



Tajik Cultural Orientation

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CHAPTER 1: PROFILE

Introduction

Located in Central Asia, Tajikistan is a former Soviet Socialist Republic that gained its independence in 1991. The majority of the country is made up of high mountains. Poor infrastructure and steep mountains and valleys make access to much of the country difficult. Cotton agriculture is important to the economy. Industry is limited to minimal aluminum production, and large numbers of Tajiks live abroad, supporting their families through remittances. Tensions exist along some of the border areas between ethnic groups.



© Lee Hughes
Pamir Mountains, Tajikistan

Important Elements of Geography

Tajikistan is a small, landlocked, mountainous country located in Central Asia. Its total land area equals 143,000 sq km (55,212 sq mi), making it slightly smaller than the state of Wisconsin. Approximately 440 sq km (170 sq mi) is water. It shares borders with China to the east (414 km/257 mi), Kyrgyzstan to the north (870 km/541 mi), Afghanistan to the south (1,206 km/749 mi), and Uzbekistan to the west (1,161 km/721 mi).^{1, 2}

Tajikistan has a continental climate. Summers are hot and dry& on the plains where temperatures range between 27°–30°C (80°–86°F). In the mountain ranges, summer temperatures range between 5°–10°C (41°–50°F). Winters in the plains are usually mild, ranging in temperature from -1°–3°C (30°–37°F). Extreme cold settles on the mountain ranges during winter. Normal temperature ranges are between -15°–20°C (5°–4°F), although temperatures as low as -45°C (-49°F) are common in some mountain areas.^{3, 4}

More than 93% of Tajikistan's total area is mountains, over half of which rise above 3,000 m (9,843 ft). The two major mountain ranges are the Pamir Mountains of the southeast and the Alay Mountain Range in the north. Known as "The Roof of the World," the Pamir Mountains occupy the entire eastern portion of the country. Extremely high mountains make up the geography of this region. The elevation is partially responsible for the dryness of the region; much of the area is described as high desert and can have humidity that measures below 10%. Numerous peaks in the Pamir Mountains rise above the 7,000 m (22,966 ft) mark. Despite the extremes in elevation and temperature, the Pamirs are home to many animals. Marmot, ibex,

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Geography," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Geography," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

snow leopard, hare, Marco Polo sheep, brown bears, and wolves live in the area. Seismic activity in the region causes frequent earthquakes and landslides that injure and kill people and damage the already-poor infrastructure of the region.^{5, 6, 7, 8, 9}

The Fann Mountains are located in the lower northwestern portion of the country; they are part of the Alay Mountain Range, which is a spur of the Pamir Mountains. The highest peak is Chimtarga (5,489 m/18,009 ft), which is one of many peaks in the region that rise above 5,000 m (16,404 ft). Once a popular mountaineering and hiking destination for Soviet mountaineers, the area is characterized by limestone scree and glaciers. Alpine lakes are also plentiful in the area. But infrastructure is primitive. Only one road crosses the mountain range to the capital city Dushanbe.^{10, 11, 12}



© Irene2005 / flickr.com
Pamir Mountains, Tajikistan

The remaining 7% of Tajikistan's land area is designated valley zone. Two valley zones exist in the country, the Fergana Valley of the northwest and the river valleys of the southwest. They are important for water distribution, agriculture, and hydroelectric power production. The area is densely populated. Cotton, fruit, and raw silk production are crucial to the economic security of the region. The Syr Darya River and Kairakum Reservoir are key water sources that allow crop irrigation and power hydroelectric stations. Lush vegetation results from readily available water sources that in turn support vigorous wildlife populations. The entire 25,000 sq km (9,653 sq mi) valley spreads through three countries—Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan—which contributes to the ethnic diversity of the area. Cultural differences and regional poverty destabilize the region, and the threat of violence looms.^{13, 14, 15, 16}

⁵ Robert Middleton, "Pamirs," Pamirs.org, 2002, <http://www.pamirs.org/>

⁶ Eurasianet, "Tajikistan: Dreams Wither for Pamir Mountain Transplants," 2 November 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66137>

⁷ Pamir Adventure, "Pamir Mountains," n.d., http://www.pamir-adventure.com/pamir_mountains.html

⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Geography," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁹ United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Tajikistan: Geography," 1 October 2012, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/asia-oceania/tajikistan?profile=geography>

¹⁰ Summit Post, "Overview: Fannsky Gory: A Brief Overview," 2013, <http://www.summitpost.org/fann-mountains/456611>

¹¹ OrexCA, "Fann Mountains," 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/fann_mountains.shtml

¹² Thomas Breu and Hans Hurni, "The Tajik Pamirs: Challenges of Sustainable Development in an Isolated Mountain Region" (publication, Centre for Development and Environment, Institute of Geography, University of Berne, 2003), 8–9, http://www.cde.unibe.ch/CDE/pdf/The_Tajik_Pamirs.pdf

¹³ OrexCA, "About the Ferghana Valley," 2013, <http://www.orexca.com/ferghana-valley.shtml>

¹⁴ Igor Rotar, Eurasia Daily Monitor, "Will the Fergana Valley Become a Hotbed of Destabilization in Central Asia?," Jamestown Foundation, 3 October 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39924&cHash=768b895149248bff881e96958af06c6d](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39924&cHash=768b895149248bff881e96958af06c6d)

In southwestern Tajikistan, a series of river valleys along the Amu Darya River and its tributaries create a similar valley zone. The Vakhsh and Kofarnihon rivers—two tributaries of the Amu Darya—have carved out a series of valleys that have been dammed at points along their courses to provide hydroelectric power. Their waters also help to irrigate crops grown in the region.^{17, 18}

Nurek Reservoir, the largest reservoir in the country, is located north of the southern river valleys in west central Tajikistan. Its dam, one of the highest in the world, is important for the regional economy. Water discharged from the reservoir fires hydroelectric power plants that provide electricity to much of the region. Its waters are diverted 14 km (8.7 mi) through the Dangara irrigation tunnel to irrigate around 700 sq km (270 sq mi) of farmland, totaling 648,000 hectares (1.6 million acres). Extremes of cold create snow and ice conditions that at times hinder the flow of water to and from the reservoir, negatively impacting the production of electricity and the amount of irrigation water supplied to farmers. During the warmer months of the year, the reservoir creates a surplus of electricity that is sold to neighboring countries, although electricity rationing is necessary during the winter months.^{19, 20, 21, 22}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Nurek Reservoir

