

A PERIPHERAL VIEWPOINT ON THE LAND REFORM
IN THE UZBEK SSR (1924-1929)

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Introduction. The land-and-water reform in the Uzbek SSR was the most important mobilization initiative that the Bolshevik regime carried out in the 1920s. Its impact in terms of land redistribution was small, but it generated consensus in the countryside and produced a first cohort of rural Uzbek communists.

This research (and the two articles it results in) stems out of a more general reappraisal of the reform. For the first time, the latter is studied from a bottom-up perspective, focusing on a single district (Aim, Andijan province, eastern Fergana). In addition, I show the connection between the land reform, national delimitation and boundary-making, and the anti-Islamic *hujum* campaign, which are usually studied in isolation.

Sources and methods. This study is based on documents from archives in Uzbekistan (TsGARUz) and Russia (GARF, RGASPI). I use the traditional tools of historical craftsmanship to produce two papers that are quite "dense" in their empirical content. By recognizing the importance of texts in the Soviet system, emphasis is put on source criticism and on the study of drafting processes, which requires a quasi-philological exam of the materials available.

Results and discussion. This study demonstrates the entanglement of agrarian, nationality, and anti-religious policy at the local level. *Pace* most of the extant historiography, which highlights the importance of ethno-cultural arguments, I show how local competition for access to investments, cooperative networks, provision of consumer goods, agrarian policies etc. shaped the outcomes of the revision of Central Asian republican borders in 1924-1924, as local actors learnt to ply the language of nationality to their very material goals. The second paper demonstrated that how decisive measures of Soviet anti-Islamic policy in 1927, namely the attack to "religious" *waqf*, originated in the periphery, rather than being imposed by policy-makers at the all-Union, regional, or republican level.

Conclusions. The importance of this study transcends the reconstruction of "what happened" (which remains the historian's most important task), for instance by producing a precise chronology of Soviet policies on pious endowments in the late 1920s. It highlights the urgent need for regional historians to produce empirically dense (and possibly local) narratives to replace Soviet ones, before developing overarching, thesis-driven interpretations.

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References.

1. B. Penati, "Life on the Edge: Border-Making and Agrarian Policies in the Aim district (eastern Fergana), 1924-1929", *Ab Imperio*, 2, 2014, pp. 193-330.