Iranian Studies, 2017
Vol. 50, No. 5, 691–704, https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943

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From Bukhara to Dushanbe: Outlining the Evolution of Soviet Tajik Fiction

This article offers an overview of Soviet Tajik Fiction under Stalinism (1920s–1950s) and during de-Stalinization (1950s–1970s) by contemplating the move from Bukhara to Dushanbe as a setting for Tajik stories and novels. In particular, it details the two main literary genres of the period, namely historical and psychological fiction. It argues that when tracing the main stages of evolution of Soviet Tajik fiction from the point of view of the setting one should mainly consider the works by Sadriddin Ayni, Jalol Ikromi and Fazliddin Muhammadiev.

Compared to the Persian literature of twentieth-century Iran, its Afghan and Tajik counterparts have received much less scholarly attention in the West. As regards Persian literary matters outside Iran, generally speaking there is perhaps a certain prejudice especially about Tajik literature, mainly because for over seventy years through the twentieth century, namely from the 1920s up to 1991, it was Soviet literature, with all the drawbacks of the case.[1]

There is no doubt that Soviet literature has often been in service to Soviet propaganda and that writers' creativity has suffered under a totalitarian regime, but this does not mean that in the history of that literature there are only examples of socialist-oriented fiction and poetry to be found. It must be admitted that non-experts in the field of Soviet literature usually have an idea of it as a standardized product of a socialist establishment and as a predominantly ideologized art. Whilst in the West the falsity of this idea has been demonstrated by numerous and relevant studies on Soviet Russian literature, little has been written on the literature of the

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In this article, I have transliterated all terms according to Tajik Cyrillic orthography, since most of the Tajik literary works of the Soviet period were published in that script. Words followed by the *izofat* (*ezafeh*) are conventionally written as single words in the Tajik Cyrillic script (e.g. *adabiyoti sovetii tojik* "Soviet Tajik literature"), but in this article they are shown by hyphenation (*adabiyot-i soveti-yi tojik*).

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https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

other Soviet republics, which at some point in the twentieth century became "national" literatures.[2]

In this article, I detail the case of a Central Asian and Iranian branch of literature, namely Tajik literature, paying attention to the fiction of the Soviet period in particular. Specifically, I discuss some aspects of a literary milieu that reflects the move from political propaganda and public life under Stalin's rule (1920s–1950s) towards the Tajik private and personal sphere of the post-Stalin period (1950s–1970s).

Under Stalin's rule, the Tajik fictional narrative was mostly set in Bukhara, the traditional center—together with Samarkand—of Tajik-Persian urban population and culture in Central Asia. The Soviet government's nationality policy of the 1920s incorporated Bukhara and Samarkand into the Uzbek republic, and not within the bounds of the Tajik republic, which induced in the latter the spreading of a nascent Tajik nationalism, and burdened Tajik intellectuals with various obstacles to cultural and literary organization.[3]

In the post-Stalin period, a greater attention to the sensibility, attitudes and ambitions of each individual also coincided with the growing "personality" of the Tajik capital Dushanbe,[4] which in fact in those very years became the main scene for Tajik psychological stories and novels. In this period, Bukhara carried on being the main setting for the genre of the Tajik historical novel.

I argue that when tracing the main stages of evolution of Soviet Tajik fiction from the point of view of the setting one should mainly consider the works by three authors: Sadriddin Ayni (1878–1954), Jalol Ikromi (1909–93) and Fazliddin Muhammadiev (1928–86). Ayni belongs to the first generation of Soviet Tajik writers and was the undisputed leading fiction writer in Tajikistan from the 1920s to the mid-1950s; Ikromi is commonly considered to be one of the most important Tajik novelist of the 1960s and 1970s; Muhammadiev was especially popular in Tajikistan in the 1970s and 1980s as a short-story writer.[5]

Bukhara is a sort of literary "obsession" for Ayni. It is also the main setting for the fiction by Ikromi, with particular reference to his historical novels, whereas the only non-historical novel by Ikromi—*Man gunahgoram* ("I am guilty," 1957)—is set in the suburbs of Dushanbe. In the fiction by Muhammadiev, Dushanbe appears more and more frequently as a setting for Tajik short stories and novels.

