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Artículos

The role of the people's liberation movement in contemporary culture, politics, and identity formation: A comparative analysis of Central Asian countries

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El papel del movimiento de liberación popular en la cultura, la política y la formación de la identidad contemporáneas: un análisis comparativo de los países de Asia Central

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Abstract. The aim of the study was to highlight the main stages of the Basmachi movement and its further impact on the history of the Central Asian region and, in particular, Kyrgyzstan. People's liberation movements of the 20th century in Central Asian countries, such as the Basmachi, had a profound and lasting impact on the formation of modern cultural identity, political institutions and religious beliefs. The study analysed the preconditions for the beginning of the Basmachi uprising, their relationship with the Soviet authorities and the reasons for the uprising's defeat. Special attention was paid to the ideology, structure, and methods of struggle of these movements, as well as their leaders and participants. The Basmachi movement was studied as a central element of resistance that united various social groups and played an important role in resisting Russian imperialism. The reasons for the division of Turkestan into Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan and how the division affected the Basmachi movement, and the future of the region were also examined. The conflict in the Fergana Valley has a great resonance in the Central Asian region today. The study reveals the origins of the conflict, its causes and the relationship with the Basmachi movement in the region. The study shows both historical events and symbols of the Basmachi movement, which are being integrated into the contemporary cultural and political discourse of Central Asian countries,

forming a new post-Soviet identity. A characteristic feature of this identity is the rehabilitation of the Basmachi as heroes of the national liberation movement and a return to a traditional way of life with the restoration of the culture before the advent of Soviet power and the Russian Empire.

Keywords: Basmachi; colonialism; imperialism; national-identity; kurbashi; bourgeoisie; socialism.

Resumen. El objetivo del estudio fue destacar las principales etapas del movimiento Basmachi y su posterior impacto en la historia de la región de Asia Central, en particular en Kirguistán. Los movimientos de liberación popular del siglo XX en países de Asia Central, como el Basmachi, tuvieron un impacto profundo y duradero en la formación de la identidad cultural, las instituciones políticas y las creencias religiosas modernas. El estudio analizó las condiciones previas al inicio del levantamiento Basmachi, su relación con las autoridades soviéticas y las razones de su derrota. Se prestó especial atención a la ideología, la estructura y los métodos de lucha de estos movimientos, así como a sus líderes y participantes. El movimiento Basmachi se estudió como un elemento central de la resistencia que unió a diversos grupos sociales y desempeñó un papel importante en la resistencia al imperialismo ruso. También se examinaron

las razones de la división del Turquestán en Uzbekistán, Turkmenistán, Tayikistán, Kirguistán y Kazajistán, y cómo esta división afectó al movimiento Basmachi y al futuro de la región. El conflicto en el Valle de Ferganá tiene una gran resonancia en la región centroasiática actual. El estudio revela los orígenes del conflicto, sus causas y su relación con el movimiento basmachi en la región. El estudio muestra tanto los acontecimientos históricos como los símbolos del movimiento basmachi, que se están integrando en el discurso cultural y político

contemporáneo de los países centroasiáticos, conformando una nueva identidad postsoviética. Un rasgo característico de esta identidad es la rehabilitación de los basmachi como héroes del movimiento de liberación nacional y el retorno a un modo de vida tradicional con la restauración de la cultura anterior a la llegada del poder soviético y el Imperio ruso.

Palabras clave: *basmachi; colonialismo; imperialismo; identidad nacional; kurbashi; burguesía; socialismo.*

Introduction

After entering Turkestan in 1873, the Russian Empire turned the region into its colony and established an authoritarian regime. In accordance with the colonial policy, any manifestations of free-thinking were suppressed, sometimes even by very harsh methods. The population was kept away from educational institutions for a long time to avoid the formation of national consciousness. Religious issues were strictly controlled, but despite the repressive policies, uprisings periodically broke out in the region.

The largest uprising was in 1916, when the regular army was sent to Turkestan to suppress it. This uprising was brutally suppressed, and according to various estimates, between 200,000 and 500,000 people were killed. The policy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in this region did not change significantly and was also colonial in nature, which further impoverished the population. This became the basis for the uprisings known as the Basmachi movement.

The Basmachi movement, which was active in Central Asia from the end of World War I until the mid-1920s, was a form of struggle for independence from Soviet rule. This movement was suppressed by the Soviet system and was largely viewed negatively in Soviet historiography as counter-revolutionary and anti-Soviet. However, thanks to the studies of modern historians and ethnographers, the role of the Basmachi movement in the history of Central Asia is gradually being reinterpreted. At the same time, elements of the Basmachi movement are reflected in the cultural traditions and symbols that form part of the identity of modern Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

While there are a number of studies on the Basmachi movement, A. Şener (2023) has analysed the influence of the Basmachi movement on Kyrgyz literature, especially Soviet-era novels covering this national liberation movement. The author also revealed how Kyrgyz novels reflect this movement and how Soviet propaganda influenced the portrayal of the Basmachi as brigands. A. Thomas (2021) explored the impact of the British Empire and its agents on Turkmenistan 1918-1919, analysing British intervention in the Trans-Caspian and its impact on

Turkmen autonomy, comparing British and Soviet methods of governance, and showing different approaches to colonized peoples, which highlights the complexity and multi-layered nature of the process of imperial disintegration. S. Günther (2022) conducted a detailed analysis of how ideas of deterritorialization, developed in different cultural and academic contexts, influenced perceptions of Turkmenistan. The author looked at different stages: from the colonial period, through Soviet rule to independence.

