

Title: Soviet Tajik Literature: Between Russia and Iran
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In September 1920, the Russian Red army overthrew the Emir of Bukhara. This event initiated a decade of radical change for Central Asians. As new Soviet republics were established, two demands were placed upon Central Asian intellectuals: to define themselves along national criteria, and to create a literature that promoted this new nationalistic concept. As ethnic Persians, Tajik writers of the 1920s also found it especially necessary, in embracing their new Soviet identity, to redefine their relationship with Iran.

This paper analyzes the formation of Soviet Tajik literature through the early works of the fathers of Soviet Tajik prose and poetry: Sadriddin Aini and Abulkosim Lahuti. In Aini's historical works, Tajik identity is intimately bound to the linguistic and cultural traditions of Persia; in his fictional works, Aini expands this connection by describing Tajik identity in terms of Central Asian revolutionary reform. Lahuti, by contrast, adopts Classical Persian poetry, and adapts it to serve the Soviet message. In these ways, Aini and Lahuti founded a new Tajik literature, which blended pre-Soviet Central Asian revolutionary thought, classic Persian poetry, and Soviet ideology. By doing so, I will argue, Aini and Lahuti became exemplars of the new Soviet Tajik writer: one who introduced Soviet concepts into Tajik literature, renegotiated the relationship between Tajikistan and Iran, and provided a sustainable model of what it meant to be Tajik.