As regards the fiction writers belonging to the generation after Ayni, I am aware that besides Ikromi and Muhammadiev there are other significant Tajik authors that I have not mentioned, the most renowned ones in their homeland being Rahim Jalil (1909–89), Sotim Ulughzoda (1911–97) and Foteh Niyozi (1914–92). The reason why I chose the works by Ikromi and Muhammadiev over those by other fiction writers of the same period is that they have detailed the various facets of the Tajik society of their time and its psychological dimension not only by means of the story, a genre widely employed for the same purpose by many other Tajik writers, but also by means of the novel. Indeed, in the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, the only two novels that have described the urban life of Tajik society are *Man gunahgoram* by Ikromi and *Palata-yi kunjaki*[6] ("Next room,"

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

1974) by Muhammadiev. All the other Tajik novels that were published in the same period were historical novels, not concerned with the reality of everyday life in Soviet Tajikistan.

The Editorial Platforms: Tajik Literary Magazines and Publishing Houses

Newspapers (*ruznoma*) and journals (*majalla*) represented the main editorial platform for the spreading of Soviet Tajik fiction. Not only short stories, but also long prose narratives such as novels were published in serial form in the literary and cultural magazines. In a number of cases, the publication of novels as stand-alone books followed their previous appearance in serial form in the periodicals.[7]

As regards the literary field, skimming through the different Tajik periodicals of the first Soviet decades one can easily note that the fictional narrative published there was dominated by the figure of Ayni and mostly revolved around the literary image of the "poor Tajik," who was in most cases a mountain peasant of the eastern Bukhara emirate whose traditional habits would have been radically changed by the Russian revolution of 1917. The image of the "poor Tajik" eventually enriched by the ideals of the revolution is to be explicitly found, for example, both in the work commonly regarded as the first story in the history of Soviet Tajik literature—*Odina, yo ki sarguzasht-i yak tojik-i kambaghal* ("Odina, or the destiny of a poor Tajik," 1924-25) by Ayni—and in the name of the first Tajik newspaper published in the Soviet period, the monthly *Ovoz-i tojik-i kambaghal* ("Voice of the poor Tajik"), founded by Ayni. The story of the adventures and misadventures of Odina was just published in serial form in that newspaper, between August 1924 and April 1925.

Ovoz-i tojik-i kambaghal was established in Samarkand in August 1924.[8] Like many other Tajik and Central Asian magazines published during the Soviet period, it changed its name several times in the course of the twentieth century, mainly due to the dictates of Soviet propaganda in Central Asia, but also by the choice of the founders or editors: in May 1925, for example, it became a weekly and changed its name into *Ovoz-i tojik* ("Tajik voice"), dropping the adjective "poor," as desired by Ayni; in 1931, for reasons to do with the territorial politics in Central Asia (notably the allotment of Samarkand to the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan), rather than the choices of the newspaper's founder, the newspaper was renamed *Haqiqat-i Uzbekiston* ("Truth of Uzbekistan"). In the same year, its editorial office was moved from Samarkand to Tashkent, though the newspaper continued to aim particularly at Tajik readers of Samarkand, since it was mainly there that Tajik-language cultural circles, publishers and schools were in operation. After a suspension of the publications during World War II, it reappeared in 1950 with the name *Uzbekiston-i surkh* ("Red Uzbekistan"), and in 1964 returned to the name *Haqiqat-i Uzbekiston*. In 1993, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, it regained the name *Ovoz-i tojik*, that has survived till today, though the articles published there, to be frank, deal more with the culture and politics of Uzbekistan than with the life of the Tajiks of Bukhara and Samarkand.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The first Tajik newspaper that appeared in Dushanbe was *Bedori-yi tojik* ("Tajik awakening"), which started publication in the last months of 1924. Its first editor-in-chief was Abbos Aliev (1899–1958), a Bukharan statesman who became the first minister of education of the Tajik autonomous region in 1924. In 1925, the newspaper was renamed *Tojikiston-i surkh* ("Red Tajikistan"), and in 1955 changed its denomination once again, to *Tojikiston-i soveti* ("Soviet Tajikistan"). After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it was rebaptized *Jumhuriyat* ("Republic"), a name that it has retained up to now.

The official periodical in service to the emerging Soviet Tajik literature remained, in any case, the journal *Baro-yi adabiyot-i sotsialisti* ("For a socialist literature"), founded in 1932 in Dushanbe as the mouthpiece of the newly established Union of Writers of Tajikistan. Its first editor-in-chief was the poet Abulqosim Lohuti (1887–1957), an Iranian emigré who was to become one of the leading figures of Soviet Tajik poetry. In 1938, the journal was renamed *Sharq-i surkh* ("Red east"), and in 1963 changed its name to *Sado-yi sharq* ("Voice of the east"). It is one of the few Tajik literary journals that has remained active up to now.

