as a group, but far too heterogeneous in their ethnic and religious composition to be collectively considered a “long-established nationality”. The fact that, of all the Persian speakers in Turkistan, representatives of the Éronī minority were the first to speak out politically, may also have influenced the formation of opinion among the Bolsheviks about the composition of Turkistan’s Persian-speaking population.

But it was not only a lack of a “Tajik” identity. The Persian language, or at least the only magazine in that language, did not enjoy great popularity even among the sympathizers of the revolution. Despite all efforts to gain new readers by developing a self-image oriented toward all of Turkistan, the editors of the weekly *Šūʹlai inqilob* must still complain about a lack of acceptance more than

half a year after the new beginning and point to the positive example of the “Uzbek brothers”:

In Turkistan there is no large city where a newspaper for the Muslims would not be published. But in relation to the population there, not even one in a hundred, or even one in a thousand, is a reader. Persian newspapers in particular seem to have no readers at all. Thus, for more than a year, the magazine *Šū”lai inqilob* has been published for the Persian speakers of Turkistan. It has some readers from the city of Samarkand, but even these have appeared only through the efforts of government and party personnel. From the rest of the Persian-speaking population in Üroteppa, Xujand, Koni Bodom, Isfara, and elsewhere, we have perceived no sign of attention.

Our Uzbek brothers are showing a hint of awakening. Signs of attention and correspondences arrive to the editorial office of our brother newspaper *Mehnatkašlar tovuši* from all corners of Samarkand province, even from other places, albeit sparsely. Thus letters, news and essays come from Andijon, Namangon, Avliyoato and [the city of] Turkiston.

But not a single letter has arrived to our journal from any Persian-speaking corner of Turkistan. This shows the complete indifference of our Persian-speaking brethren.

(*Šū”lai inqilob* 40, 17.6.1920, 2)

The deep despair that gripped Aynī in the face of this ignorance cannot be denied. Nevertheless, he persisted with his “bilingualism” project. In June 1920, on the eve of the Bukhara Revolution, Aynī was summoned to Tashkent for a month by Bukharan communists to write projects, speeches, and other agitational materials for the people of Bukhara on their behalf. Aynī wrote these materials in two languages: Persian and Turki (Aynī 1958a: 104). Thus, the newspaper *Qutuluš*, which was published by Bukharan revolutionaries in Tashkent with a total of eleven issues from June to August 1920, included Persian prose texts and poems in addition to the articles written mostly in Turki (Aynī 1926: 577).

With the victory of the Bukharan Revolution in September 1920, the “bilingualism” project was to fail for good. The overthrow of the Emir of Bukhara had been achieved with the significant participation of foreign forces. In addition to the Red Army, this included Uzbeks from Tashkent and Farğona as well as prisoners of war from Turkey. The newspaper *Šū”lai inqilob*, which sent its own correspondent, namely Aynī, to Bukhara in November 1920 to report on the situation, initially painted a very contradictory picture of the situation under the just two-month-old Soviet power. On the one hand, it praised the discipline among the revolutionaries and among the local population, who even voluntarily held out in the square in front of the mosque after Friday prayers to attend a meeting, whereas in Samarkand people usually had to be driven by force of arms into the walls of a *medressa* for a meeting. (*Šū”lai inqilob* 59, 2.12.1920, 4). On the other hand, “the small and inexperienced organization called *javonbuxoroyon* ‘Young Bukharans’ was completely overwhelmed in setting up a functioning administra-

tion. Even the help of “three to four Turkish and Tatar Turkistani brothers” could not make much difference (*Šū”lai inqilob* 61, 30.12.1920, 2).

The young revolutionary impetus to turn everything upside down and the inexperience of the new rulers were also to have linguistic consequences. The newspaper *Buxoro axbori* ‘Bukharan News’, which was published in Bukhara from September 1920, was still published bilingually in Turki and Persian (*Šū”lai inqilob* 50, 20.9.1920, 8), but soon a new consciousness began to develop in the course of that revolutionary enthusiasm, which is characteristic of so many overthrows of this kind. Under the influence of the Turks and Tatars who had rushed to Bukhara, the Persian/Tajik language was pushed more and more into the background. With the establishment of the Republic of Bukhara in September 1920, *turki-ūzbeki* ‘Turki/Uzbek’ became the de facto administrative language of the Bukhara council government. Even in eastern Bukhara, where the population did not understand “Turki/Uzbek”, Turki was designated as the language of local administration and the language of schooling (Muhiddinuf 1928: 16 and Xūğojif 1930: 6).<sup>14</sup>