In the far northwest of the country Kairakum Reservoir is part of the Syr Darya River system. Built in 1956 as part of the hydroelectric power production system, its electricity production is limited, and Tajikistan trades irrigation water to Uzbekistan for electricity during the winter months when its hydroelectric power plants produce insufficiently.^{23, 24, 25}

¹⁵ Charles Recknagel, “Ferghana Valley: A Tinderbox for Violence,” Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 17 June 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Why_Is_The_Ferghana_Valley_A_Tinderbox_For_Violence/2074849.html

¹⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Fergana Valley,” 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/204603/Fergana-Valley>

¹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Amu Darya,” 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/21934/Amu-Darya#toc283832>

¹⁸ Vatansho Vatanshoeff, trans., “Rivers of Tajikistan,” *Tajik Water*, 22 October 2012, http://tajikwater.net/docs/tajik_rivers_080620.htm

¹⁹ Avaz Yuldoshev, “Norak Reservoir Filled to the Max Level,” *Asia-Plus*, 17 September 2011, <http://news.tj/en/news/norak-reservoir-filled-max-level-0>

²⁰ Avaz Yuldoshev, “Norak Inflow into Norak Reservoir Decreases Again,” *Asia-Plus*, 5 April 2011, <http://asia-plus.tj/en/news/water-inflow-norak-reservoir-decreases-again>

²¹ Avaz Yuldoshev, “Water Levels at Norak Reservoir Fall to 856.88 Meters,” *Asia-Plus*, 7 April 2011, <http://asia-plus.tj/en/news/water-levels-norak-reservoir-fall-85688-meters>

²² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “Nurek Dam,” 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/422603/Nurek-Dam>

²³ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), “Ferghana/Osh/Khujand: Issues and Problem Spots,” 1 December 2005, <http://www.osce.org/eea/16705>

²⁴ Eurasia Link, “Feasibility Study for Rehabilitation of the Kairakkum Hydroelectric Power Plant on the Syr Darya River,” n.d., <http://www.rubiner.com/kairakkumproject.html>

²⁵ Siyavush Mekhtan, “Tajikistan Supplies Water to Neighbouring Countries,” *Central Asia Online*, 28 April 2009, http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/2009/04/28/feature-09

Tajikistan has an extensive river system. Snow and glacial melt from the mountains feed a system of more than 25,000 rivers. One of the most important rivers is the Syr Darya. Located in the Fergana Valley of northwestern Tajikistan, the river and its tributaries help irrigate densely populated farmland. Numerous hydroelectric power stations have been built along its course.^{26,}

^{27, 28} The Amu Darya, located in southwestern Tajikistan, is also very important to the nation's survival. Formed by the confluence of the Panj and Vakhsh rivers, the Amu Darya drains an enormous amount of water on its way to the Aral Sea, creating irrigation for agriculture and hydroelectricity. The river, although the longest in Central Asia, reacts delicately to changes in precipitation and glacial melt.^{29, 30, 31, 32} The Vakhsh River is another important river. Flowing 524 km (325 mi) in Tajikistan, it irrigates the cotton fields of the southwest.



© Alida Bata
Kids on bank of the Panj River

Although it flows through high mountains that restrict its passage in places, glacial melt feeds the river heavily during the summer months, which helps to power the five hydroelectric dams located along its course.^{33, 34, 35}

Lakes are another important part of Tajikistan's hydrologic system. Karakul Lake, located in the Pamir Mountains of northeastern Tajikistan, sits at approximately 3,900 m (12,795 ft) above sea level. Fed by three small rivers and numerous streams, the lake has no real drainage. Its levels constantly change because of the dryness of the area and snowmelt in the spring. It averages 8 km (5 mi) in length and 4 km (2.5 mi) in width. Its eastern portion averages 22 m (72 ft) in depth; its deepest point is 236 m (774 ft) in the western portion.^{36, 37} Located in the Fann

²⁶ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Syr Darya," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/578814/Syr-Darya>

²⁷ Bakhtiyor Valiyev, "4th Bridge Across Syrdarya River to Be Finished in October," 23 September 2008, <http://news.tj/en/news/4th-bridge-across-syrdarya-river-be-finished-october>

²⁸ Water Unites, "The Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, Central Asia's Lifelines," 2013, <http://www.waterunites-ca.org/themes/29-the-amu-darya-and-the-syr-darya-central-asia-s-lifelines.html?view=booktext>

²⁹ Amu Darya Basin Network, "Amu Darya River Basin," n.d., <http://amudaryabasin.net/content/amu-darya-river-basin>

³⁰ Environment and Security Initiative, "Environment and Security in the Amu Darya Basin" (report, United Nations Environment Programme, 13 July 2011), <http://www.envsec.org/publications/AmuDarya-EN-Web.pdf>

³¹ Water Unites, "The Amu Darya and the Syr Darya, Central Asia's Lifelines," 2013, <http://www.waterunites-ca.org/themes/29-the-amu-darya-and-the-syr-darya-central-asia-s-lifelines.html?view=booktext>

³² Muhammad Tahir, "Amu Darya Fertile for Conflict," *Asia Times Online*, 2 August 2011, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/MH02Ag01.html

³³ OrexCA, "Vakhsh River," 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/vakhsh_river.shtml

³⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581047/Tajikistan#ref598759>

³⁵ Vatansho Vatanshoeff, trans., "Rivers of Tajikistan," *Tajik Water*, 22 October 2012, http://tajikwater.net/docs/tajik_rivers_080620.htm

³⁶ Travel Tajikistan, "Karakul Lake," 2013, http://www.traveltajikistan.net/gosee/karakul_lake/

³⁷ OrexCA, "Lake Kara-Kul," 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/karakul_lake.shtml