As regards the Tajik fictional narrative that appeared as a stand-alone book, and not in serial form in the periodicals, one should keep in mind that from the mid-1920s to the 1970s the book market in Tajikistan was monopolized by the *Nashriyot-i davlati-yi Tojikiston* ("Tajikistan state publishing house"). It was established in Dushanbe on 7 October 1925 and specialized in publishing Tajik fiction and collected poems, as well as scientific and translated literature.[9] In 1964, it changed its name to *Irfon* ("Knowledge"), and for a couple of years incorporated the Tajik publishing house *Maorif* ("Education"), which specialized in publishing textbooks and children's literature.[10]

In Tajikistan, *Irfon*'s monopoly over the publication of Persian classical authors and Soviet Tajik writers finished in the late 1980s, when, in the milieu of *glasnost'*, openness and transparency in government institutions and activities had increased in the Soviet Union. In 1987, one more publishing house was established in Tajikistan: *Adib* ("Writer"). It was founded in Dushanbe and had different sections devoted to the following subject areas: Persian classical literature, modern Tajik literature (covering the period from the mid-nineteenth century onwards), Russian literature, translated literature (into Tajik), children's literature in Tajik, children's literature in Russian, school books in Tajik and school books in Russian.[11]

Remembering Bukhara: Ayni's Fiction under Stalinism

In Tajikistan, Sadriddin Ayni is universally acclaimed as the most prominent cultural and literary personality of the twentieth century. In Uzbekistan, his name is included among the major representatives of realistic fiction. This author had a fine literary command of both Tajik and Uzbek, and published widely in both languages.

In the field of twentieth-century humanities, Ayni remains the most popular and studied author in Tajikistan. From the 1950s until today, countless monographs and articles on his life and work have been published in the country, and one may

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

state that almost all the Tajik scholars working on twentieth-century Tajik literature have devoted at least one article to Ayni's oeuvre.[12]

Although he was not only a fiction writer, but also a poet, an educator, a historian and an academician, in Tajikistan he is especially known to the general public for his stories and novels, which in the first Soviet decades laid the foundations of modern Tajik fiction.

Ayni was from the 1920s to his death in 1954 the undisputed fiction leader in Soviet Tajikistan, though, one should specify, he did not live there, and nor did he set his stories and novels there, albeit in those years the Stalinist orientation was stimulating the development of a "national" literature to be concentrated within the bound of the Soviet republic of Tajikistan. Ayni did live most of his life in Samarkand, in what was then the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, and set his fictional narrative almost entirely in Bukhara, where he was born and received his education. His movements to the Tajik capital Dushanbe, where he finally died, became more frequent from the early 1950s, when he became the first president of the newly established Tajikistan Academy of Sciences (1951).

Ayni contributed to the literary edification of Soviet Tajikistan in a way that differs somewhat from that of other Tajik fiction writers active during the years of Stalinism, who set their fictional narrative within the borders of Soviet Tajikistan by depicting, for example, the life of the farmers during the collectivization of agriculture (Ikromi's novel *Shodi*, 1936; Ulughzoda's novel *Navobod*, "New land," 1953), or by portraying the rural life of the Tajik families whose sons had been sent to the battle front (Jalil's *Hikoyaho-yi zamon-i jang*, "War era stories," 1944; Niyozi's novel *Vafo*, "Loyalty," 1949). Rather, Ayni's fiction explores the Bukharan past. Its common denominator is the Bukhara emirate, its socio-economic and intellectual decline in the late nineteenth century, and its fall due to the coming of the Soviet power in the 1920s. Specifically, Ayni fictionalized the main social problems of the emirate, notably usury and superstition, and depicted the stagnant state of the traditional *maktab*s and *madrasa*s due to the incompetence and bribery of the teachers. Moreover, he portrayed the impact of the Russian revolution of 1917 on the life of the lower social strata, among whom were small farmers and craftsmen, and especially mountain peasants.

This is the leitmotiv of Ayni's fictional narrative, which consists of three novels, three stories and two short stories, published for the most part during the most restrictive years of Stalinism, namely the 1930s. The novels are *Dokhunda* ("Highlander," 1930), *Ghulomon* ("Slaves," 1935) and *Yatim* ("Orphan," 1939), the stories are *Odina, yo ki sarguzasht-i yak tojik-i kambaghal* (1924-25), *Marg-i sudkhur* ("Death of a usurer," 1937) and *Jallodon-i Bukhoro* ("Executioners of Bukhara," 1937); the short stories are *Ahmad-i devband* ("Ahmad, the conjurer of demons," 1928) and *Maktab-i kuhna* ("Old[-fashioned] school," 1935). *Ghulomon* and *Jallodon-i Bukhoro* were originally written in Uzbek and translated into Tajik by Ayni himself; the other fictional works were composed in Tajik.[13]