S. Misra and T.G.K. Yadab (2023) examined the historical and political transformations of Central Asia in the context of Soviet expansion and its geopolitical significance. The authors analyse how the territorial and administrative changes that occurred after the fall of the Russian Empire and during the Soviet period influenced the formation of Central Asia's political identity and international relations. T.K. Blauvelt (2013) analysed the relationship between military mobilization and national identity in the USSR. The author investigated how Soviet military mobilization influenced the formation and perception of national identity among different peoples and regions of the USSR. M. Bektursunov (2022) analysed the relationship between Kazakhs and Kyrgyz and its impact on the formation of Soviet Kyrgyzstan. The author showed that Kyrgyz elites cooperated with Kazakhs but also tried to avoid marginalization, especially after the administrative division of Turkestan in 1924. This division and changes in national identities led to a breakdown in socio-economic unity between the regions. The study emphasizes the complexity of the formation of Soviet republics and the influence of interethnic relations on this process. H.B. Paksoy (1995) investigated the Basmachi and its impact on Central Asia. Validi Ahmet Zaki, a key figure in the Basmachi movement, provides a unique insider's perspective on the events and processes that shaped this period. Validi Ahmet Zaki, as an active participant, documents the Basmachi struggle against Soviet rule in an attempt to preserve the national identity and autonomy of Central Asia.

E. Naby (1986) examines the idea of jihad as a form of resistance to the communist regime in Central Asia. The author analyses how jihad was used to mobilize the population against the Soviet regime, emphasizing the religious and ideological aspects of this struggle. The study is based on a thorough analysis of the sources, which gives the article a scholarly value. However, the author focuses mainly on the religious aspect, leaving out other important factors such as socio-economic conditions and the role of local leaders.

The aim of the study was to examine the role of national liberation movements, particularly the Basmachi movement, in shaping modern identity and influencing the culture of Central Asia. The study aimed to analyse the historical factors that influenced the development of these movements and their legacy in the post-Soviet context. To achieve this goal, the following objectives were set: to investigate the role of the Basmachi movement in the formation of national identity in the countries of Central Asia, to conduct a comparative analysis of approaches to assessing the Basmachi movement in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, and to evaluate its impact on public consciousness and historical memory in these countries. To assess the impact of the post-Soviet legacy on modern concepts of national identity and their reflection in national ideology and symbolism.

1. Materials and Methods

The theoretical framework of the study is based on the concepts of national liberation movements, postcolonialism and theories of resistance. Firstly, the theory of nationalism, in particular, the concept of G. Ernest (1983), who sees nationalism as a product of industrialization and modernization, where national identity is formed through cultural narratives and shared experiences. An important role in understanding the situation in Central Asia is played by the concept of “Orientalism” by E.W. Said (1985), which, in the context of Central Asian countries, provided an insight into how national liberation movements struggled against external threats in an attempt to shape new national narratives and strengthen national identity.

This study adopted a comprehensive approach to analyse the role of the Basmachi movement in Central Asian countries. The study was divided into three stages, the first stage was to examine the historical context of the origins of the Basmachi movement in Turkestan and to analyse the literature of the period. The next stage was the study of the Basmachi movement itself in its historical context and the study of the entire body of literature, as well as the consideration of the Soviet, Kyrgyz and Western historiography of the subject. The final stage was a study of the implications for modern Kyrgyzstan and the impact of the movement on cultural policy, and how it is presented by contemporary researchers. During the research the method of comparison was used to identify the correlation of ethnic, social, religious and cultural features that influenced the evolution of the Basmachi movement as a whole, the specificity of the Basmachi movement in different regions is considered.

The specific-historical method was also used, which allowed, refraining from any unambiguous assessments of the opposing political sides, to depict the processes in the political life of the region in all their complexity and ambiguity, to take into account the whole complex of factors influencing the behaviour of social groups at a particular historical moment. A critical analysis of the sources was conducted to determine what postulates guided authors on both sides, be it the Basmachi, Soviet historiographers or Western historians, and numerous cases of marginalization and attempts to downplay the role of the insurgents in the attempt to defend independence were identified.

Analysing cultural representations became the main tool of the study. This was done by analysing in detail contemporary cultural products such as literary works, artworks, media materials and national celebrations. In particular, it was analysed how the Basmachi movement is represented in feature films, documentaries, and songs. This allowed us to identify how cultural representations reflect and shape perceptions of the Basmachi in contemporary Kyrgyz society.

The role of cultural identities was examined through the prism of how the Basmachi movement became part of Kyrgyzstan's national identity. To do so, the national historical memory and cultural narrative shaped by the history of the Basmachi movement were analysed. In particular, it examines how the historical experience of the Basmachi movement is integrated into national narratives and how this affects the political and social identities of contemporary Kyrgyz people. The study of the interaction between history and culture involved examining how the historical context of the Basmachi movement influences contemporary cultural and social processes. It analysed how different aspects of Basmachi history interact with contemporary cultural and political phenomena in Kyrgyzstan. This helped to identify how historical events shape cultural

practices and political beliefs in contemporary society. In addition, a comparative analysis was conducted with other post-Soviet states such as Ukraine and Poland that have experienced similar historical processes. This allowed identifying common and distinctive features in the formation of national identities and cultural narratives in the region.

2. Results

The end of the twentieth century was a turning point in the history of both Eastern Europe and the world, caused by the fall of the Soviet Union, dubbed the evil empire by Reagan. The collapse of the Soviet Union was marked by numerous social cataclysms. But one of the positive consequences of the fall of the USSR was that together with it its ideology and the policy of imperialism went into the past began to rethink the history of the twentieth century, because much of it was fabricated by Soviet historiography in favour of ideology. Soviet historians did not ignore the national movements on the territory of Turkestan (the territory of modern Central Asia) nicknamed in a derogatory form “басмачи”. Today, the term “басмачи” is in common use in national and international literature, denoting a specific social phenomenon of the first half of the twentieth century in the history of Central Asia. At the same time, it should be recalled that the Russian term “басмач” is an Orientalist term and is of Turkic origin. It derives from the Turkic verb with the base “бас”, which has a wide range of meanings such as “to push”, “to press”, “to stamp”, “to set the tone” and “to attack” (often with the aim of robbery). The name of the figure also derives from this verb base and in most Turkic languages sounds like “басмачи” (or “басмаджи”), i.e., “one who attacks or pushes” (with the aim of robbery).

The political, socio-economic and ethnic life and various regional features of Central Asia (in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) had already laid the foundations for the rise of the Basmachi movement. In Fergana, these peculiarities were reduced to socio-economic problems and distortions in the economic development of the region, leading to a general deterioration in the living conditions of the indigenous population.