Mountains of northwestern Tajikistan, Iskanderkul Lake sits 2,195 m (7,201 ft) above sea level. Accessible only by foot, the lake is home to a wide variety of wildlife.^{38, 39, 40} Lake Sarez is located in east central Tajikistan. The lake was formed in 1911 when an earthquake caused a landslide that blocked the Murgab River. Approximately 60 km (37 mi) long and up to 500 m (1,640 ft) deep, the lake is held by a natural dam, Usoi Dam, that is closely monitored. Seismic activity in the area is heavy. If it were to create a breach in the dam, a wave of water could extend as far as the Aral Sea.^{41, 42, 43, 44, 45}

Urban areas are concentrated in the valley regions of northwestern and southwestern Tajikistan. Access can be difficult in many regions. Dushanbe, located in west central Tajikistan, became the capital in 1929. Its population is approximately 724,000, and it is the center of the nation's industrial output.^{46, 47, 48} Khujand is located in the extreme northwest of the country. The city lies in the heavily populated Fergana Valley. Silk and cotton processing and food canning are among its major industries.⁴⁹ Located southwest of Khujand, Istaravshan (Uroteppa) is a city that originates from the 6th century C.E. It lies in the foothills of the Turkistan Range. Fruit processing, wine making, and various crafts are important to its economy.⁵⁰ Kulob, in southwestern Tajikistan, is a major center for cotton and grain cultivation and sheep grazing. Food processing and the manufacture of building materials are also important to the city.⁵¹ Qurghonteppa is a major stop on the railway from Kulob to Dushanbe. Economic activity



© Peretz Partensky
Cotton fields in the Fergana Valley

³⁸ OrexCA, "Iskander-Kul Lake," 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/iskanderkul_lake.shtml

³⁹ Travel Tajikistan, "Iskanderkul Lake," 2013, http://www.traveltajikistan.net/gosee/iskanderkul_lake/

⁴⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581047/Tajikistan#ref598764>

⁴¹ Earth Observatory, "Lake Sarez, Tajikistan," 2001, http://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/earthobservatory/lake_sarez_tajikistan.htm

⁴² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581047/Tajikistan#ref598764>

⁴³ Tajikistan Travel, "Sarez Lake," 2013, http://www.traveltajikistan.net/gosee/sarez_lake/

⁴⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Tajikistan: Lake Sarez and the Pamir Mountains," 24 January 2007, <http://www.fao.org/forestry/11713-035462ac48075753256c4f9435046cff5.pdf>

⁴⁵ OrexCA, "Iskander-Kul Lake," 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/iskanderkul_lake.shtml

⁴⁶ Thomas Brinkhoff, "Tajikistan," City Population, 2011, <http://citypopulation.de/Tajikistan.html>

⁴⁷ Maps of World, "Tajikistan Cities Map," n.d., <http://www.mapsofworld.com/tajikistan/cities/>

⁴⁸ OrexCA, "Dushanbe," 2012, <http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/dushanbe.shtml>

⁴⁹ OrexCA, "Khujand City," 2013, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/khujand_city.shtml

⁵⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Istaravshan," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/618997/Istaravshan>

⁵¹ OrexCA, "Kulob," 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/kulob_city.shtml

includes food processing, cotton-ginning, and textile manufacturing; the city also maintains an electrical transformer plant.⁵²

⁵² OrexCA, “Qurghonteppa,” 2012, http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/kurgantube_city.shtml

Important Elements of History

Modern-day Tajikistan has been populated for more than 2,500 years, with Iranian peoples, such as the Soghdians and Bactrians, the ethnic precursors of today's Tajiks. In the fourth century B.C.E., the area was conquered by Alexander the Great. During the third century C.E., Persian language and culture spread throughout the region, and Zoroastrianism became the dominant religion. During the eighth century, Arabs conquered the region, bringing with them Islam, which became the dominant religion in the ninth century. A series of successive invasions by Turks, Mongols, and Uzbeks occurred from the 11th through the 16th centuries. The Uzbeks divided modern-day Tajikistan into a series of khanates that they ruled until the middle of the 19th century.^{53, 54, 55}

In the 19th century, Russia began to slowly take control of the region. The Russians instituted cotton cultivation and worked to improve the economic situation. Tajikistan became an autonomous republic in the newly formed Soviet republic of Uzbekistan in 1924. In 1929, Tajikistan became a full Soviet Socialist Republic. Under Soviet rule, Tajikistan's irrigation capabilities expanded, which improved its agricultural output. Educational programs were also developed. Despite improvements in the country, political life remained concentrated in the hands of a very few. In 1991, Tajikistan declared its independence from the Soviet Union.^{56, 57, 58}



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Coat of Arms of the Soviet Union

In 1992, regional forces vying for control of the new country erupted into civil war. The war waged until 1997 when the government brokered a peace agreement with warring factions. The 5 years of fighting left more than 50,000 people dead and more than a tenth of the population refugees. The damage to the economy caused by the war continues to this day. One consequence is the rise of radical Islam as an answer to the nation's poverty. Russia, which has been increasing its economic influence in the country in recent years, maintains a military base in Tajikistan. The Chinese government has also been strengthening economic ties with Tajikistan, developing infrastructure and investing in oil, gas, and gold extraction.^{59, 60, 61, 62, 63}

⁵³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Historical Background," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁵⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁵⁵ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2178–79.

⁵⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Historical Background," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁵⁷ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2178–79.