Abdulqodir Muhiddinuf offers a retrospective view of this change. He came from the family of a wealthy Bukharan factory owner and had joined the Communist Party in Moscow in 1918 (Eisener 1991: 23). Muhiddinuf was a leading member of the revolutionary movement in Bukhara and later held senior posts in the state and party apparatus of Tajikistan. In 1928, he recalled – in the style of an admission of guilt, which was not unusual for the late 1920s – the period of the Bukharan Revolution:

The political ideology, which at the establishment of the Republic of Bukhara and also for a long time afterwards had completely influenced the activity of the employees and leaders of the Soviet government of Bukhara, was the ideology of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism. In the initial period of the establishment of Bukhara, three groups of people were at the forefront:

- 1) Turkish prisoners from the World War;
- 2) Uzbeks from Farğona and Tashkent, all of whom were of the same ideology and belief as the *jadidi* of Bukhara;
- 3) We, the *jadidi* of Bukhara, who had received our first education and ideological development in the circle of the development of the ideology of pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism in Central Asia and had been under the perfect influence of the ideology of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism for a long time.

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<sup>14</sup> Bartol’d (1925: 110) does point out that Persian (in his usage of 1925: *tadžikskij jazyk*) remained the state language not only in the Emirate of Bukhara, “but also in the People’s Republic of Bukhara,” but this formal status found no counterpart in linguistic practice.

The panturkists said:

Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Turkmen and the other nations which have relation to a Mongol origin and all of which now all form their own independent nation, are in fact parts of one nation. The Tajik-speaking population of Bukhara is also of Turkic origin; under the influence of Iran's literature and civilization, they have lost their language and their nationality. We must make them *turk* again and create from all of them together one *millati buzurgi turk* "great *turk* nation".  
(Muhiddinuf 1928: 16)

A description very similar in content and style to that of Muhiddinuf is provided in an article by Š. Džabbarov published in the journal *Za partiju* in 1929, almost at the same time (Masov 1991: 152–160). When evaluating such statements, the following should be taken into account: The Bolsheviks were later hardly able to control the spirit they had evoked with their demand that the oppressed peoples of the East must first undergo national revolutions before a social revolution. In order to banish forever any ideas that – like Turkistan nationalism – were not compatible with the “national delimitation” of 1924, they were subsequently elevated to the status of conspiratorial “pan-Islamism” or “pan-Turkism”. The choice of words by Muhiddinuf and Džabbarov can therefore be attributed to the political thinking and language usage of the late 1920s. This includes the use of the word *tojik*, which could be used for identification to a much greater extent after the “national delimitation” than before it. The meaning attached to it in 1929, cannot simply be applied to the situation in the early 1920s.

But even if we subtract all that springs from the spirit of the post-1924 period, the retrospective view of Muhiddinuf and Džabbarov offers eloquent testimony to that intellectual and linguistic change that had received further impetus after the Bukharan Revolution and also gripped many individuals who had once used primarily the Persian language. In the Turkistani and even more so in the Bukharan understanding of that time, a commitment to the Bolshevik ideology was inextricably linked to a commitment as Turk or – as one gradually began to say – as *uzbek*, which manifested itself most clearly through language.

In other words, the indifference of some “Persian-speaking brothers” lamented by Aynī went hand in hand – at least for politically active individuals – with a commitment to Turkistan, which in the final analysis could also be a linguistic commitment. The language question, which had been formulated from the beginning as an “either-or” question, had found an answer, and the language of Turkistan nationalism was not Persian. Those who, to put it casually, did not want to miss the train of time spoke and read Turki. Those who wanted to exist as communists professed to be *uzbek*. Such a confession was by no means an attempt to join a “strong nation” in an inconspicuous and clever way in order to gain personal advantages. The “Uzbek nation” meant here did not exist at all until then, but was only created during these years. For this new nation, an old name with a new meaning was

used, which virtually invited such confessions. Those who professed to be *uzbek* wanted to participate and take part in this creative process. In a society where speech habits were not rigidly identified with a particular language name, the esteem of a social ideal could encourage one to identify with a speech group that was not that of one's first language.

In a wall newspaper circulated in 1924 in Xujand this confession was expressed by a person who would be called a "Tajik panturkist" a few years later: "Therefore, I believe that we will be left behind the culture for years to come if we take upon ourselves or make a claim to Tajikization [an insistence on Tajik language and identity – L. R.]" (*Novyj put'* 1924: 14, quoted after Masov 1991: 154).