In the introduction to the most recent English translation of part of Ayni's *Reminiscences*, John Perry and Rachel Lehr stated that Ayni had published "four novels (the first of their genre in Tajik), [and] a half-dozen shorter fictional and quasi-historical

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

works."[14] Ayni's novels are actually three rather than four. I suppose that Perry and Lehr were partly influenced by the Czech scholar Jiří Bečka (1915–2004), a specialist on Tajik literature, when counting the number of Ayni's novels. Indeed, in his history of Tajik literature, in his monograph on Ayni, and in other articles, Bečka had defined "novels" as not only *Dokhunda*, *Ghulomon* and *Yatim*, but also *Marg-i sudkhur*.[15]

Really, because of its great size, *Marg-i sudkhur* may also be mistaken for a novel. However, since it does not present a diversity of events and characters, but illuminates a whole period in the life of a single main character—the usurer—it is more appropriately to be considered as a story, or a novella at the most, and such is the case of *Odina* and *Jallodon-i Bukhoro*. Ayni himself had never defined *Marg-i sudkhur* as novel, whereas in the subheadings of *Dokhunda*, *Ghulomon* and *Yatim* he explicitly mentioned the term *roman* ("novel").[16] It is strange that Bečka, whose scholarly works were usually somewhat affected by the Soviet Tajik and Russian literary critics, had defined *Marg-i sudkhur* as a novel rather than a novella. In Tajik textbooks and scholarly works on literature that have appeared through the Soviet period, Tajik-Russian literary criticism always referred to *Marg-i sudkhur* by using the Russian loan-word *povest'* ("story, novella"), the term of Arabic origin *qissa* ("story") being commonly employed in the Tajik publications of post-Soviet times.

Anyway, what one should keep in mind when studying the Tajik literary genres is that the Soviet Tajik story—like all those published in Russia and the other Soviet republics—usually ranges in size between what is normally called a story and what might also be a short novel, though it is more frequently the length of a short novel than of a story; such is the case of *Marg-i sudkhur*.

This novella, dealing with the social problem of usury in the Bukhara emirate during Ayni's lifetime, is also considered the first satire in the history of modern Tajik literature, and still nowadays remains one of the most popular and frequently reprinted fictional works in Tajikistan. Its main character, the usurer Qori Ishkamba, has become the personification—delineated by means of the satire—of the negative element in modern Tajik society: he is a person with all possible faults and with no merits, but he hides behind the mask of an exemplary and devoted man.[17] The fact that in Tajikistan this story is still popular nearly thirty years after the collapse of the Soviet Union demonstrates that its connection with the current socio-economic crisis in Tajikistan is possibly strong.

Let us note that *Marg-i sudkhur* is also the last fictional work that Ayni set in Bukhara. After that, he published just one more prose-work, *Yatim* (1939), a novel set in the mountains within the borders of the newly established Soviet republic of Tajikistan. After *Yatim*, Ayni no longer wrote fiction, as if his "duty" to write fictional works was confined to the decade of the 1930s. During the 1940s, he devoted himself to the study of Persian classical authors such as Rudaki, Sa'di, Vasefi, Nava'i and Bedil, and published widely on their life and works, to some extent laying the foundations of literary criticism in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. From the late 1940s and through the mid-1950s, he composed his monumental *Yoddosht-ho* ("Reminiscences"), which, besides their literary merit, also offer a rich source for the study of the Bukharan social and intellectual history of the late nineteenth century.

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Ayni's *Yoddosht-ho* also represents, together with *Marg-i sudkhur*, a good "laboratory" for studying the first developments of the so-called "Tajik literary language" (*zabon-i adabi-yi tojik*), whose features were initially codified in a Latin script in the mid-1920s by some Bukharan intellectuals and Russian orientalists, with reference to the parallel Latinization of Uzbek.[18] Ayni did not sit on the committee for the Latinization of Tajik, but expressed himself enthusiastically in favor of the move from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet, as demonstrated by some articles he wrote on the subject, among which was *Dunyo-yi nav va alifbo-yi nav* ("The new world and the new alphabet," 1927).[19]

The details of the new Tajik orthography and the new Tajik literary language were discussed at the conferences of Tashkent (1928) and Dushanbe (1930), that defined which grammatical features were to be considered "colloquial" rather than "literary," and accepted: for example, in "standard Tajik" the progressive tenses formed with the auxiliary *istodan* (e.g., *rafta istoda-am* "I am going"), typical of the Tajik northern and northwestern dialects. The Dushanbe conference of 1930 also criticized some grammatical features as "archaizing," among which was the verbal prefix *bi-* in the imperatives and in some subjunctives.[20]

In 1939–40, the Latin alphabet was in turn replaced by a modified Cyrillic system. According to Bečka, Ayni's silence following the switch from the Latin to the Cyrillic script is to be interpreted as his disagreement with the Cyrillization, since after the introduction of the Latin alphabet Ayni had expressed himself favorable towards the Latinization of Tajik.[21] Anyway, it is important to keep in mind that all his life Ayni wrote his works in the Perso-Arabic script, though he saw them published in the Latin and Cyrillic scripts.