⁵⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁵⁹ BBC News, "Tajikistan Profile," 17 July 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16201032>

⁶⁰ Alexander Sodiqov, Eurasia Daily Monitor, "Tajikistan Secures New Chinese Loans and Investment," Jamestown Foundation, 15 June 2012,

Government

Tajikistan is a republic with three branches of government. The executive branch is headed by the president, who is elected to unlimited 7-year terms. The president is the chairman of parliament and appoints all members of the Council of Ministers, provided he receives parliamentary approval.^{64, 65, 66}

The legislative branch consists of a bicameral Supreme Assembly. The Assembly of Representatives meets year round and consists of 63 seats. Members are elected to serve 5-year terms; 41 representatives are chosen by direct popular vote and 22 are elected by party. The National Assembly has 33 seats. Because the constitution provides each region of the country equal representation, three-fourths of the assembly members are chosen by councils representing each of the country's four political regions; the remaining members are appointed by the president. The National Assembly meets at least twice a year.^{67, 68, 69, 70}

The judicial branch has a Supreme Court, Supreme Economic Court, and a Constitutional Court that decide on matters of constitutionality. Judges are appointed to 10-year terms by the



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Government Building in Dushanbe

[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39503&cHash=c09678c17ad8078ba5cb0cc1e14c0431](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39503&cHash=c09678c17ad8078ba5cb0cc1e14c0431)

⁶¹ Mark Vinson, "China Land Deal Upsets Tajiks," *Asia Times*, 17 February 2012, http://atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NB17Ag01.html

⁶² Sofia News Agency, "Russia 'Agrees' to Stabilize Central Asia with Tajikistan Base," *Phantom Report*, 5 October 2012, <http://www.phantomreport.com/russia-agrees-to-stabilize-central-asia-with-tajikistan-base>

⁶³ Sergei Blagov, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, "Russia Struggles to Lure Tajikistan into the Customs Union," Jamestown Foundation, 12 October, 2012, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=39966&cHash=84b7712d8de8131d7552757d573f7603](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=39966&cHash=84b7712d8de8131d7552757d573f7603)

⁶⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁶⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Government and Politics," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁶⁶ Rafis Abazov, "Government," in *Cultures of the World: Tajikistan* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 37–39.

⁶⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Government and Politics," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁶⁸ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2181.

⁶⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁷⁰ Rafis Abazov, "Government," in *Cultures of the World: Tajikistan* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 37–39.

president, but must receive parliamentary approval. Tajikistan also has a Military Court.^{71, 72, 73,}

⁷⁴

Media

Television is the most popular form of media in Tajikistan. Numerous private stations exist as well as Russian channels and government-run channels. More than 200 newspapers are registered in the nation, although there are no daily papers. Government and political newspapers have a larger readership than private papers. Freedom of the press is limited, despite being provided for in the constitution. Harassment and violence are routinely used against journalists. More than 1 million internet users exist in the nation. The government has routinely blocked access to independent websites, including social media sites and news websites.^{75, 76, 77, 78}



© VSO Ireland / flickr.com
Press interview in Khovar

Traditional Jobs and Economy

Historically, Tajikistan is a poor country. For years, subsistence farming was the mainstay of the economy. Cotton is the most important crop, and the Tajik government closely monitors and controls much of its production. The agricultural sector employs nearly half of the labor force and generates approximately 20% of GDP (gross domestic product). Although Tajikistan has numerous natural resources, industrial output remains low. Gold, uranium, tungsten, and silver are largely unexploited. Industrial output is restricted to aluminum. Hydroelectric power production also plays a role in the nation's economy. The government is currently trying to achieve food self-sufficiency, but growth has been slow. As many as 50,000 people migrate yearly in search of work, mainly to Russia. Their remittances help support their families and account for nearly half of Tajikistan's GDP. Approximately one-third of GDP comes from the informal economy, which employs more than 40% of the working population. Extensive criminal

⁷¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, "Country Profile: Tajikistan: Government and Politics," January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁷² Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2181.

⁷³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁷⁴ Rafis Abazov, "Government," in *Cultures of the World: Tajikistan* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 37–39.

⁷⁵ BBC News, "Tajikistan Profile," 17 July 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16201088>

⁷⁶ Payam Foroughi, "Tajikistan: Nations in Transit 2012" (report, Freedom House, 25 July 2012), www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Tajikistan_final.pdf

⁷⁷ Reporters Without Borders, "Massive Internet Censorship Could Add Tajikistan to 'Countries Under Surveillance'," 2 August 2012, <http://en.rsf.org/tajikistan-access-to-one-of-tajikistan-s-main-25-07-2012,43109.html>

⁷⁸ Reporters Without Borders, "Tajik Opposition Journalist Stabbed in Moscow," 13 January 2012, <http://en.rsf.org/russia-tajik-opposition-journalist-13-01-2012,41676.html>

networks run by clan leaders exist throughout the country. They are involved in activities such as the black market and heroin smuggling.^{79, 80, 81, 82, 83}

⁷⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Tajikistan: Economy,” January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁸⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, “BTI 2012: Tajikistan Country Report,” 2012, <http://www.bti-project.de/fileadmin/Inhalte/reports/2012/pdf/BTI%202012%20Tajikistan.pdf>

⁸¹ BBC News, “Tajikistan Profile,” 17 July 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16201032>

⁸² Rafis Abazov, “Economy,” in *Cultures of the World: Tajikistan* (Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish, 2006), 43–49.

⁸³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Tajikistan: Economy,” in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

Ethnic Groups

Of the four major ethnic groups in Tajikistan, Tajiks make up approximately 80% of the population. Descendents of ethnic Iranians, they are distributed throughout the country.^{84, 85, 86, 87}

The Uzbeks, descendents of a Turkish race that migrated to Central Asia, are the second-largest ethnic group in the country. They live primarily along Tajikistan's western border and make up approximately 15% of the population. The Uzbeks are underrepresented in parliament and have faced authoritarianism from the Tajik government. Even though they are predominantly Sunni Muslim, as are most Tajiks, relations between the two groups are tense.^{88, 89, 90}



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Tajik family

Russians have occupied portions of Tajikistan since the mid-nineteenth century. Today they primarily live in small urban pockets in the west. After Tajikistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, many Russians left. Russians in Tajikistan are highly valued for their technical skills and education. Although violence and discrimination against Russians occurs, incidents remain scarce.^{91, 92}

⁸⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan," in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁸⁵ Ismaili.net, "Language and Ethnicity Issues in Tajikistan," n.d., http://www.ismaili.net/mirrors/112_tajik/tajkethn.html

⁸⁶ BBC News, "Tajikistan Profile," 17 July 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16201032>

⁸⁷ David Levinson, "Tajikistan," in *Ethnic Groups Worldwide: A Ready Reference Handbook* (Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1998), 285–86.