It is not uncommon that people living in a bilingual milieu, where each language, in addition to its function as the first language for one or the other, also dominates entire social spheres based on the division of labor, choose to use one language or the other depending on the situation. Such behavior appears reprehensible only when language is instrumentalized ideologically. This means that language is primarily no longer seen as a means of communication that is supposed to fulfill a certain function for the one who uses it and is therefore selected according to the criterion of functionality. These functions may include using language as an embodiment of a cultural or political identity. The fact that the use of Turki and the renunciation of Persian/Tajik did not always have to be imposed, but could be the result of a voluntary decision – as demonstrated first by Fitrat and, from 1920 at the latest, also by Muhiddinuf and some of his political comrades-in-arms – is not readily perceived.

Muhiddinuf's memoirs show that language loyalties were not inherited by nature, but were the content of confessions. In the successful case – here: for Central Asian Turki – such confessions had a language-constituting effect. For Persian/Tajik, they had the opposite effect. In the period from 1922 to 1924, the view that the *tojik* were actually Turkic and had lost their original language under Iranian influence was also propagated in the Turkistani newspapers *Zarafšon* and *Turkiston*. This was accompanied by the demand that only Turki or, as it was now called, *o'zbek tili* – 'Uzbek' should be considered the official and general colloquial language. In the People's Republic of Bukhara, in the membership papers of the party and youth organization, under the heading "nationality", an entry as "Persian speaker" or "Tajik" was not provided for. Thus, even in the remote parts of eastern Bukhara, all party and Komsomol members were listed as "Uzbek" in 1924 (Šakuri 1997: 150–151). Finally, the use of the Persian language was banned and fined in some of Bukhara's Soviet administrations, including the People's Commissariat for Education headed by Fitrat. In the course of this development, the journal *Šū'lai inqilob*, the only Persian-language press publication of the time, was finally discontinued in December 1921.

## 2 Tajik emancipation

### 2.1 Prescribed nations

The situation changed with the territorial-administrative reorganization of Central Asia, which was carried out as a hasty and barely prepared campaign between February and October 1924. Unlike many other problems discussed and decided in 1924 in connection with “national delimitation” (lit. *nacional’noe razmeževanie* ‘national unmixing’), there was agreement in principle on the Tajik question from the very beginning. The Central Committee of the Bukharan CP first discussed the “delimitation of Soviet Central Asia into a number of republics according to national characteristics” on February 25, 1924, and the Executive Committee of the Bukharan Communist Party adopted corresponding theses on March 10, 1924. At this time, it was already clear: “The Tajik people form an autonomous Tajik region from Matča (sic), Karategin and Garm within the framework of Uzbekistan-Bukhara” (quoted after Masov 1991: 31). Thus, it was clear that Tajikistan was to be given only an autonomous status within Uzbekistan and was to be limited essentially to the remote mountainous areas of former Eastern Bukhara and some mountainous areas on the upper reaches of the Zarafšon, the latter having until then belonged to the Samarkand province of the Turkistan Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (ASSR).

A Tajik sub-commission, which did not have voting rights was appointed only a few days before the meeting of August 21, 1924, at which the boundaries of the Tajik Autonomous Region were on the agenda. A total of 1.24 million “Tajiks” were adopted for Turkistan and Bukhara, defined as such essentially according to linguistic criteria. As language designations, both the designation *farsidskij* “Persian” and *tadžikskij* “Tajik” appear in the minutes of this meeting (the language of negotiation was Russian) with the latter dominating. The members of the Tajik sub-commission, none of whom, incidentally, came from the areas under consideration for the autonomous Tajik territory, admitted at the meeting of August 21, 1924, that the population in the districts of Samarkand and Xujand (*Samarkandskij* and *Xudžandskij uezd*) as well as in the city of Bukhara was approximately 95 percent Persian/Tajik-speaking. At the same time, however, they themselves took into account that these population groups were closely linked to the Uzbeks in economic and administrative terms and that it would not be possible to incorporate these Tajiks into the Tajik autonomous regions on the territory of eastern Bukhara because of the spatial distance as well as the lack of transportation routes. It had therefore been agreed with the Uzbek comrades that the large number of Tajiks remaining in Uzbekistan would receive education and culture in their mother tongue. In addition, the major Tajik cities such as

Bukhara and Samarkand would have to remain temporary cultural centers for training officials for eastern Bukhara (Masov 1991: 42–43).

