



Section 4. Sociology

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SOVIET IDEOLOGY AND BUKHARA TOPONYMS: THE CASE OF STREETS AND GUZARS (TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD UNITS)

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Abstract

This article discusses the impact of ideological policies implemented during the Soviet era on the toponymic system of the city of Bukhara.

It is well known that the names of Bukhara's traditional neighborhoods (guzars), developed over centuries, reflect not only geographical features but also embody layers of local history, culture, and social structure. The Soviet government aimed to erase the unique national memory by renaming residential areas. For this reason, many existing local names were replaced with Russian or ideologically charged ones; streets were named after figures such as Lenin, Marx, and Frunze. These changes were interpreted as a tool for shaping a new social consciousness among the population. Based on archival documents, historical maps, and statistical data, the article examines how this renaming policy was implemented in stages and analyzes the social resonance it generated within society. In the first half of the 20th century, the city of Bukhara had more than 200 neighborhoods (guzars). After the establishment of Soviet rule, one of the methods used to rapidly instill communist ideology into public consciousness was the elimination of these centuries-old neighborhood names. Streets and squares were renamed to reflect communist ideals, significant dates in Soviet history, and the names of prominent communist leaders and revolutionaries.

Keywords: *communist ideology, guzar (traditional neighborhood), internationalism, Aspgardon, urban space*

Introduction

The period of Soviet rule represents a historically transformative phase in the history of Bukhara. It is well known that the Soviet government's general policy aimed at unifying society – particularly through the renaming

of local neighborhoods (guzars) and streets in accordance with communist ideology – had a negative impact on national traditions that had developed over centuries. This can clearly be observed in the example of how the historical neighborhood names of the city of

Bukhara were changed. When studying the history of any city, information about its *ma-hallas* and *guzars* serves as a vital source that reflects its past. The formation of Bukhara's *guzars* was influenced by factors such as the occupations of the local population, the climate of the region, and its geographical features. For instance, names like Havzi Nav, Ko'chai Bodom, Eshoni Imlo, Chuqur Mahalla, Zargaron, Hammomi Kunjak, Suzangaron, Masjidi Balandi, Uruson, Hammomi Kappa, and Khoja Zayniddin illustrate this connection. However, the Soviet policy aimed at the gradual erasure of historical names and their replacement with ideologically motivated labels, which had a detrimental effect on the national cultural heritage.

Literature Review and Methodology

Various studies have been conducted on the historical and political aspects of toponymic changes in Bukhara during the Soviet period, which help to gain a deeper understanding of the process of renaming streets and neighborhoods in the city. Notably, the works of Orientalist scholars such as V. V. Bartold, M. E. Masson, and A. Rempel have shed light on the transformation of the urban environment during the Soviet period. Meanwhile, A. G. Sukhareva, Sh. Shishkin, and a number of Uzbek researchers have analyzed the socio-cultural significance of Bukhara's *guzars*. In the preparation of this article, the methods of historical analysis, source criticism, comparative analysis, and toponymic analysis were employed. In addition, based on archival data, the stages of the naming policy implemented during the Soviet period were examined.

Discussion

During the reforms carried out by the city administration in Bukhara in 1925–1926, existing small neighborhoods (*guzars*) were consolidated, and a new list consisting of 192 enlarged *guzars* was compiled (Sukhareva, O. A., 69). According to archival data, there were 188 *guzars* recorded in the city of Bukhara in 1927 (Bukhara Regional Archive, Fund 37, Inventory 1, 8). This discrepancy is explained by the fact that different criteria were used for registering and classifying the *guzars*. As a result, both the names and the number of *gu-*

zars changed. In 1927, under the supervision of the Bukhara City Council, a special working group was established to determine the exact number of *guzars* and households. As a result of their work, it was revealed that 15 *guzars* in the old city had not been registered, and that up to 1,000 households were residing in these areas (Bukhara Regional State Archive, Fund 37, Inventory 1, 38). Thus, by the late 1920s, the administrative-territorial system of *guzars* in Bukhara had undergone significant changes, with both their names and numbers being redefined. It is known that, since the medieval period, many streets were named after the professions of their residents (e.g., weavers, soap makers, nail makers, carvers, corpse washers, etc.), while others were named after notable individuals, such as saints, sheikhs, and *khojas* who had lived on those streets (examples include Ghoziyon, Khoja Tabband, and Rashid). Some *guzar* names reflected their geographical location – for instance: Chighiri Joibor (a reference to a water-lifting device), Havzi Nav (new pond), Chuqur (deep), Obi Ravon (clear water), Peshkhona, Hammomi Kunjak (a corner bathhouse), Chor Kharos (four mills), Ko'chai Bodom (Almond Street), Darvozai Sallahona (Gate of the Butchers), Takya (in front of the Persian mosque), and Khiaban (Boulevard). Some *guzars* were named to indicate the presence of specific ethnic or tribal groups residing in those areas, such as: Urganjjon, Dasarbandon (Persian slaves who wore turbans), Shahri Nav (new quarter in Joibor), Zangi Arab, Kattagon, Durmon, Kalmakiyon, Miyankuliyon, Uruson, and Serakhsiyon.