⁸⁸ Eurasianet, "Tajikistan's Ethnic Uzbeks: Poor Like Everyone, but Sidelined More," 24 February 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62952>

⁸⁹ Center for International Development and Conflict Management, "Data: Assessment for Uzbeks in Tajikistan," University of Maryland, 31 December 2006, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=70202>

⁹⁰ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, "Uzbeks," 2005, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2383/tajikistan/uzbeks.html>

⁹¹ Refworld, "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples—Tajikistan: Russians and Ukrainians," Minority Rights Group International, 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher.MRGI.,TJK,49749c9ec.0.html>

⁹² Gregory Gleason, "Why Russia Is in Tajikistan," *Comparative Strategy* 20, no. 1 (17 March 2001): 77–89, <http://greatgame.no.sapo.pt/Why%20Russia%20is%20in%20Tajikistan.pdf>

The Kyrgyz are the third-largest ethnic group in Tajikistan. They make up only 1% of the population and occupy the north central and eastern regions of the country. Border disputes between the Kyrgyz and the Tajiks are the source of disruptive fighting between them.^{93, 94, 95}

Small populations of other ethnic groups are dispersed throughout the country. Germans, Jews, Koreans, Turkmens, and Ukrainians together make up approximately 3% of the population.^{96, 97, 98}

⁹³ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Tajikistan: Society: Ethnic Groups,” January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁹⁴ David Straub, “Tajikistan Update,” Angelfire, 2 May 2003, <http://www.angelfire.com/sd/tajikistanupdate/culture.html>

⁹⁵ Natalia Yefimova-Trilling and David Trilling, “Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: Disputed Border Heightens Risk of Conflict,” Eurasianet, 2 August 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65744>

⁹⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, “Country Profile: Tajikistan: Society: Ethnic Groups,” January 2007, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Tajikistan.pdf>

⁹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Tajikistan,” in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

⁹⁸ Ismaili.net, “Language and Ethnicity Issues in Tajikistan,” n.d., http://www.ismaili.net/mirrors/112_tajik/tajkethn.html

CHAPTER 1 ASSESSMENT

1. Tajikistan is a country of sweeping plains and pastureland.
False
More than 93% of Tajikistan's total area is mountains, over one-half of which rise above 3,000 m (9,843 ft).
2. Numerous rivers exist in Tajikistan.
True
Tajikistan has an extensive river system. Snow and glacial melt from the mountains feed a system of more than 25,000 rivers.
3. Tajikistan's hydrologic system is important to its survival.
True
Water from reservoirs and rivers is used to irrigate crops and to power hydroelectric plants.
4. Russian influence has been strong in Tajikistan.
True
In the 19th century, Russia instituted cotton cultivation in Tajikistan, helping develop its infrastructure and educational system, which continued under the Soviet regime until 1991.
5. Tajikistan transitioned smoothly to independence following Soviet rule.
False
The new country plunged into civil war in 1992. The 5-year conflict left more than 50,000 people dead and a tenth of the population war refugees.

CHAPTER 2: RELIGION

Overview of Major Religions

Approximately 85% of Tajikistan's 7.8 million citizens are Sunni Muslims. They follow the Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence, the most widespread school of Islamic law. Its laws are seen as relatively liberal regarding women and marriage contracts. Approximately 5% of Tajiks are Ismaili Shi'a Muslims. Most live in the remote mountainous terrain of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, which makes up eastern Tajikistan. They follow the Aga Khan, an imam whom they consider the 49th spiritual leader directly descended from the Prophet Muhammad.^{99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Countryside mosque

The remaining 10% of Tajikistan's population are Christians, Baha'is, and Jews. Christians make up the largest non-Muslim groups. Of the approximately 150,000 Christians, Russian Orthodox adherents constitute the largest group. Baptists, Roman Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Lutherans, and Korean Protestants make up the remaining Christian groups. Baha'is have been in Tajikistan since the early 20th century. Their numbers are growing, but they face government opposition to the free practice of their religion. The Jewish population, which is divided between Bukharan and Ashkenazi Jews, remains small. Many Jews migrated to Tajikistan in the early 20th century to escape Nazi control in Europe. More than half of the Jewish population fled Tajikistan during its civil war. Today, statistics about the number of Jews remaining in the nation vary, and estimates range from less than 300 to around 2,000. Jews also face government mistreatment. The nation's only synagogue was destroyed in 2008 to make way for a presidential palace.^{108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113}

⁹⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Tajikistan: People and Society," in *The World Factbook*, 29 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ti.html>

¹⁰⁰ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "International Religious Freedom Report 2011: Tajikistan," n.d., <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/193149.pdf>

¹⁰¹ Oxford Islamic Studies Online, "Hanafi School of Law," 2013, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e798>

¹⁰² Global Security, "Hanafi Islam," 2013, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/intro/islam-hanafi.htm>

¹⁰³ Al-Islam, "Who Are the Shi'a?," n.d., <http://www.al-islam.org/shiism/4.htm>

¹⁰⁴ Islamic Laws, "4 Sunni Schools of Fiqh: Sahfii, Hanbali, Maliki, and Hanafi," n.d., <http://islamic-laws.com/articles/sunnischools.htm>

¹⁰⁵ Joanna Sloame, "Tajikistan," Jewish Virtual Library, 2013, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Tajikistan.html>

¹⁰⁶ Lily Jamali, "Prince Karim Aga Khan IV and the Ismaili Sect of Shia Islam," PRI, 26 July 2011, <http://www.theworld.org/2011/07/prince-karim-aga-khan-iv-and-the-ismaili-sect-of-shia-islam/>

¹⁰⁷ Ismaili, "The Ismaili Community," 2009, <http://www.theismaili.org/cms/16/The-Ismaili-Community>

¹⁰⁸ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "International Religious Freedom Report 2011: Tajikistan," n.d., <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/193149.pdf>

Role of Religion in Government

In 2012, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom designated Tajikistan a country of particular concern (CPC). Although Tajikistan's constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the country has no official religion, the government flagrantly violates its citizens' right to religious freedom. Religious organizations must successfully register with the government to receive legal status. Failure to receive such status forces religious organizations to operate illegally, and their clergy and practitioners face fines and incarceration. In 2011 the government created the Law on Parental Responsibility for Educating and Raising Children. This law makes it illegal for children under the age of 18 to receive religious training and instruction. Sending people abroad to receive religious instruction is also illegal.^{114, 115, 116, 117}