In Eastern Bukhara and Khiva, the conflict between pastoralist and agrarian interests (complicated mainly by ethnic contradictions), the general economic backwardness of the region and its (geographical) frontier and isolation had the greatest impact. As a result, social tensions manifested themselves in the form of the development of the Basmachi movement, which would influence events in Central Asia after 1917, i.e., during the civil war and later in the 1920s and 1930s. The World War I and the subsequent rise in the price of food supplied from Europe and Russia had a negative impact on the economic establishment of the region, particularly the decree of the tsarist government, issued in the summer of 1916, to conscript the Muslim population of the Turkestan region to the front and engage them as soldiers in the Russian army. This decree actually became the occasion for the Central Asian uprising of 1916.

The assessment of the 1916 uprising by modern historians is as follows: “Tsar Nicholas II insisted on suppressing the uprising by any means. The punishers, sent to deal with the rebels, fully used the powers granted to them. For example, on 14 August in the village of Belovodskoye, a punitive detachment together with a group of settler militiamen killed more than 600 Kyrgyz, beating them with sticks, axes, and stones without using up a single bullet. On the same day, the

brutal punishers carried out several more raids in the neighbouring village of Borost, where they first robbed the Kyrgyz and then killed them all” (Penati, 2007).

The reasons for the uprising were the aforementioned social, as well as the dramatic changes in living conditions (often for the worse) in recent decades. The establishment of Soviet power in the former Turkestan region (early November 1917), the subsequent abrupt collapse of the old socio-economic and political order, and the lack of policy flexibility in the first years of the Soviet presence in the region (at a time when the brutal suppression of the 1916 uprising was still fresh in the minds of the locals).

After the February Revolution of 1917, the tsarist regime fell, and a national liberation movement began in Central Asia. The Turkestan Muslim Committee, which included representatives of various ethnic groups of the region, proclaimed the creation of the Kokand Autonomous Oblast. The main tasks of the Kokand Autonomous Oblast were to guarantee the ethnic rights and freedoms of the Muslim population, protect them from the Bolshevik dictatorship and preserve their cultural heritage. However, the newly formed state faced many difficulties, such as lack of resources, internal conflicts and external pressure from the Bolsheviks.

The Bolshevik authorities, wishing to maintain control over all regions of the former empire, considered autonomy dangerous and unacceptable, and in February 1918 Bolshevik troops under Mikhail Frunze invaded Kokand, and after several days of fierce fighting, Kokand was occupied. The core of Frunze’s troops were Armenians, who remembered the Ottoman genocide and therefore viewed all Muslims very negatively after the capture of Kokand, the Armenians began to behave very brutally, exterminating the local population according to various estimates, between 10,000 and 14,000 people died during the occupation, which in turn contributed to a very negative perception of the Bolsheviks by the local population (Thomas, 2021). The base of the first Basmachi detachments was the remnants of the armed formations of the Kokand autonomy.

After the liquidation of the Kokand autonomous government by the armed detachments of the Red Guard subordinated to the Soviet government in Tashkent, the remnants of the armed formations under the leadership of former militia chief Ergash (Ilgani, according to the Russian transcription) launched an active struggle of the Kokand government against the Soviet power. Thus, according to Ergash’s own testimony, the detachments of Usman Aliyev, known as Shir Muhammad-bek and Mukhtodin-bek, Palpi Botil, Makhkam Khoja, and later Bahram Khojaev, known as Khar Khoja, were active. Moreover, they were linked to an earlier insurgency in Fergana (the late 19th century uprising, the “Central Asian Uprising of 1916”) (Olcott, 1981). In this connection, it is appropriate to emphasize that the defeat of the Kokand autonomy was only a pretext for the rise of Basmachi movement in Fergana, the reasons being derived from the political and economic situation of the late 19th – early 20th century. During 1918 and most of 1919, the Basmachi movement in Fergana developed extremely successfully for the Basmachi, thanks to ethnic contradictions that worked in their favour (Drieu, 2017). The high expectations that the Kyrgyz had for the Soviet government immediately after the victory of the revolution were not fully fulfilled. Among local Bolshevik leaders with Russian citizenship, a world-view of alienation dominated (Killioglu, 2022).

The first attempts of local intellectuals in Turkestan to achieve national-ethnic independence were declared by the Bolsheviks as bourgeois-nationalist, counter-revolutionary activities and suppressed by the armed forces. This was the beginning of the open struggle of the population against the Soviet power, which later became known as the Basmachi movement. The acuteness of the long-term unresolved ethnic problems led to anti-Soviet sentiments on the part of the ideologists of the uprising. By mid-1918, the Basmachi movement covered almost the entire Fergana region and was a single hotbed until 1920, that is, until the beginning of the “Sovietisation” of the Khiva Khanate and the Bukhara Emirate (Amsler, 2009).

Almost every locality in Fergana had its own Basmachi detachment, many of which, as already mentioned, existed even before 1917. Basmachi detachments mainly used guerrilla tactics such as small ambushes, arson and assassinations, which made it difficult for the Soviet authorities to fight them (Table 1). The Fergana Front, formed by the Red Army command as part of the Turkestan Front to fight the Basmachi, was not a humble base. Even if Basmachi units were defeated by Red Army units at a particular point, they quickly gathered their forces from a distance and reappeared at the site of the struggle. The fact that the territory of Fergana itself was densely populated also made the fight against the Basmachi much more difficult for the Soviet authorities, who had safe positions only in the city and along the railway line.

Thus, in early 1920, the adjustment of the political line of the Soviet government in Turkestan and the military victory of the new-born Red Army over the Fergana Basmachi became the main factors in the emergence of the Basmachi movement. In addition to direct armed confrontation, the events of spring 1920 provided the Basmachi movement with another opportunity for coexistence with the Soviet government in Turkestan: the peace treaty signed on 7 March 1920 between the Soviet military command on the Fergana front and the Muslim military leader Madamin-bek. The Soviets attempted to divide the Basmachi movement and militarily exploit those who sided with them (Tekir, 2023).