Tribal communities had lived in these neighborhoods for centuries, and their presence was passed down from generation to generation. Notably, in the 10th century, the area where Yemeni Arabs once lived – known as Poyi Zindon *guzar* – was still home to around 50 Arab families at the beginning of the 20th century. Some *guzars* retained their names as a reflection of historical places that had long since faded from memory. For example, Jo'i Zardi Joibori was named after an ancient canal, while Qarchighayi Joibori referred to the area where the Joibari sheikhs kept falcons and hawks for hunting during the reign of Abdullakhan. The name Pakhsah (meaning "clay wall") originated from an

old wooden fortification. In many cases, the names of guzars were associated with nearby mosques, madrasahs, or shrines located within the neighborhood.

The re-registration of *guzars* was conducted in 1927 and again in 1929, during which the number of neighborhoods was gradually reduced at each stage.

This policy aimed not only to enlarge and consolidate traditional *mahalla* structures under centralized administrative control but also, and more importantly, to reshape the ideological structure of society by assigning Soviet-friendly names to these neighborhoods. The main policy behind the renaming of streets and *guzars* consisted of the following principles: **Ideological expression:** The Soviet authorities sought centralized control and standardization, which led to the uniformity of street names that reflected communist ideals. Streets and squares were renamed to commemorate key dates in Soviet history, as well as to honor prominent communist leaders and revolutionaries.

For example, in 1924, Mirzo Narzullo Guzar was renamed “Red Pioneers,” symbolizing the promotion of the Pioneer movement and the ideological upbringing of the younger generation in the spirit of communism. **Secularization:** (“Secularization” is the process of reducing the influence of religion in public life and replacing it with administrative, ideological, or rational systems of order. (See: *Philosophical Encyclopedic Dictionary*. – Moscow: “Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya”, 1983, p. 599). “Secularization” is the process of reducing the influence of religion in public life and replacing it with administrative, ideological, or rational systems of order. (See: *Philosophical Encyclopedic Dictionary*. – Moscow: “Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya”, 1983, p. 599).) Many cities and regions – particularly during the late 1920s and early 1930s – underwent significant transformations during campaigns aimed at erasing traces of religious belief.

For example, the renaming of Eshoni Pir Street to “Tsentralnaya” (Central Street) il-

lustrates how historical and religious memory was erased and replaced with neutral names devoid of spiritual meaning, instead reflecting administrative functions or urban infrastructure. The renaming of Sarrafon Street to “Aptekarskaya” (Names of streets, settlements, and cultural-educational centers in the areas of citizens’ assemblies of mahallas in Bukhara city. 2007, 27) symbolized a shift in the representation of various economic and domestic structures – pushing aside the memory of traditional crafts and professions, and replacing it with symbols of “Soviet medicine” and “modern public services.

Political and Social Personalization:

The process of renaming streets was part of broader political control aimed at affirming Soviet ideology and historical narrative. This included a policy of removing references to historical figures associated with the pre-revolutionary period. For instance, Ravganga-Guzar was renamed after Dzerzhinsky, Kokuli Kalon Guzar after Krupskaya, Khoja Rushnoi Guzar after Kuibyshev, and Havzi Nav Guzar was renamed Ordzhonikidze.

The assignment of names of Soviet figures in science, culture, and politics to guzars served to present Russian cultural heritage as a model of “Soviet universal culture”. In particular, Tupkhona Guzar was renamed after Maxim Gorky (founder of proletarian literature and a symbol of “new socialist literature” in Soviet ideology); Boboyi Nonkash Guzar was renamed after Mikhail Lomonosov (an Enlightenment thinker and scientist, one of the founders of Russian science and the founder of Moscow University); Joibori Guzar was renamed after Pyotr Tchaikovsky (a major Russian classical composer, representative of symphonic and operatic art); Boboyi Poradoz Guzar was renamed after David Kaylakov (a Bukharan Jewish scholar, linguist, and translator); Bogishamol Guzar received the name of Modest Mussorgsky (a representative of Russian national music and author of the opera Boris Godunov); and Imom Qozikhon Guzar was renamed after Anton Makarenko (an educator and theorist of Soviet education and pedagogy).

Through the use of such names, the idea was instilled in the public that “Soviet culture possesses broad, universal human heritage.”

Results

The analysis reveals that the main goal of the policy of renaming Bukhara's *guzars* was to shape a new socialist worldview in the public consciousness, while erasing national and religious memory. Names of individuals who served Soviet ideology – revolutionaries, party leaders, and figures of Russian culture and science – were assigned to Bukhara's historical neighborhoods. Through such personalized naming, ideas about the “universal,” “progressive,” and “modern” nature of Soviet culture were instilled in the minds of the population. At the same time, tradition-

al names based on ethnographic, historical, occupational, and religious characteristics gradually disappeared.

In conclusion, the policy of renaming *guzars* in Soviet-era Bukhara was not merely an administrative action, but rather a purposeful cultural and ideological intervention. This process served as a means of shaping a new urban identity for the city and controlling collective memory. The replacement of local and national toponyms with ideologically driven names clearly demonstrates how toponymy functioned as a powerful tool of Soviet political and cultural influence.

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