© Francis Tyers
Government building in Tajikistan

Protestants in the country face a double jeopardy. No Protestant groups have licensed Christian schools; therefore, it is illegal for them to provide religious education to their children and sending them abroad also violates the law. The Tajik government resists international pressure to relax its laws on religion. It claims that by severely regulating religion it reduces the possibility of religious extremism, a very real threat considering Tajikistan's proximity to Afghanistan. Despite government efforts, Islamic radicalism has been on the rise across Tajikistan, especially among impoverished youth who have few employment opportunities.^{118, 119, 120, 121}

¹⁰⁹ Bahais Online, "Tajikistan: Draft Religion Law Causes 'Deep Anxiety'," 3 July 2007, http://bahaisonline.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1267&Itemid=2

¹¹⁰ Bahai.org, "The Bahá'í Community of Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.bahai.org/worldwide-community/national-communities/tajikistan>

¹¹¹ Joanna Sloame, "Tajikistan," Jewish Virtual Library, 2013, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Tajikistan.html>

¹¹² Farangis Najibullah, "Tajik Jewish Community Gets New Synagogue," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 7 April 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/In_Time_For_Passover_Tajik_Jewish_Community_Gets_New_Synagogue/1603812.html

¹¹³ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2184.

¹¹⁴ Michael Schwartz, "On the Rise in Tajikistan, Islam Worries an Authoritarian Government," *New York Times*, 16 July 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/17/world/asia/17tajikistan.html?pagewanted=all&r=2&>

¹¹⁵ Mushfig Bayram, "Tajikistan: Further Administrative Penalties Punish Religious Activity," Forum 18 News Service, 28 August 2012, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1735

¹¹⁶ Monica Duffy Toft, "Religion, Terrorism, and Civil Wars," in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, eds. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 131.

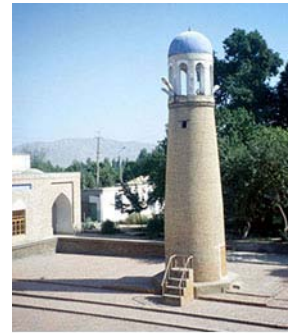
¹¹⁷ Lena Jonson, *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 159–66.

¹¹⁸ Michael Schwartz, "On the Rise in Tajikistan, Islam Worries an Authoritarian Government," *New York Times*, 16 July 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/17/world/asia/17tajikistan.html?pagewanted=all&r=2&>

¹¹⁹ Mushfig Bayram, "Tajikistan: Further Administrative Penalties Punish Religious Activity," Forum 18 News Service, 28 August 2012, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1735

Influence of Religion in Daily Life

Claims have been made that for Tajiks, Islam is less important as a religion than as a cultural heritage.¹²² Polls suggest that in Tajikistan only around 50% of Muslims believe that religion is important and only a nominal number carry out the five pillars of Islam.¹²³ Even so, extreme poverty in the country has resulted in rising Islamization and Islamic radicalism. Tensions have erupted into violence.^{124, 125} Parents are not allowed to enroll their children in schools to receive religious instruction. Exceptions exist only for government-run religious schools. Proscriptions exist against tattoos, the wearing of jewelry, and the names parents give their children. Youths and women are forbidden from praying in mosques. The government has been known to conduct raids on religious organizations; Jehovah's Witnesses have been fined, and numerous madrassas (Islamic schools) have been closed down. Religious dress for women and beards for men are prohibited in many schools and public buildings. But the limitations placed on religious instruction by the government have been bypassed to an extent through the informal economy. In many bazaars, for example, women buy cassette tapes that teach proper behavior to Muslim women.^{126, 127, 128, 129}



© Francis Tyers
Mosque in Isfara

Religious Conventions and Gender Roles

¹²⁰ Monica Duffy Toft, "Religion, Terrorism, and Civil Wars," in *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs*, eds. Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 131.

¹²¹ Lena Jonson, *Tajikistan in the New Central Asia: Geopolitics, Great Power Rivalry and Radical Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 159–66.

¹²² Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2184.

¹²³ Pew Research Center, "Chapter 2: Religious Commitment," in *The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity* (report, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 9 August 2012), http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-full-report.pdf

¹²⁴ John Heathershaw and Sophie Roche, "Islam and Political Violence in Tajikistan: An Ethnographic Perspective on the Causes and Consequences of the 2010 Armed Conflict in the Kamarob Gorge" (Ethnopolitics Papers, March 2011), <http://www.ethnopolitics.org/ethnopolitics-papers/EPP008.pdf>

¹²⁵ Daily Caller, "Religious Fanatics Slay Santa Claus in Tajikistan," January 2012, <http://dailycaller.com/2012/01/02/religious-fanatics-slay-santa-claus-in-tajikistan/>

¹²⁶ Susan Sypko, "Tajiks Wrestle with Identity and Islam," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, October 2007, http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/publication/17612/tajiks_wrestle_with_identity_and_islam.html

¹²⁷ Felix Corley, "Tajikistan: Ban on Religious Uprising [*sic*] of Children," International Institute for Religious Freedom, 10 July 2011, [http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=241&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=123&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=1218](http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=241&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[backPid]=123&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1218)

¹²⁸ Mushfig Bayram, "Religious Communities Forced to Pay for State Human Rights Violations," International Institute for Religious Freedom, 15 February 2011, [http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=241&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=123&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=1107](http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=241&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[backPid]=123&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=1107)

¹²⁹ Anneta Vyssotskaia, "Tajikistan: Reviewing Religious Laws," 21 May 2008, [http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=241&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=123&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=10](http://www.iirf.eu/index.php?id=241&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[backPid]=123&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=10)

Prior to independence in 1991, Tajikistan witnessed a Soviet-style equality among its populace. Although men and women had equal opportunities in the workplace, the division of labor in the home was unequal. Men eschewed housework and played a minimal role in raising children. After independence, the rise of Islam created further inequities in society. Educational and career opportunities, societal equality, and other benefits of independence have been significantly reduced for women. The