Table 1. Leaders of the Basmachi movement

Kurbashi	Region of activity	Period of activity	The result of the confrontation with the Soviet power
Enver Pasha	Central Asia (Bukhara Emirate)	1921-1922	He died in battle with the Red Army in 1922
Ibrahim Bek	East Bukhara, Tajikistan	1918-1931	He was captured and executed by Soviet authorities in 1931
Muetdin-bek	East Bukhara, Tajikistan	1919-1922	He was surrendered in exchange for amnesty, executed in 1922
Madamin-bek	Fergana Valley	1918-1920	He died in battle with Soviet troops in 1920
Kurshimat	Fergana Valley	1918-1923	He immigrated to Afghanistan in 1923
Junaid Khan	Khorezm	1918-1928	He immigrated to Afghanistan and organized Basmachi raids in Central Asia until his death in 1938

Source: compiled by the authors based on E. Mawdsley (2021).

The Fergana Front Command planned to form an Uzbek cavalry brigade, adding Madamin Bey's Basmachi detachments to the Turkish and Tatar cavalry brigades. Subsequently, in the first half of 1920, the Basmachi detachments defected to the Soviet government and were incorporated directly into the Red Army as "Soviet Basmachi". The situation in Khorezm was different; the victory of the revolution did not allow the 'Khorezm Republic' to resolve the contradictions between Uzbeks and Turkmen based on conflicts over fertile land and water sources (Ozat, 2024).

Thus, by the mid-1920s, the Basmachi movement in Central Asia seemed to have completely disappeared. The "new economic policy" of the Soviet government played an important role in this. It opened markets, allowed private trade, abolished forced confiscation and provided enormous financial support to normalize economic life in Turkestan. Among the various concessions made by the Soviet government to the Muslim clergy were the restoration of Sharia courts, including in Fergana, and the clergy's participation in various political activities of the Soviet government (especially propaganda and negotiations with the Basmachi), and amnesty for Basmachi who voluntarily surrendered.

However, the Basmachi issue did not disappear from the Turkmen political life. Nor did it disappear from the pages of Turkmen newspapers. The main leaders of the Basmachi movement (Kurshimat, Ibrahim-Bek and Junaid Khan) and their supporters, as well as ordinary Basmachi who refused to stop resistance, were deported by the Soviet Union without being caught. Many civilians with their families and property emigrated along with the Basmachi.

From 1927 onwards, increased Sovietisation began in the Central Asian region with the abolition of Sharia courts, nationalization of Awqafs, and the closure of most mosques and religious schools (Markowitz and Radnitz, 2021). The economic reform during which the property of the rich kurbashi was taken away could not accept such policies. A new round of the Basmachi movement began in 1928, with about two hundred Basmachi vatagas, ranging in size from 20 to 100 people, being organized in southern Kyrgyzstan and Fergana. The most organized was the Kyrgyz kurbashi Janibek Kazy, who sent several regiments to suppress him. Similar uprisings began throughout former Turkmenistan (Blauvelt, 2013).

In 1931, the famous Ibrahim-bek returned, but even under conditions of increased collectivization this uprising could not gain the expected momentum and on 23 July 1931 his detachment was surrounded, after which he surrendered, and on 31 August he and about a hundred of his associates were shot (Mawdsley, 2021). From 1933, there were still raids of Basmachi from Persia, Afghanistan and China, but they were no longer of such a notable scale, and they also lost their political colouring; most of them were robbery raids (Engvall, 2020).

In parallel with the Basmachi uprising, ethnic contradictions between Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Russians in Fergana from the late XIX and even more so from the beginning of the XX century were aggravated. These contradictions were connected with economic reasons with the arrival of the Russian Empire and the application of colonialism policy, the gradual impoverishment of the local population began. In addition, conflicts began between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks for free land. The Uzbeks were sedentary farmers, and the Kyrgyz were nomadic herders, and because of the Uzbeks' settlement of the river valleys, the Kyrgyz herders also had to settle down, but the Uzbeks settled

the best land. This problem was highlighted even more during the armed uprisings of the Basmachi, when Kyrgyz and Uzbek groups fought against each other and refused to fight together against a common enemy, which had a significant impact on Kyrgyz self-determination, which is evident today (Kaliev, 2016; 2017).

These contradictions were skilfully exploited by the Soviet leadership by pitting Uzbeks and Kyrgyz against each other. For the most part, Kyrgyz Basmachi very often defected to the side of the Soviet army (Kamp and Pianciola, 2021). The very existence of Russia (through educational institutions and introducing some local population to democratic and nationalist traditions) contributed to the development of national identity. Although national identity was extremely weak, the growing interest in national identity led to the formation of a somewhat alternative national identity not only among the Russian people, but also among confessional and macro ethnic groups on the one hand, and among compatriots and tribes on the other (Bektursunov, 2022).

Colonial restructuring accelerated the process of ethnic integration to a certain extent, but at the same time had many negative aspects for the peoples of Central Asia. The sharp decline in the role of Khiva, Bukhara, later Samarkand and other cities as political and cultural centres, the collapse of the entire system of historically established relations, and the collapse of statehood. They disrupted the natural path of development and created new centres of tension, contradictions, and conflicts. Community and clan relations These relations are based on the unity of compatriots and are structured in a certain way at all levels of social relations. Social relations. This is especially relevant for southern Kyrgyzstan, where for centuries the patriotism of the inhabitants of the “valley” (“oasis”) has played an important role in the process of socialization and self-determination of people. With independence, Kyrgyzstan tried to rethink its history, without neglecting the Basmachi movement. It became relevant due to the contradictions that began to arise in society. The Basmachi movement turned from an ordinary uprising against the colonialism of the Russian Empire and the USSR into a movement for national freedom.

Today's historians see nothing less than the will and resistance of the Kyrgyz people to the Soviet Union than to the encroachment on their territories and fertile lands by Russian and Uzbek settlers. The problem of the partition of Fergana is still relevant today because it was divided without taking into account the residence of individual ethnic groups in certain territories. Such an unobvious step of the Soviet Union led to numerous problems in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Conflicts and even forced occupation of Kyrgyz land by Uzbeks and vice versa continue to occur (Markowitz and Radnitz, 2021).