The repeated references to the economic and cultural similarities between the Tajiks and Uzbeks living in Bukhara and Samarkand and to the backwardness of the Tajiks living in the mountains of eastern Bukhara, formally speaking, were a practical realization of the directive formulated by Zelenksiy (1924: 72–73), according to which the question of national affiliation must occasionally take a back seat to other aspects, including economic and cultural ones, in the “national delimitation” process. Notwithstanding the appeal that a self-confession as a “Tajik” gradually began to develop, the attitude expressed in these references also correlates with the traditional primacy of regional and social identities over linguistic ones. The self-image as a “Bukharan” or “Samarkandi” was ultimately more decisive than the primarily linguistically oriented decision as to whether one was an “Uzbek” or a “Tajik”. With the regionally based identity, it was ultimately also possible to accept the principle of regarding the cities as belonging to the population by which they are surrounded. The precept that the economically and culturally more developed city dwellers had to provide civilizational assistance to the backward inhabitants of the mountains of eastern Bukhara and that Samarkand and Bukhara therefore had to belong to the prosperous Republic of Uzbekistan, moreover, draws in a flattering way on old resentments against the Tajiks of the mountains. Such resentments could also be expressed in a pejorative designation as *ǧalča*.<sup>15</sup> The regionally determined identity as “Bukharans” or “Samarkandis” also meant a social demarcation from the inhabitants of the mountain regions, which manifested itself in the feeling of cultural and economic superiority of the townspeople and was reflected in a disdainful view of the dialects spoken in the mountain regions.<sup>16</sup> An additional political confirmation of this resentment towards the Tajiks of the mountains at that time was the fact that the armed anti-Soviet resistance of the so-called *basmači*, which had by and large been put down in 1923, was still continuing in the mountainous areas of eastern Bukhara at that time. In October 1924, the following administrative regions belonged to the Tajik ASSR:

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<sup>15</sup> Lentz (1933: 9–15) provides an overview of the use of the term in the first third of the 20th century.

<sup>16</sup> The Russian scholar A. A. Semenov’s presents in his memories a vivid description of such reservations, which had been firmly established since pre-Soviet times. For example, the student body at the medressas of Bukhara, numbering several thousand, was divided into two factions formed on the basis of regional origin. The students from the city and the adjacent administrative areas in the plains of the Zarafšon Valley (*mullobačahoi tumani*) were opposed to the students from the mountainous areas known as *mullobačahoi kūhistoni* (Semenov 1960: 988–989).

- From the former People’s Republic of Bukhara: the province of Qurğonteppa, the eastern parts of the province of Sari Osjo, and the provinces of Dušanbe, Kūlob, and Ğarm;
- From the former Turkistan ASSR: the eastern part of the Samarkand district (upper reaches of the Zarafšon), the western Pamirs (Rušon, Šuğnon, Iškošim, Langar); the district of Rošorv on the upper reaches of the Bartang, and the western parts of the Vaxon.

Dušanbe (from 1929 to 1961: Stalinabad) was declared the capital, but it had suffered great damage during the battles with the armed opposition. In 1924 Dushanbe had only 42 houses and 242 inhabitants (*Materialy* 1926: 135).

## 2.2 The return of the Persian/Tajik language into the public sphere

In 1924, the Persian/Tajik language returned to the public sphere after a three-year suppression by Turki hegemonic claims. The establishment of the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic provided the occasion and legitimation for this. It also determined the character and status that this language would have in the future: Persian/Tajik was initially tolerated and promoted only in its function as the first language for the majority of the inhabitants of those remote mountainous areas that, from then on, comprised the territory of the Tajik ASSR. This functional limitation, in turn, shaped the status of Persian/Tajik in those cities that for centuries were considered centers of Persian/Tajik culture but were assigned to Uzbekistan rather than Tajikistan during the “national delimitation”. The inhabitants of these cities were given the task of providing cultural and political assistance to the mountainous regions of the Tajik ASSR, which were considered backward in cultural and economic terms. (Above all, it was a matter of first establishing a functioning Soviet administration in these opposition-controlled areas). Knowledge of the Persian/Tajik language, which was widespread in the cities of the plains, was a welcome prerequisite for the fulfillment of this missionary task, but no more.