© Steve Evans
Woman with stroller

rise in Islam has brought with it a revival of patriarchal clan structures and male dominance that has resulted in submission, poverty, and discrimination for women. Women have returned to the traditional, gender-based division of labor, often performing unpaid labor in their homes and for their in-laws. The seclusion and veiling of women is also on the rise. Domestic violence has increased as well. As many as a third to a half of Tajik women have been subjected to physical, psychological, and sexual abuse by their husbands and in-laws. The honor-and-shame system, which is part of the Islamic culture, has led to complete parental control over children and male control over females, resulting in increased rates of suicide among women. Few social services exist for women. Imams can provide guidance for them, and some NGOs (Non-governmental Organizations) exist that mostly focus on providing services for domestic violence issues.^{130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136}

¹³⁰ Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, “Cultural Information: Tajikistan,” 15 October 2009, <http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/ci-ic-eng.asp?iso=tj#cn-7>

¹³¹ Human Rights Watch, “Country Summary: Tajikistan,” January 2012, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/tajikistan_2012.pdf

¹³² Violence Is Not Our Culture, “Tajikistan Women Beaten, Abused, and Raped in the Family,” 24 November 2009, <http://violenceisnotourculture.org/content/tajikistan-women-beaten-abused-and-raped-family>

¹³³ Christa Hämmerle et al., “Gender Relations and Gender Politics in Contexts of Radical Change,” in *Gender Politics in Central Asia: Historical Perspectives and Current Living Conditions of Women*, eds. Christa Hämmerle, et al. (Köln, Germany: Böhlau Verlag GmbH, 2008), 12–14.

¹³⁴ Sofiya R. Kasymova, “Gender Relations in Tajik Society,” in *Gender Politics in Central Asia: Historical Perspectives and Current Living Conditions of Women*, eds. Christa Hämmerle et al. (Köln, Germany: Böhlau Verlag GmbH, 2008), 35–46.

¹³⁵ Abida Samiuddin and Rashida Khanam, eds., *Muslim Feminism and Feminist Movement: Central Asia* (Delhi, India: Global Vision Publishing House, 2002), 312–34.

¹³⁶ Collette Harris, “Suicide,” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health*, vol. 3 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2006), 452.

Religious Events

Because Tajikistan is a majority Muslim country, the hajj is an important event. Regulated by the Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA), yearly pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia are arranged by the Tajik government. Bribery and corruption have been reported as common practice in government management of hajj participants.¹³⁷ The hajj—the holy pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia—is the fifth pillar of Islam and is required of all Muslims at least once in their lifetimes. Occurring annually during the 12th and final month of the Islamic lunar calendar, the hajj commemorates the Angel Gabriel’s blessing of Abraham as he searched for water in the desert. The Prophet Muhammad led the first official hajj to Mecca in 630 C.E. Completing the pilgrimage demonstrates the highest faith in God and creates Muslim unity. It helps Muslims define and understand their relationship to God. When Muslims properly perform the rituals of the hajj, they are absolved from sin. After they arrive in Mecca, the pilgrimage lasts for five days, during which participants travel to the required pilgrimage sites and perform the prescribed rituals. Under certain conditions, Muslims may be exempted from the hajj. Because Islam dictates that Muslims must first take care of their families, those who are financially incapable of making the trip are excused. Those who are physically unable to endure the rigors of the pilgrimage are excused as well; Islam exempts believers from duties that will cause harm to them or their families.^{138, 139, 140}



© Ali Mansuri
Pilgrim at Mecca in Saudi Arabia

¹³⁷ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “International Freedom Report 2011: Tajikistan,” n.d., <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/193149.pdf>

¹³⁸ Alyssa Fetini, “A Brief History of the Hajj,” Time World, 25 November 2009, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1864624,00.html>

¹³⁹ Dawa.tv, “Hajj: Pilgrimage to the House of Allah in Mecca,” n.d., <http://dawa.tv/Learn-About-Hajj.php>

¹⁴⁰ Saudi Embassy, “Issues: Hajj,” 18 November 2008, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/issues/hajj/>

Religious Holidays

Eid al-Fitr

Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha are two important Islamic holidays, and the Tajik government recognizes them as national holidays.¹⁴¹ Beginning the first day after the holy month of Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr is the “festival of fast breaking,” which celebrates the end of Ramadan and lasts for three days. During this time, ministries and other government offices shut down. People wear new clothes, engage in community prayers, and visit friends and relatives. Eid al-Fitr is a time of togetherness and community. Neighbors are invited for meals, and donations of money and food are given to local mosques for charity. Restaurants, cafes, and bakeries experience an upsurge in business as people flock to them for celebratory meals and dishes.^{142, 143, 144, 145}



© Steve Evans
Family celebrating Eid

Eid al-Adha

Tajiks celebrate Eid al-Adha as an important religious holiday. Eid al-Adha occurs each year the day after the Day of Arafat—a ritual on the hajj. Eid al-Adha commemorates Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son to God. The holiday lasts four days and begins with families going to public prayer wearing their finest holiday clothing. Families visit friends and neighbors, exchange gifts, and enjoy feasts. Those who have the money sacrifice a sheep. They donate one-third of the meat to the poor, dividing the remaining two-thirds among family and friends. Charity is obligatory on Eid al-Adha so that the poor can also participate in the festivities.^{146, 147}

¹⁴¹ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, “International Freedom Report 2011: Tajikistan,” n.d., <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/193149.pdf>

¹⁴² Colorado State University, “Islamic Holidays and Observances,” n.d., <http://www.colostate.edu/orgs/MSA/events/EUF.html>

¹⁴³ Global Post, “Saudi Arabia Announces Tuesday Start of Eid al-Fitr Holiday,” 29 August 2011, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/culture-lifestyle/world-religion/110829/eid-al-fitr-2011-uae-dubai-mubarak-egypt-ramadan-ends>

¹⁴⁴ Eid Mubarak, “Eid-ul-Fitr Traditions,” 22 July 2011, <http://www.theeid.com/eid-ul-fitr-traditions/>

¹⁴⁵ Barot Yusufi and Abdulfattoh Shafiev, “Behind Preparations for Eid Al-Fitr in Tajikistan,” Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 23 September 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Ready_For_Eid_alFitr/1829660.html