The Kyrgyz people were divided into regions of the Turkestan ASSR (Semirechye, Sirdarya, Fergana, Samarkand, etc.) long before the establishment of Soviet power. In these regions, the Kyrgyz were an ethnic minority, and their ethnic and cultural interests were largely ignored. In the 1930s, one of the most serious problems for the rapidly growing Kyrgyz industry was the problem of human resources. Local ethnic labourers without knowledge and training were forced into low-skilled and low-paid jobs, and the formation of an ethnic working class was left to fend for itself (Misra and Yadab, 2023). The establishment of new agro-processing enterprises did not take into account demographic characteristics. For example, the low social mobility of nomads who had recently moved to settled areas. All this had a negative impact on the level of professional training

of the indigenous population. The number of workers at the enterprises built in Kyrgyzstan increased mainly due to experienced workers from Moscow, St. Petersburg and other industrial centres.

Turanian Socialist Party (STP) was founded in the early 1930s. Concerned about the difficult economic situation and the negative consequences of the Bolsheviks' agrarian policy, leading members of the national intelligentsia began to look for further ways to develop Kyrgyzstan, and the opposition attempted to publicize its ideological views in its programme entitled "Appeal", but failed to reach a wide audience. The appeal argued that the Kyrgyz nation had never been in a more catastrophic state in its 3,000-year history than under the rule of the Tsar's successors. The society was governed by a military monarchy dominated by secretaries of district committees and central committees (Cummings, 2012). In the 1930s, many writers were persecuted on charges of "counter-revolutionary" and "bourgeois nationalism" and their works were considered politically and ideologically harmful and banned. Even the sale of Kyrgyz-language books containing poems, articles, notes, and even photographs of those listed as "enemies of the people" and "bourgeois nationalists" was prohibited.

In the 1950s, the Soviet leadership regarded the folk national epic, particularly the Kyrgyz Manas, as religious propaganda and anti-nationalist works that were criticized and banned. Only in Kyrgyzstan was there opposition to this approach. The pre-revolutionary history of Kyrgyzstan in Soviet historiography was interpreted in Soviet historiography as the constant strengthening of friendly relations between the Kyrgyz and Russians and, conversely, the expansion of colonial rule as an enlightenment movement that itself played a central role in national unity.

Historians of the October Revolution initially referred to the colonization of the region as "accession to Russia", but this term was later replaced by "becoming part of Russia", supplemented by definitions such as "voluntarily" and "of their own free will" (Paksoy, 1995). Representatives of the national liberation movement who opposed the Tsarist regime were considered reactionaries; during perestroika, a significant part of the leading Kyrgyz ethnic intelligentsia actively raised the issues of historical heritage, restoration of national historical and cultural monuments, renaming of streets and squares, recognition of the innocently killed, the future of the Kyrgyz language, etc. The issues were actively raised. Kyrgyzstan, like other Central Asian republics, has turned into a raw material base, and the level of social development and social security is much lower than in most European republics.

Inequalities in the distribution and redistribution of national income were blatant. The spiritual values of the Kyrgyz people were interpreted in accordance with the ideological criteria of the totalitarian regime, and anything that did not fit into this framework was silenced. In the context of the establishment of the sovereign state of Kyrgyzstan, the Basmachi movement became a symbol of unity and spiritual revival of the Kyrgyz people, the rise of culture, and the assertion of national dignity and self-knowledge (Naby, 1986).

During the Soviet period, Kyrgyzstan was included in the all-union economic complex and was one of the most backward regions, specializing in the extraction and supply of raw materials. Today, the Kyrgyz people are strengthening their national independence and confidently moving towards an open and democratic society, consciously solving the difficult task of strengthening the

country's independence. This movement is accompanied by mass labour migration to Russia, and the role of Russia in ensuring the independence and security of Kyrgyzstan, to form a post-Soviet existence several axioms have been developed that explain the Kyrgyz desire for independence. The uprising against the Russian colonial rulers is a national liberation struggle of the Kyrgyz people and a progressive process, the Kyrgyz people are fighters for independence (especially the leaders of the Basmachi and the Turan Socialist Party) (Mambetaliev, 2022).

The formation of post-Soviet identity in Kyrgyzstan is a complex and multifaceted process involving both historical, cultural, political and social aspects (Khan, 2024). This process involved a rethinking of the country's history, changing cultural perceptions, socio-economic transformations and political changes that contributed to the formation of modern Kyrgyz identity. The transition from a planned economy to a market system also influenced the formation of post-Soviet identity. Socio-economic changes included the privatization of state enterprises, reform, and decommunization of the agricultural sector and the development of small and medium-sized businesses. These changes, especially when combined with rising unemployment and social inequality, led to serious economic difficulties. At the same time, they have opened up new opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-realization. Recognizing, economic reform and its impact on the social structure of society has become an important topic of discussion in the media and public discourse (Siegel, 2022).

Economic successes and challenges have become part of the national identity, drawing attention to both independence and the difficulties faced by the new Kyrgyz people. Kyrgyzstan's political landscape has undergone significant changes since independence. From changes in the political system to the struggle for democratic transformation, these processes have become important in shaping national identity. The period of political instability, including two revolutions (2005 and 2010), has had a significant impact on public consciousness. These events not only emphasized political instability, but also gave impetus to the development of active citizenship.

The ideological map of the country is changing, new political forces and movements representing different sides of national interests are emerging. Revolutionary events became an important moment for rethinking national identity and expressing people's aspirations. Education and the media are important elements in the process of identity formation. New courses and programmes aimed at learning about the country's history and culture, educational reforms, including modern textbooks and learning materials for the younger generation, allow them to better understand their identity and contain more information about the history, culture, and language traditions of Kyrgyzstan (Şener, 2023). The media also play an important role in the formation of national identity. The media actively cover issues of national identity, history and culture, which contribute to the formation of public opinion. Economic difficulties, political instability and social problems threaten the stability of national identity. In particular, fighting corruption, overcoming social inequality and ensuring political stability are important for the further development of identity, but despite these challenges, there are also positive trends (Bazarbayev and Elmira, 2013).