Bukhara itself was considered backward and its inhabitants, as the chairman of the Central Asia Bureau put it, were “more sinister and retrograde and more liable than others to succumb to the provocations and fanatical agitations of the mullahs and ešons” (Zelenskij 1924: 79). For this reason, Samarkand, which already had been under Russian rule for many decades, was to have a special role in providing assistance to the mountainous areas of the Tajik ASSR. However, the first measures in this direction were initiated in Tashkent, the political center of Turkistan.

As early as January 15, 1924, a special class for Tajiks was established at the Communist Central Asian University, a kind of cadre school for party and state functionaries in Tashkent in order to train political cadres for the areas of the later Tajik ASSR. The initiative for this had been taken by the Afghan émigré and educational politician Nisor Muhammad. However, this group met with little approval at the time, as potential students were still very suspicious of the idea of a special class for Tajiks due to their experience with the dominance of Uzbek and Russian in the administration of Turkistan (*Ovozi tojik*, 25.8.1924). At the end of 1924, a teacher training institute was established in Tashkent specifically for Tajiks, where two hundred young students were to be trained as elementary school teachers in a five-year course of study. The first rector of this institute was again Nisor Muhammad, who also appeared as a book author in 1924 and published a primer and a reading book for Tajik schoolchildren (Nisor Muhammad 1924 a, b).

### 2.3 The new language designation “Tajik” and its meaning

On August 25, 1924, when the territorial borders of the future Tajik ASSR were already largely determined, the first issue of the socio-political and literary newspaper *Ovozi tojik* ‘Voice of the Tajik’ appeared in Samarkand. Abdulqayum Qurbī was appointed as politically responsible editor, but the actual editing was in the hands of Sayyid Rizo Alizoda. With Hojī Muin as an editorial board member and Sadriddin Aynī as an author, other personalities who had already been involved in Persian/Tajik journalism in earlier years collaborated on this newspaper.

The newspaper’s target audience is unambiguously stated in its title. Similarly, Sadriddin Aynī writes in the editorial of the first issue about the language of the newspaper that this will be, as its title says, *zaboni tojik* “the Tajik language” (*Ovozi tojik* 25.8.1924, 1). This was the first time that the name “Tajik” was used instead of “Persian” in reference to the written language. This was more than a change of label. Behind the new name was also a new content. However, in Aynī’s usage at the time, the word *tojik* had a limited meaning. It hardly referred to the Persian/Tajik speaking population of Bukhara or Samarkand. At that time, that is, in August and September 1924, Aynī preferred to refer as *tojik* to the inhabitants of those mountainous areas to which the territory of the Tajik ASSR, then still in the process of formation, was to be limited.

This is confirmed by his choice of words in an article entitled “On Tajik Schools and Education”, which he had written in September 1924 for the second issue of the newspaper *Ovozi tojik* (4.9.1924: 1). Here it is said:

Everyone knows that the Tajiks of Turkistan have lagged behind others in terms of science and education. A question on which life and death of the Tajik people depends today is the school and education question. [ . . ]

I think that in Samarkand, which is close to the mountainous areas of the Tajiks and is considered the center of culture, a course should be opened at the next opportunity. Students from Falğar, Mastčoh [sic] and the rest of the mountainous areas, as well as from the villages of the Tajiks, should come to this course; forty to fifty young people who can read and write should be gathered and trained in four to five months. The intellectual potential for such a course is available in Samarkand, because those Samarkand teachers who currently run the Teacher Training Institute and the educational courses in Samarkand know Tajik well. (Ovozi tojik 4.9.1924: 1)

In this article, the terms *tojikon* and *samarqandī* are de facto juxtaposed. In any case, they are not congruent in Aynī's use of language at the time. His statement that the Tajiks were backward compared to the other peoples of Turkistan only makes sense if the Persian/Tajik-speaking population of Samarkand remains excluded from it, because they were given the task to help to overcome this backwardness. The phrase that Samarkand is close to the mountainous areas of the Tajiks also delimits the settlement areas of the population group to which Aynī wishes to apply the term *tojik*. In the next sentence, he adds the villages of the Tajiks and expands this space to include the rural settlement areas in the plains. However, as far as the urban population of Samarkand is concerned, Aynī makes the statement that the Samarkand teachers know Tajik well, thus deciding against a formulation of the kind that the Samarkand teachers are themselves Tajiks. This choice of words was by no means accidental. In an article that appeared only a week later (Ovozi tojik 12.9.1924: 1) he referred to the Persian-speaking urban population in the plains as *forsiyon* 'Persian speakers', thus also contrasting them terminologically with the *tojik* of the mountain areas and villages. When Aynī actually mentioned Tajiks in Samarkand and other cities of the plains, he meant exclusively immigrants from the mountain regions who took on casual work in the cities and hired themselves out as day laborers, transport workers or guards.