To the ear of the Iranians and the Afghans, this "literary Tajik" that developed first in the works of Ayni, adapted in the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, and later inherited by the subsequent generations of Tajik fiction writers, may perhaps seem like a crude Iranian slang and sound archaic in its morphology, lexicon and syntax; but for all the Tajiks of today this is *consciously* the Tajik literary language.

Tajik Fiction during De-Stalinization: Ikromi and Muhammadiev Towards Dushanbe

Though not overtly revolutionary, the era following the death of Stalin and the condemnation of his regime on the part of his successor, the First Party Secretary Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971), represented a new period of gradually increased freedom in the history of the Soviet Union. This increased freedom also involved the field of literary discussion and creation. After Khrushchev's "Secret speech" to the Twentieth Party Congress of February 1956, in which he denounced some of the excesses of Stalin's regime, the Soviet writers' relationship with the political authorities gradually changed, becoming somewhat more relaxed.

In the history of modern Tajik literature, the 1950s are particularly significant for the appearance of Ayni's final major work, the *Yoddosht-ho*. There is no doubt that Ayni's memoirs represent an important stage in the evolution of modern Tajik litera-

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ture and the "standardization" of the Tajik literary language, but let us note that the popularity of this work has perhaps overshadowed the publication, in 1957, of a novel by Ikromi that arguably represents, more than Ayni's memoirs, a breakthrough in the history of modern Tajik literature. This novel is *Man gunahgoram* ("I am guilty"), which deals with problems of family, marital infidelity and morality.

As a native of Bukhara and a major Tajik representative of the genre of the historico-revolutionary novel set in Bukhara, Ikromi is probably more popular in Tajikistan for his novel *Dukhtar-i otash* ("Daughter of fire," 1960) rather than for *Man gunahgoram*.[22] Indeed, *Dukhtar-i otash*—dealing on the one hand with women's social position in Bukhara during the intellectual revolution and the social riots of the early twentieth century, and on the other hand with the effects of the Jadid movement on the educational system addressed to women—received wide critical acclaim in Tajikistan following its appearance, and still enjoys great popularity in the country.[23] Conversely, *Man gunahgoram* does not enjoy the same popularity, and, as denounced by Ikromi himself, soon after its publication it was targeted by some members of the Union of Writers of Tajikistan as lacking in ideological character.[24] Anyway, its literary value has been always recognized by both Soviet and post-Soviet Tajik scholars, according to whom this work is artistically one of the best novels in the history of Tajik literature and is to be considered as the first Tajik psychological novel.

Let us note that *Man gunahgoram* is also the first Tajik novel which is set within the borders of Soviet Tajikistan without being a Soviet "production novel" praising the collectivization of agriculture, as was the case, for example, of *Shodi* by Ikromi or *Navobod* by Ulughzoda. *Man gunahgoram* is set in the post-Stalin years in Lolazor, a village located not far from the capital Dushanbe, and in a sea of Tajik historical novels published in the post-Stalin decades it is the first novel to detail the everyday life of Tajik society of the time and its psychological dimension. Ikromi is especially successful here in his use of "inner monologue" (*monolog-i botini*), which reveals the attitudes, moods and personality of the main character of the novel, Anvar Salimov—the head of the elementary school in Lolazor—who feels guilty for having betrayed his wife Surayyo and denounces himself at the police station in his village.

Man gunahgoram is the first and the last novel by Ikromi treating contemporary issues. All the other novels that the author wrote thereafter are historico-revolutionary novels set in the Bukhara emirate. When analyzing Ikromi's fiction, it is important to keep in mind that the psychological dimension of the characters we find in *Man gunahgoram* continues in Ikromi's historico-revolutionary novels. Among these works, besides *Dukhtar-i otash*, one can cite *Duvozdah darvoza-yi Bukhoro* ("Twelve gates of Bukhara," 1969) and *Takht-i vozhgun* ("Upturned throne," 1974). The Bukharan revolutionary events of the early twentieth century and the psychological dimension of the characters represent not only the common denominator of Ikromi's novels, but also the main scene of his most popular stories, notably *Tor-i ankabut* ("Cobweb," 1960).