The active participation of civil society, the development of cultural initiatives and efforts to preserve national heritage contribute to the strengthening of post-Soviet identity. The new generation that has grown up in the context of independence has the opportunity to form a modern

Kyrgyz identity, taking into account both historical experience and contemporary realities. Despite the challenges the country faces, the desire to preserve and develop a national identity is an important aspect of contemporary politics and culture (de Jong, 1998).

Before Russia invaded Central Asia, or before the Soviet Union divided Central Asia into socialist republics, there were no borders of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan at that time. However, the traditional khanates, made up of the indigenous peoples of the region, the Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Uzbek khanates, and the Turkmen and Tajik peoples, spoke their own languages. They were not political countries in the modern sense of the word. However, this does not mean that they had no ethnicity (Tekir, 2023). These states still exist today as ethnic and cultural states. They have also united to form a multi-ethnic state. The post-Soviet concept of nationality was formed by the “Soviet ethnic theory”, which claimed that a country was the highest stage of development of ethnic groups. Central Asian leaders and scholars who grew up in the Soviet tradition have consistently, historicized national identity, uncovered golden ages and national heroes, and sought to define the state as homogeneous and collective. The Stalinist regime divided the population of the USSR into more than 100 ethnic communities, each with its own legal status based on its size, history, economic potential, and location. Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmens, and Uzbeks were given the status of “united Republic”, so they gained independence after the collapse of the Union (Paksoy, 1995).

This process laid a favourable foundation for the immediate emergence of a nation-state with clear borders and an unnamed name in the post-Soviet period. The name of each newly independent state refers only to the namesake country and is derived from the previous Soviet name. For example, the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic became the Kyrgyz Republic (Shaw, 2011).

The abolition of Russification of language, culture, and education after independence and cultural self-determination encouraged the development of a national language and replaced Russian as the indigenous language. The Soviet Union froze nationalism within the Soviet country. The state independently shaped its ideology defending the territorial boundaries it gained after the collapse of the USSR. Here began the formation of national heroes for which historians were involved one of the brightest heroines was Karimjan Datka. She was a famous fighter against Russian penetration into the region, and the process of searching for a national liberation movement around which it would be possible to unite the nation began. The formation of a nation with its own ideology and national heroes is a thorny path that many independent states have travelled. The formation of Kyrgyzstan was equally thorny (Günther, 2022).

But even after independence, the Soviet narrative that the Basmachi was essentially banditry remains strong in Kyrgyzstan. This is not surprising since Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the post-Soviet world that celebrates the anniversary of the October Revolution on 7 November. It is widely believed in the country that Kyrgyzstan’s return to statehood and unprecedented development was due to the events of 1917 and Soviet rule. In particular, the country’s first president Askar Akaev stated that “Russia was given to us by God and history” (Aitzhanova and Sarachakova, 2022). Indeed, in 2017, the authorities renamed the day “History and Ancestors Day” to commemorate the events of 1916, when Tsarist troops brutally suppressed the Kyrgyz uprising in Semirechye. However, not everyone in Kyrgyzstan has a negative view of the Basmachi; some

consider the participants in the Basmachi movement to be patriots and defenders who gave their lives for the well-being of their country.

Jadism and the Basmachi have had a significant impact on the process of shaping the national identity of Central Asian countries, with special attention being paid to Uzbekistan as the central and most populous country. In addition to the idea of harmony between the spiritual and the secular, the Basmachi movements had a significant impact on the formation of Uzbekistan's national identity. These movements put on the agenda the concept of modernization and the ideology of Turkic national liberation, which were alien to local political thought until the late 19th century.

Aspects of the struggle for independence, stubbornness in dealing with enemies, loyalty to traditional social structures and the desire for progress are reflected in Uzbekistan's modern state ideology. At the same time, both Jadidism and Basmachi were expressed as nationalist movements, in sharp contrast to their international character.

In the countries of the region there was a return to Islamic identity (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan). At the same time, the construction of mosques and the religious rhetoric of heads of state illustrated the Islamisation of politics. Each country sought its own 'heroes', mostly referring to its heroic past and justifying its historical importance in the region. Tamerlane, the founding hero, was chosen to emphasize the historical significance of the Uzbek nation. The Uzbek leadership uses the historical past to construct an ideology in support of its geopolitical claims.

Tashkent's official position on the shared past with the USSR is reduced to a dichotomy of colonialism and metropolitanism. Soviet and imperial history are fused into a period of conquest and Russification (Kassymbekova and Chokobaeva, 2021). The Soviet Union is referred to as an era of totalitarian regimes, while Uzbekistan is referred to as a raw material appendage supplying cotton and other resources to the metropolis. The annexation of the region to the Russian Empire is perceived as conquest and colonization, as are the actions of the Soviet authorities. Researchers of this period discovered new heroes, the Basmachi, who fought for a better future for their descendants. The period of Soviet repression is called the logical continuation of the Tsarist repression: more than 100,000 Uzbeks were repressed, of whom more than 13,000 were shot (Table 2). It is believed that most of those repressed were repressed for political reasons, mainly because of kulakism and anti-Soviet activities, which was directly attributed to the Basmachi and the very strong lack of trust in the Uzbek people during most of the half of the Soviet domination here was related to the Basmachi movement and the fact that the Uzbek Basmachi were the last to surrender. While in other countries of Central Asia (meaning the then republics) the Basmachi movements were suppressed almost completely until 1927-1929, the Uzbek reactionary forces of the Basmachi continued their resistance until 1931 and even more after the death of Ibrahim-Bek. The rebellion was finally suppressed in 1942.

These events meant a lot to the leadership of the USSR against the Uzbeks were applied massive repression in an attempt to suppress. The sheer number of repressed demonstrates that historians cannot ignore this period. Today, the role of the Basmachi in Uzbekistan's independence is being rethought, and, for example, in 2021 there will be a meeting between 115 Basmachi and Ibrahim Bey, the main opponent of the USSR. And, for example, an important point is education in the reflection of the Basmachi movement today textbooks of the last 5 years reflect the Basmachi

movement as a struggle against imperialism and also very often Uzbek historians defend their identity around how they heroically resisted this imperialism and fought to the last against a much bigger enemy.