In a paper on textbooks for Tajiks, Aynī also raised the question of which dialect should be used as the basis for the written "Tajik" language. The language of Samarkand, Ūroteppa and Xujand, Aynī said, is too mixed with Uzbek and therefore unsuitable:

Therefore, the language of the Tajik mountain areas must be adopted in Tajik school textbooks. The language of the Tajik mountain areas is a simple *forsi*, free from Iranian inflections, not mixed with rarely heard Arabic words, and it corresponds to Persian grammar. Yes, in pronunciation it has a certain turgidity in relation to the language of urban Persian speakers. But it is pure and it conforms to the rules. Such a language is widespread from Falğar and Mastčoh [sic] to Qarotegin and Darvoz and is universally understood . . . From

these considerations, it can be said that the language of the textbooks of the Tajiks should be a simple Persian language. In other words, the language of the majority of the Tajiks of the mountainous areas.”  
(*Ovozi tojik* 12.9.1924: 1)

Aynī’s demand that the “Tajik language” be aligned with the idioms of the mountain regions was not only based on linguistic arguments. In the foreground was the educational and developmental mission, which he, as a politically active person of that time, also liked to propagate:

The destitute people of the Tajiks in the mountains are deprived of all the benefits of urban life and are bound to difficult labor . . . These destitute people are seized with sufferings from which they can find no relief; they live in torment and have no one to help them. The Tajik language will be a translator especially to such destitute people.

(*Ovozi tojik* 12.9.1924: 1)

In calling for a social orientation of the written language, Aynī was in line with the political guidelines of the Communist Party and the doctrine of “turning to the village”. On October 19, 1924, a conference on the press in Central Asia was held in Tashkent, attended by editors of all Central Asian newspapers and magazines. At this conference, the peasantry was named as the most important target group of Soviet press organs. The editors were therefore called upon to write in a simple and generally understandable language in order to attract this social stratum, which until then had shown little interest in Soviet newspapers and magazines. However, no measures were proposed on how to achieve this goal  
(*Ovozi tojik* 30.10.1924: 1)

The language that returned to the public life of Central Asia in 1924 under the name “Tajik” differed from the written language that had been called “Persian” until then not only by its new name. In Aynī’s mind, the new, Tajik language was to be a language that should be:

- In social terms, addressed the poorest classes and should be distinguished from “Persian” by its simple, popular, and generally understandable character;
- In spatial terms, it should not rely on the dialects of the urban cultural centers, that is, not on the dialects of Bukhara, Samarkand, Ūroteppa, or Xujand, but on the idioms spread in the mountainous areas of Masčoh and Falğar on the upper reaches of the Zarafšon as far as Qarotegin and Darvoz. The preference of these idioms was justified by low Uzbek influences and the rare use of complicated Arabic phrases. However, by pointing to the absence of allegedly “Iranian” turns of phrase in these dialects, Aynī’s definition of the new, Tajik language is also directed against the linguistic dominance of Ēronī in the written Persian language of the early post-revolutionary years.

Such a territorially and socially determined understanding of language appears to be the consistent realization of Stalin's linguistically fixed concept of nation, according to which a nation is based primarily on the unity of language and territory. Aynī's definition of the Tajik language, however, was more than political conformism or the thoroughly credible attempt, as a representative of urban high culture, to provide civilizational development aid for the inhabitants of the mountain regions, who were regarded as backward. Aynī's understanding of language also correlates with the traditional contrast between the Persian/Tajik idioms of the plains and those of the mountain regions, which was already known from pre-Soviet times. As is well known, this contrast also found expression in the fact that one's own idiom was called *forsi* in the cities, whereas the name *tojik* was used by – predominantly non-settled – Turki speakers as a foreign designation. Only in most mountainous areas could the expression *zaboni tojikī* also be used by Persian/Tajik speakers to designate their own idiom, but it then referred mainly to spoken language.