As with Ayni, Ikromi also favored his native city of Bukhara as a setting for his fictional narrative. In particular, there is a certain analogy between the two author's

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

beloved Bukhara: in fact, they both tend to fictionalize the historical period of their own childhood and early adolescence there, which in the case of Ayni is the late 1880s and 1890s and in the case of Ikromi is the late 1910s and early 1920s. For political reasons, both authors were forced to leave Bukhara and moved to Samarkand (in the case of Ayni) and Dushanbe (in the case of Ikromi).

To some extent it is arguable that Ikromi's fiction shows the acceleration of a process already discernible in Ayni's novels and stories: the partially autobiographical basis of the fiction began in fact to acquire a figurative or symbolic meaning, as well as a more conscious psychological dimension. Simultaneously it can be seen that the "revolutionary fiction" began to acquire some of the features of the "historical fiction"; that is to say, it is related to the past of the Tajik people—represented by Bukhara—and is conscious of the need to interpret that very Bukharan revolutionary past to the present of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic of the post-Stalin period, with its newly established capital Dushanbe.

The social and psychological scrutiny of the Tajiks' everyday life that began in the mid-1950s with Ikromi's *Man gunahgoram* strengthened and developed still further in the 1960s and 1970s, especially in the fiction of Fazliddin Muhammadiev.[25] Unlike Ayni and Ikromi, Muhammadiev did not write any historical novels, and he rarely chose Bukhara as a setting for his fiction, which is mainly short fiction.[26] In his works, the city of Dushanbe, its Soviet-style apartment blocks, its parks and suburbs, began to acquire a certain personality in the Tajik literary field.

Muhammadiev was born in Samarkand and in 1947 moved to Dushanbe, where he began his career as a journalist. He enters the literary field in the mid–1950s with a series of documentary essays (*ocherk* or *qissa-yi mustanad*)[27] of a social and socio-political character, among which are *Rais-i nav* ("The new boss," 1955) and *Muhojiron* ("Immigrants," 1956), both dealing with the village economy and the development of agriculture in Soviet Tajikistan. By blending journalism and memoir, Muhammadiev began his career by analyzing the merit of various events through the use of the documentary essay, passing later to the genres of the story and the novella.

Though at the beginning of his literary career he was popular for having introduced the genre of detective fiction in Tajik literature—notably with the story *Tir-i khok-khurda* ("The dusty arrow," 1960)—with the passage of time he gained a reputation as a writer committed to show the generation gap between the Tajik elderly and young, namely between the generation who grew up during the restrictive Stalinist period and that which experienced the gradually increased freedom of the post-Stalin years.

Bridging the gap between the Stalinist generation and young Tajik adults of the 1960s and 1970s, for whom the Stalinist period was an impersonal historical event, is certainly an uneasy task. Muhammadiev's most successful attempts at doing so are represented by the stories *Odamon-i kuhna* ("Old people," 1962) and *Dar on dunyo* ("In that world," 1965), and by the novel *Palata-yi kunjaki* ("Next room," 1974).

In *Odamon-i kuhna*, set in the early 1960s in the suburbs of Dushanbe, the life and habits of old Tajik people are told by a young Tajik journalist. In *Dar on dunyo*, set in the same period, a young Tajik doctor—an atheist—relates the pilgrimage of elderly

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Tajik Muslims to Mecca and Medina. The two stories share the respectful attitude that the young expressed towards their elders, even when, as in the case of *Dar on dunyo*, their religious beliefs are not the same.

During his career as a fiction writer Muhammadiev wrote only one novel, *Palata-yi kunjaki*, which is also the second psychological novel in the history of modern Tajik literature (the first is the already mentioned *Man gunahgoram* by Ikromi). The novel is set in the 1970s in a room of a hospital in Dushanbe, where there are four people of different ages, and thus differing past experiences: a former president of the Vigilance and Monitoring Committee of the city of Dushanbe; a retired factory worker; a former soldier of the Second World War; and a twenty-seven-year-old film maker. They all have had an ictus and have been cured by a young doctor. The three elderly patients talk to each other about the Soviet life under Stalinism and during de-Stalinization. The younger patient listens to them in silence, joining in the conversation rarely. Muhammadiev represents himself as being in the next room in the hospital and listening to the talk of the four patients. The author wrote this novel when he himself was in a hospital in Dushanbe for treatment of a tumor that some years later would lead to his death in his fifties.