Table 2. Approximate data on repressions and executions in Central Asia

Country	Approximate number of repressed	Approximate number of executed
Kazakhstan	500,000-600,000	20,000-30,000
Uzbekistan	250,000-300,000	10,000-15,000
Kyrgyzstan	100,000-150,000	5,000-10,000
Tajikistan	50,000-80,000	2,000-4,000
Turkmenistan	50,000-80,000	2,000-4,000

Source: compiled by the authors based on B. Kassymbekova and A. Chokobaeva (2021).

The situation with the memory of the Basmachi movement in Tajikistan is quite different; having recently experienced a bloody civil war, Tajikistan is extremely cautious in its choice of new post-Soviet symbols. Tellingly, Tajikistan is the only republic that uses the image of Soviet-era revolutionary Shirishno Shotemur on its official banknotes. Shotemur, a communist from the Pamirs, was one of the organizers who fought against the Basmachi movement and turned Tajikistan's autonomy into a federal republic, which is a very telling point Tajiks often feuded with Uzbeks so they supported the Soviet Union despite religious oppression and until the last decades of the 21st century the Basmachi movement continued to be portrayed as marginalized in Tajik historiography, while Tajiks saw themselves as fighters against the Basmachi and admirers of socialism.

This shows that, unlike Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan does not deny its links with the Soviet era on a spiritual and symbolic level. It is also evidence of the significant role in Tajik life of the Basmachi, although negative in the opinion of the Tajiks, but nevertheless important in their defence of their peculiarity in that they are the only ones in Central Asia who fought against the old traditions that the Basmachi defended. Tajik historian Saifro Mrozhonov emphasizes that in some regions of Tajikistan, the names of the kurbashi are still remembered. For example, the memory of Khodjibek lives on in the Machin District in northern Tajikistan. Also, after 90 years, the locals still tell stories about Ibrahimbek, one of the most formidable Basmachi. Despite this, the contribution of the Basmachi to the history of Tajikistan is being re-evaluated. In the last 5 years, historians have come to the conclusion that the movement was not so marginalized, as exemplified by the numerous monuments to the Basmachi movement that are being erected in Tajikistan.

The worst situation with the Basmachi movement in Kazakhstan is not so much with the movement itself as with the rehabilitation of Basmachi. The main reason is the close co-operation at government level especially in terms of trade since the war started in 2022 and the sanctions imposed on Russia most of the supplies go through Kazakhstan, so the Kazakh government is keen to maintain good relations with the Russian government. But the Kazakhs remember the Russians' arrival on their lands well for several reasons. The Kazakhs, who suffered great losses during the

uprisings in Central Asia, joined the Basmachi movement as soon as it began and supported it to the end. This bloody event left a big stain on the Kazakhs. For this reason, Kazakhs have more animosity towards Russians than other Central Asian countries, and this hatred is passed on from generation to generation. About 300 rebellions were raised in the Kazakh SRs during the 1930s. Y.A. Lysenko, N.P. Goncharova, E.V. Tarasova conducted a survey among elderly people in Central Asia, according to which the largest percentage, namely 4.2% of respondents in Kazakhstan believe that the Basmachi won the civil war this fact may indicate that people's memory has not yet forgotten their ancestors who fought for their freedom with blood.

The main feature of the Basmachi movement can be called the defence of traditional ways of life, they fought against the fact that would not take away their culture, which would simply melt into the Soviet culture. And today the revival of the traditional way of life, which we can see in the villages, towns, and cities of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, even if it is only a representation of the life of their ancestors, allows people to realize that if it were not for the Basmachi 100 years ago perhaps we would not exist now, and this in turn is nothing but a reflection of what the Basmachi were able to protect in their struggle.

3. Discussion

The fall of the Soviet Union and the events that preceded it revealed deep and complex processes that affected all the countries of Central Asia. National liberation movements, which were directed against the colonial policies of the Russian Empire, took on a new meaning in the context of the struggle for national identity and political autonomy. The Basmachi movement that developed in the Fergana Valley, Khorezm, Khiva, Bukhara, and Northern Turkestan reflected a wide range of social, economic and political problems that left their mark on the further development of the region. For the countries of Central Asia, the Basmachi movement was a symbol of the struggle not only against external oppression, but also for the preservation of their own cultural and ethnic characteristics in the face of global change. The movement was not only a protest against external pressure, but also an attempt to preserve cultural and ethnic specificities. This idea is supported by the research of L.P. Markowitz and S. Radnitz (2021), who emphasized the importance of national liberation movements in shaping political systems in Central Asia.

During the Soviet era, the Basmachi movement was discredited by official historiography, which portrayed its participants as bandits and counter-revolutionary elements. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian countries, a process of rethinking ethnic history began. The new national context raised the question of ethnic heroes and movements that could be included in the pantheon of national memory. An important step in this direction is to analyse the cultural and political narratives in which the Basmachi movement occupies an important place. Cultural and political narratives associated with the Basmachi appear in the context of broader trends in historiography.

S. Günther (2022) has argued that reinterpreting history not only allows ethnic heroes to be identified, but also to be enshrined in the pantheon of national memory. This is important because in the new political realities of Central Asian countries, there is a need to form a common cultural discourse that unites different ethnic groups.

The use of images and symbols of the movement in literature, cinema and other forms of art contributes to the formation of a new national narrative based on the ideas of independence, freedom, and the struggle for rights. I.Z. Ozat (2024) emphasizes that in the context of post-Soviet Islamic radicalism in the Fergana Valley, it is important to consider how cultural narratives can be used to counter extremism and build a sustainable identity. Given the political situation in Central Asia in the twenty-first century, the study of the Basmachi movement may also have practical implications for the development of public policy in the sphere of culture and education. The use of historical narratives to strengthen ethnic unity and form a positive image of the country in the international arena is an important element of modern politics. Its reinterpretation and incorporation into the national narrative contributes to the formation of a new perception of history in accordance with modern political and cultural realities. The main conclusion is that Basmachi is not only a historical phenomenon, but also a relevant element of contemporary cultural and political discourse in the region. This confirms that historical events and movements can retain significance and influence national identity and political processes even decades later.