The fact that Aynī, as a representative of the urban culture characterized by bilingualism, leaned on the Turki-specific use of the word *tojik* with the unmistakable basic meaning “the linguistically and culturally different”, also found its linguistic expression at that time: in the mid-1920s Aynī preferred the expression *zaboni tojik* for “Tajik language”. Similarly, in the title of a book published in 1926, he uses the phrase *adabiyoti tojik* “Tajik literature” (Aynī 1926, see Figure 2). According to the linguistic conventions of Persian/Tajik, however, it should be either *zaboni tojikī* “Tajik language” or *adabiyoti tojikī* “Tajik literature” (with the adjective *tojikī* as an attribute) or *zaboni tojikon* “language of the Tajiks” or *adabiyoti tojikon* “literature of the Tajiks” (with the noun *tojik* in the plural as an attribute). The expressions *zaboni tojik* and *adabiyoti tojik* can be explained only if one takes into account Aynī's active bilingualism and understands these formulations as recreations of the morphosyntactic structure of corresponding Uzbek phrases, namely *tojik tili* and *tojik adabijoti*, respectively. In Uzbek, *tojik* can be used equally as an adjective and as a noun. This peculiarity was transferred to the homonymous Persian/Tajik word in the forms *zaboni tojik* and *adabijoti tojik* preferred by Aynī at the time.

Linguistic idiosyncrasies that appear to be recreations of Uzbek phrases or grammatical structures, are not uncommon in the Persian/Tajik idioms of Central Asia. However, it is more than a linguistic problem if even in the introduction of a new language name morphosyntactic features of an Uzbek model were copied. It also gives us an indication of mental models on which this new name was based. It must be taken into account that Aynī had already lived for several years in Samarkand at that time, where the dominant influence of Uzbek was particularly strong. Nevertheless, Aynī saw himself far more than other politically active contemporaries in the urban centers of Turkistan as an advocate for the people

of the Tajik Autonomous Region and, with the resources of a publicist, worked primarily to disseminate factual information about these mountainous regions among urban readers who were burdened with many prejudices.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.4 The awakening of Tajik nationalism

The creation of Tajikistan was not a consequence of Tajik nationalism, but its birth. The establishment of Tajik autonomy had been under discussion for months before its realization, but only the legal completion of “national delimitation” and the actual creation of the Tajik ASSR, as well as the convening of independent Tajik administrative bodies, could finally eliminate the mistrust that obviously existed regarding the sincerity of this project.

### 2.4.1 First attempts to catch up on Uzbekistan’s national delimitation

The realization of Tajik autonomy made the commitment to a Tajik identity suddenly appear attractive even to those who previously had not wanted to profess it in such a sense or had not dared to do so because of the sociopolitical climate in the early 1920s. It was not until the establishment of the Tajik ASSR that the determination to assert a separate linguistic identity in the face of Uzbek claims to hegemony was reaffirmed, even in the cultural centers that had been characterized by Persian-Uzbek bilingualism and were to become part of Uzbekistan after national delimitation. Many language activists in Samarkand and Tashkent saw themselves strengthened and began to claim a “Tajik” identity for themselves and those segments of the population in Uzbekistan that used exclusively or primarily the Persian/Tajik language.

The newspaper *Ovozi tojik* also unmistakably struck new notes in this regard from the end of October 1924. Although none of its authors lived in the Tajik ASSR at the time, hardly anyone refrained from expressing “a thousand thanks” to the Soviet government for the establishment of this republic. Immediately after the Tajik ASSR was proclaimed, Hojī Muin demanded that school instruction in Tajik be provided in Samarkand and its environs as well (*Ovozi tojik* 30.10.1924: 1).

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<sup>17</sup> The newspaper *Ovozi tojik* published a two-part report entitled *tojikoni kūhiston* ‘The Tajiks of the Mountainous Areas’, in which Aynī reported on their customs, economy, and social structure (*Ovozi tojik* 21.9.1924: 3 and 5.10.1924: 1–2). A detailed description of the fate of emigrants from Qarotegin who hired themselves out on the cotton plantations of Farğona is given by Aynī in his novel *Odina* (Aynī 1958b).

Analogous demands were made for all Tajik settlement areas in Uzbekistan by a “Tajik commission” that had met at the Central Asian Communist University in Tashkent after the establishment of the Tajik ASSR. Great hopes were placed in the commissions for administrative reorganization (*rajonirovanie*) of the newly established republics, which began their activities at the end of 1924 and also conducted surveys of the national composition of the population in individual areas. From the results of these surveys, the young Tajik nationalists hoped to revise previous decisions on language policy in the territory of Uzbekistan.