In terms of their general perspective, one may state that in most of Muhammadiev's fictional works there is a reappraisal of the elderly, who are considered to be of great value for society. In contrast, in the early Soviet period the elderly had been shown in a bad light in the Tajik literary field (and in the Soviet literary field in general), because they represented the "old" world of the emirs, and not the new Soviet world that sought to invest above all in young people.

Conclusions

In the Tajik literary field, Bukhara and Samarkand are connected with a large number of novelists and poets who are considered to be some of the most important representatives of Soviet Tajik literature. Many Tajik fictional narratives or collections of poems which were published in Dushanbe during the Soviet period are set in Bukhara (to a lesser extent in Samarkand), and their authors were born and lived in those cities before moving, from the 1930s onwards, to Dushanbe. Of the three authors considered in this article, two were born in Bukhara (Ayni and Ikromi), the other was born in Samarkand (Muhammadiev). Besides them, one can mention the poet and political activist Ahmadjon Hamdi (1875–1946), the poet and pedagogue Mirzo Abdulvohid Munzim (1877–1934), the poets Payrav Sulaymoni (1899–1933), Muhammadjon Rahimi (1901–68) and Gulchehra Sulaymonova (1928–2003), all of Bukharan origin. Moreover, the poet Turaqul Zehni (1891–1983) and the poet and playwright Abdusalom Dehoti (1911–62) were natives of Samarkand.

With his stories and novels condensed into the decade of the Stalin's purges—the 1930s—Ayni laid the foundations of modern Tajik fiction, which in those years seems to have developed in a fairly conscious way towards its realistic feature, being not par-

https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ticularly affected by the so-called "socialist realism," hailed as the reigning style of all Soviet literature in 1934.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the novel in Tajikistan became a dominant cultural institution in a way it had not been thirty years earlier, when Ayni's novels were published. Most of the Tajik novels that appeared during the de-Stalinization period were historical novels, mainly portraying revolutionary events of the past, in many cases set in Bukhara in the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the October revolution of 1917.

Among the non-historical Tajik novels the most significant are Ikromi's *Man gunahgoram* and Muhammadiev's *Palata-yi kunjaki*, set in Dushanbe or its suburbs, and detailing the everyday life and psychological dimensions of Tajik society in the 1950s and 1970s, respectively. They are, more specifically, the first two psychological novels in the history of modern Tajik literature.

It is not by accident that when placing the "age of the story" (*davron-i povest'*) in the history of Soviet Tajik literature, the well-known Tajik scholar Muhammadjon Shukurov (1925–2012) stated that from the publication of *Man gunahgoram* in 1957 to the appearance of *Palata-yi kunjaki* in 1974 not a single novel depicting the life of the contemporary Tajik society was been published in the country.[28] In fact, all the Tajik novels that appeared between the mid-1950s and the mid-1970s were historical novels. The fictional genre that in those years had detailed the daily behaviors and material life of the contemporary Tajik society was the story. By means of this genre, Tajik fiction writers described the various facets of their society in the twenty years that followed the death of Stalin, a period that became the landmark of a new era of increased freedom in the history of the Soviet Union.

Notes

1. General works on Soviet Tajik literature that appeared in English are the following: Bečka, "Tajik Literature"; De Chiara and Grassi, *Iranian Languages and Literatures*, 259–336; Hitchins, "Modern Tajik Literature"; and Perry, "Tajik Literature: Seventy Years." In Tajik, see Tursunzoda and Ma'sumi, *Ta'rikh-i adabiyot-i soveti-yi tojik*.
2. Relevant studies on Soviet Russian literature to be consulted are Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature since Stalin*; Clark, *The Soviet Novel*; and Dunham, *In Stalin's Time*.
3. For a detailed discussion of Tajik nationalism following the birth of Tajikistan in the early Soviet period, see Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*; and Jahangiri, "The Premises for the Construction."
4. From 1929 to 1961, Dushanbe was known as Stalinobod.
5. Complete or selected works by these three fiction writers that appeared in Tajikistan are the following: Ayni, *Kulliyot*; Ikromi, *Asar-ho-yi muntakhab*; and Muhammadiev, *Kulliët*.
6. The term *palata* ("room") is a Russian loan-word.
7. For example, the novel *Yatim* ("Orphan") by Ayni was first published in serial form in 1939 in the journal *Bo roh-i lenini* ("Lenin's path"), and appeared as a stand-alone book in 1940, in Stalinobod (Dushanbe). Also the first volume of the novel *Shodi* ("Shodi") by Ikromi, before appearing in book form in 1940 in Stalinobod, was first published in 1936 in the journal *Baro-yi adabiyot-i sotsialisti* ("For a socialist literature"), and in 1939 in the newspaper *Tojikiston-i surkh* ("Red Tajikistan").
8. Information on this and the other periodicals treated in this paragraph draws on Usmonov and Davronov, *Ta'rikh-i matbuot-i tojik*, 45–51.