The results of the study are consistent with the conclusions of a number of authors, M. Bektursunov (2022) notes that the Basmachi remain a symbol of the struggle for independence and national resistance. The author's conclusions were supplemented by the finding that the image of the Basmachi is actively used to shape national identity and personify the heroism of resistance in Central Asia.

Also, the results of the study correlate with the findings of S. Misra and T.G.K. Yadab (2023) the authors focused on the key stages and factors that contributed to the process of establishing Soviet power in Central Asia and analysed how Soviet power was established in the region and what changes occurred in the political and social structure of Central Asia as a result of this process. The authors provide a detailed overview of the historical events that preceded the establishment of Soviet power. They have analysed the political and military campaigns that played an important role in this process. But there are important differences, the authors did not take into account the fact that the region was religious, which was the cause of the initial unrest in 1917-1919, nor did they take into account the influence of the British Empire, which was still the hegemon in the region in all of Asia.

J. Engvall (2020) emphasizes the influence of religious and cultural factors on identity formation in Central Asia. He noted that Muslimity had different influences on different ethnic groups in the region. The study partially confirms these findings, adding that nomadic lifestyles and socio-economic conditions also played an important role in identity formation, as Muslimity did not play as important an influence in the lives of nomads as it did in the lives of sedentary peoples who were dependent on religion. Research by E. Naby (1986) correlates with these findings by demonstrating the use of religious concepts such as jihad as a tool of political resistance. The study showed that such concepts played a key role in the struggle to preserve cultural and political interests, which is in line with the findings on the importance of ideological motives in popular liberation movements.

The results of M.E. Killhøglu (2022) correlate with the findings of this study on several points, ranging from the relationship between the movements in Central Asia to their impact on

neighbouring Afghanistan. In his study, M.E. Kılıoğlu, analysed how the Basmachi uprising in Central Asia, which emerged as a response to Soviet repression, interacted with political and social processes in Afghanistan, which is important for analysing the impact of regional conflicts on the formation of cultural and political identities. The findings showed that the Basmachi movement not only reflected the internal contradictions of Central Asia, but also interacted with external political forces. The analysis showed how local uprisings can influence neighbouring regions and how foreign policy can intensify or modify local conflicts. This correlates with the findings on the importance of external factors in understanding popular liberation in Central Asia.

Future research could focus on several key aspects. It is important to examine in more detail how the Basmachi and similar historical movements influence contemporary political and cultural movements in Central Asia, attention should also be paid to contemporary interpretations of the Basmachi in cultural and political discourse, and the influence of the current political and cultural context on the assessment of historical legacies. The study finds that the Basmachi continued to have a significant impact on shaping cultural and political life in Central Asia. Contemporary interpretations of the Basmachi may have been influenced by the current political and cultural context, which affected the perception of historical heritage and its use for cultural and political purposes.

In Kyrgyzstan, despite independence, Soviet narratives presenting the Basmachi as banditry persist, which is linked to historical perceptions of the October Revolution and Russia's role in the region. However, a part of the population considers the Basmachi as patriots, indicating a gap between official history and popular memory. In Uzbekistan, Basmachi and Jadidism influenced the formation of national identity by reinforcing ideas of Turkic national liberation and modernization, despite the international character of these movements. Tajikistan, after the civil war, is cautious about post-Soviet symbols and retains some Soviet elements, such as images of Shirishno Shotemur on banknotes, demonstrating the difficulty of forming a new identity. In Kazakhstan, close relations with Russia and negative historical memories of the uprisings have led to less rehabilitation of the Basmachi, despite their important role in resisting Soviet rule. These differences in the perception and interpretation of historical experience emphasize the complexities of national identity formation in the post-Soviet space, reflecting both historical memory and political realities.

Conclusions

Despite the efforts of the Soviet authorities to suppress the Basmachi movement, it has not only not disappeared, but has become an important element in the historical memory of the peoples of Central Asia. In the post-independence period, the countries of the region have been actively rethinking their past, including the role of the Basmachi movement in the struggle for national independence. This history continues to play an important role in shaping the contemporary identity and political orientations of the Central Asian states. The Basmachi movement has thus become not just a historical episode, but an important part of the national narrative of all Central Asian countries, reflecting both internal conflicts and a shared desire for freedom and self-determination. A contemporary approach to this topic emphasizes the importance of the Basmachi movement in the context of building new nation-states and preserving cultural heritage.

The study has shown that the Basmachi played an important role in the history of the formation of Central Asian countries. Basmachi had the greatest impact on modernity in Uzbekistan, as it was the most populated region and a significant part of military operations took place there, but it also affected Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. Since 2021 one can notice a tendency to rethink the role of rebel movements against colonialism, first against the Russian Empire and then against the Soviet Union, this process is taking place in parallel with the rehabilitation of the convicted and repressed (100 thousand people were repressed in Uzbekistan alone).

The Basmachi movement turned out to be not just a historical episode, but an important factor that continues to influence contemporary society. It has become an integral part of national mythology, contributing to the strengthening of collective memory and national consciousness. A comparative analysis of the different stages of the history of the Basmachi movement also allows us to trace how political and cultural priorities in the region have changed. One of the positive features of the Basmachi movement is a return to the traditional way of life that was practised by the indigenous peoples of Central Asia before the arrival of the Soviet Union. The return to traditional living conditions also led to the restoration of historical monuments and symbols, which became an important element of cultural identity. Each country in the region was found to have a different approach to conceptualizing this historical period, reflecting different political and cultural realities. The findings point to the need for further research on the influence of historical memory on the formation of contemporary culture in Central Asia. It is also important to extend the study to other countries in the region, in particular Turkmenistan, where the processes of national identity formation remain understudied.

Among the limitations of the study are the closed access to archival sources and the different interpretations of historical events in different countries. This may make it difficult to compare and generalize the results. Further research could include a more in-depth analysis of the sources. In the future, the results of the study could be improved by involving larger data sets and expanding the geographical and chronological coverage. This would create a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of the Basmachi movement on country formation in Central Asia.

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