However, the demands for Tajik-language schools could not even be met in the Tajik ASSR at that time. The People’s Commissariat for Education, which was established in December 1924 and at that time had to administer only seven schools with 152 pupils and 26 teachers in the whole of Tajikistan, in the second year of autonomy admitted that school instruction in Tajikistan was still conducted in Uzbek. The lack of Tajik-language teaching materials, instructional programs, and teachers was pointed to as the main cause. Only a few primers and reading books existed. Moreover, there were hardly any accompanying didactic materials for teachers (Obidov 1967: 3–4). All other teaching materials that existed in 1926, including a mathematics book, a textbook on natural history, and political textbooks, were translations from Russian and intended for higher grades. Sayyid Rizo Alizoda, who in those years also produced the first grammar of the Tajik language (Alizoda 1344), had rendered outstanding services as a translator. However, this book was also not suitable for teaching beginners. The remote location of Tajikistan and the poor transportation routes posed additional difficulties for the implementation of school reform.

These objective difficulties were compounded by efforts on the part of Uzbek state and party officials to maintain the linguistic-political status quo and to prevent a return of the Persian/Tajik language to public life in Uzbekistan by any means necessary. On this occasion, the Tajik party functionary Širinšoh Šohtemur felt compelled to submit a report addressed to Stalin on June 25, 1926, in which he described in detail the situation of the Tajiks in Uzbekistan and called for the convening of a special commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks). Šotemur pointed out, for example, that illegal methods were being used to try to prevent the circulation of the newspaper *Ovozi tojik* in Uzbekistan, and that graduates of Tajik teacher training courses held in Samarkand in 1925 were subjected to persecution and threats when they returned to their schools if they wanted to conduct classes in Tajik. Particular political tensions arose in 1926 at a celebration of the anniversary of the founding of Tajikistan, held for Tajik workers and students in Tashkent but conducted in Uzbek from beginning to end. Participants demanded that speakers should speak Tajik or Russian. Ultimately, the event ended up being a political manifestation against Uzbekistan. As a result, the director of the Tajik Teacher Training Institute in Tashkent had been fired (cf. Masov 1991: 72–77).

Šohtemur's objection did not go unheard. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan had to address the situation of the Tajik minority in 1926. The Uzbek People's Commissar for Education, Mū'min Xoja, advocated in several Central Asian newspapers the establishment of Tajik-language elementary schools, literacy courses, clubs, and reading rooms in Bukhara and Samarkand, for which he received high praise from Tajik language activists such as Zehnī (*Ovozi tojik* 28.9.1926: 2). In the 1926/1927 school year, Uzbek was replaced as the language of instruction by Tajik in most of the schools in Samarkand's Old City. In 1927, the Tajik Teacher Training Institute in Tashkent was transferred under the administration of the corresponding authorities in the Tajik ASSR.

But what did the Tajik-Uzbek "delimitation" mean for the Ēronī of Samarkand? They were still considered Shiite immigrants from Merv in 1926 and used a non-written Turkic idiom in addition to Persian. This constellation made it difficult for them to assume a Tajik identity, and they had few advocates for their interests when education in the schools of the Samarkand district of Boḡi Šamol, which they inhabited, was changed from Persian to Uzbek in 1926. In this situation, they were not helped by the fact that their most notable representative, Alizoda, had already rendered great services to Persian/Tajik journalism in Central Asia for many years. Additional confusion was caused by the demand raised by some Ēronī: If everyone was to be taught in his or her mother tongue, then the Ēronī would have to introduce Azeri Turkic, not Uzbek, in their schools (*Ovozi tojik* 31.5.1926: 4). The move from "Persian" to "Tajik", or, to put it another way, the evolution from a multifunctional language to one reduced to its sole function as the primary idiom of a nationally defined community, was to mean for the Ēronī a renunciation of Persian, which they had used for centuries in its function as a written language as well as a language of literature, religion, and science.

#### 2.4.2 Linguistic models of demarcation

The young Tajik nationalism was as language-fixated as Stalin's concept of nationhood, which served as its intellectual model. The advocates of Tajik interests were therefore confronted with the same problems in the multilingual milieu of Uzbekistan that the Bolsheviks had previously had to deal with in the "national delimitation of Central Asia". Even according to "purely linguistic" criteria, it should be extremely difficult or even impossible in some areas of intensive Uzbek-Tajik linguistic contact to make a clear separation into "Uzbeks" and "Tajiks". Tajik nationalists were unwilling to recognize the interpenetration of Uzbek and Tajik as a given and to make this intermingling the basis of their understanding of nationality. Instead, they tried to support their claims with dubious statistical arguments.