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9. Vositzoda, "Irfon," 515.
10. Ghafurov, "Maorif," 158. The publishing house *Maorif* was founded in Dushanbe in 1958 with the name *Nashriyot-i davlati-yi adabiyot-i ta'limi-yu pedagogi*; it changed its name to *Maorif* in 1967. It was incorporated into the publishing house *Irfon* from 1964 to 1975.
11. Ostonova, "Adib," 107.
12. The bibliography on Ayni is substantial if we consider the Tajik, Uzbek and Russian-language sources. There exists a two-volume bibliography on his life and works (Azizqulov and Mullojonova, *Fehrast-i asar-ho-yi S. Ayni*; Mullojonova and Fayzulloev, *Fehrast-i asar-ho-yi S. Ayni*). See also the eleven-volume collection Shukurov *et al.*, *Jashnnoma-yi Ayni*; and Shakuri [Shukurov], *Ravshan-gar-i buzurg*. In Russian, see Braginskij, *Sadriddin Ajni*. In English, see Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni*.
13. *Ghulomon* was first published in Uzbek in Tashkent in 1934, under the title of *Qullar*, and appeared in Tajik in Stalinobod in 1935. *Jallodon-i Bukhoro* was first published in serial form in Uzbek in 1922, in the Samarkand newspaper *Inqilob* ("Revolution"), under the title of *Bukhoro zhallodlar-i*, being published in Tajik in Stalinobod just in 1937.
14. Perry and Lehr, "Introduction," 3.
15. Cf. Bečka, *Tajik Literature*, 562; Bečka, *Sadriddin Ayni*, 51–2; and Bečka, "The Historical Veracity and Topicality."
16. Ayni, *Dakhunda: Roman*; Ayni, *Ghulomon: Roman*; Ayni, *Yatim: Roman*.
17. For a more comprehensive analysis of the story *Marg-i sudkhur*, see Bečka, "The Historical Veracity and Topicality"; and Grassi, "Alcune considerazioni sul racconto." For a comparison between Ayni's *Marg-i sudkhur* and Sadeq Hedayat's *Haji Aka*, see Bečka, "Two Outstanding Satires."
18. The Bukharan intellectuals and Russian orientalists who sat on the Committee for the Latinization of Tajik were Abdurrauf Fitrat, Mirzo Abdulvohid Munzim, Aleksandr A. Freyman, and Aleksandr A. Semyonov. See Perry, "Script and Scripture," 6–7.
19. The article was originally published in the newspaper *Ovoz-i tojik* (September 5, 1927). It is included in Ayni, *Muntakhab-i asar-ho-yi ilmi*, 22–4.
20. Perry, "From Persian to Tajik to Persian," 283. See also Lazard, "Caractères distinctifs de la langue tadjik," 117–86.
21. Bečka, "Problème de l'écriture au Tadjikistan," 46.
22. For more information on Ikromi's fiction, see Shukurov and Demidchik, *Nasr-i Jalol Ikromi*; and Solehov, "Jalol Ikromi va Bukhoro."
23. *Dukhtar-i otash* was published in several reprints in Tajikistan, the most recent appeared in Dushanbe in 2009, on the centenary celebrations of Ikromi's birth. During the Soviet period, the novel was translated into Russian and many other languages of the former Soviet Union. There also exists a French translation (Ikrami, *La fille du feu*), and a translation/linguistic adaptation in farsi (Ikrami, *Firuzeh*).
24. Ikromi, "Dar bora-yi nasr-i ta'rikhi-yi revolyutsioni," 167–8.
25. For more information on Muhammadiev's fiction, see Nabavi, "Maqom-i Fazliddin Muhammadiev."
26. There exists an English translation of one of Muhammadiev's short stories. See Muhammadiev, "The Duel."
27. In the history of modern Tajik literature, the genre of the documentary essay, which was very popular during the Soviet period, is commonly referred to by the Russian loanword *ocherk* (lit. "essay, study") in the Tajik publications of the Soviet period, whereas those of the post-Soviet years are called *qissa-yi mustanad*.
28. Shukurov, *Nasr-i realisti*, 360.

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https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2017.1322943 Published online by Cambridge University Press

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