¹⁴⁶ Huffington Post, “Eid Al-Adha 2013: Muslims Observe the Feast of Sacrifice,” 14 October 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/14/eid-al-adha-2013-feast-of-sacrifice_n_4096669.html

¹⁴⁷ BBC, “Eid-ul-Adha: 15th October,” n.d., http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/islam/eid_haj.shtml

Buildings of Worship

The small Jewish population in Tajikistan formerly had one synagogue, which was demolished in 2008 to make room for a planned presidential palace. In 2009, a building was donated to the Jewish community of Dushanbe to use as a synagogue.¹⁴⁸ Christian groups face difficulties in maintaining their buildings of worship. Only officially registered Christian groups are allowed to operate churches. Churches that operate without official status are closed down. Dushanbe's Baptist church was forcibly closed by the Tajik government in 2009.^{149, 150, 151} Mosques remain ubiquitous throughout Tajikistan. According to a statement in 2012 by the CRA, Tajikistan has more mosques than schools, with 45 more planned for construction. A mega-Mosque that is to be built in the capital, Dushanbe, is being jointly financed by Tajikistan and Qatar, which is expected to donate 70% of the financing for the project.^{152, 153}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Mosque in Dushanbe

¹⁴⁸ Farangis Najibullah, "Tajik Jewish Community Gets New Synagogue," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 7 April 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/In_Time_For_Passover_Tajik_Jewish_Community_Gets_New_Synagogue/1603812.html

¹⁴⁹ BosNewsLife, "Tajikistan Churches Face Closures, Uncertain Future," 5 January 2010, <http://www.bosnewslife.com/10802-tajikistan-churches-face-closures-uncertain-future>

¹⁵⁰ Mushfig Bayram, "Tajikistan: Court Bans Baptist Church," Forum 18 News Service, 2 December 2009, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1381

¹⁵¹ Mushfig Bayram, "Tajikistan: Muslims and Protestants Are the Latest Official Targets," Forum 18 News Service, 12 June 2009, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=1312

¹⁵² Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, "Tajikistan Has More Mosques Than Schools," 18 February 2012, http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan_mosques/24488099.html

¹⁵³ George Camm, "Tajikistan Celebrates Giant Mosque Groundbreaking for Second Time," Eurasianet, 6 October 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64275>

Behavior in Places of Worship

Etiquette for mosques throughout Tajikistan remains much the same as for mosques in the rest of the world. Women and children, however, are banned from mosques in Tajikistan.

Exchange 1: May I enter the mosque?

Soldier:	May I enter the mosque?	Ман метавонам ба масҷид дароям?	maan metaavonam baa maasjid daRoyaam?
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

Visitors and worshippers must wear clean, modest clothing free of images. Shoes must be removed before entering a mosque. Men’s shirts should have sleeves no shorter than those of a standard T-shirt.

Exchange 2: Must I take off my shoes inside the mosque?

Soldier:	Must I take off my shoes inside the mosque?	Барои даромадан ба масҷид ман бояд пойафзолавро кашам мӣ?	baaRoy daaRomaadaan baa maasjid maan boyaad poyaafzolaampo kaashaam mee?
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

Visitors should remain silent while prayers are in progress, and all electronic devices must be shut off. Food and drink are prohibited in mosques.^{154, 155, 156, 157, 158}

¹⁵⁴ Hounslow Jamia Masjid and Islamic Centre, “Volunteers,” n.d., <http://www.hounslowmasjid.co.uk/volunteers>

¹⁵⁵ Hounslow Jamia Masjid and Islamic Centre, “Volunteers,” n.d., <http://www.hounslowmasjid.co.uk/volunteers>

¹⁵⁶ Istanbul Trails, “Mosque Rules and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.istanbultrails.com/2008/06/mosque-rules-and-etiquette/>

¹⁵⁷ Akbar Sharifi, “Tajikistan: Women Challenge Mosque Ban,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 21 February 2005, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/tajikistan-women-challenge-mosque-ban>

¹⁵⁸ Safa S., “Tajikistan Mosques: No Kids Allowed,” Care2Make a Difference, 19 July 2011, <http://www.care2.com/causes/tajikistan-mosques-no-kids-allowed.html>

CHAPTER 2 ASSESSMENT

1. Islam is the minority religion in Tajikistan.

False

Approximately 85% of Tajikistan's 7.8 million citizens are Sunni Muslims. They follow the Hanafi School of Islamic Jurisprudence. About 5% of Tajiks are Ismaili Shi'a Muslims.

2. Christians make up a small portion of Tajikistan's population.

True

Of the roughly 150,000 Christians, Russian Orthodox members constitute the largest group, followed by Baptists, Roman Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, Lutherans, and Korean Protestants.

3. Tajikistan's government encourages the free practice of religion.

False

Tajikistan's constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the country has no official religion, but the government flagrantly violates its citizens' right to religious freedom.

4. Suppression of the practice of religion has not been effective in reducing Islamic radicalism in Tajikistan.

True

Despite government efforts to suppress religion, Islamic radicalism has been on the rise across Tajikistan, especially among impoverished youth who have few employment opportunities.

5. It is illegal in Tajikistan to provide children with religious education.

True

Parents are not allowed to enroll their children in schools to receive religious instruction. Exceptions exist only for government-run religious schools.

CHAPTER 3: TRADITIONS

Introduction

Many of the customs and traditions of the Tajik people stem from their Islamic religious tradition. Under Soviet rule religious practice was stifled and Soviet-style culture dominated many aspects of life. Gender equality issues followed the Soviet model, as did politics and agricultural and infrastructure development. With independence in 1991, a revival of traditional Tajik culture and religion began in earnest. Fears also emerged among government officials that Islamic extremism would prevail and plunge the country into a state of instability, similar to what it had experienced during its 1992–1997 civil war. As a result, religious and cultural traditions are closely monitored by the government in an attempt to forestall any extremism or societal rifts.



© foto.tj / wikimedia.org
Children in traditional costume

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

When Tajik men greet each other, they shake hands with their right hands and often give the Islamic greeting *Asalaam Aleikum* (Peace be with you). Women usually greet each other with a handshake and nod of the head.

Exchange 3: May peace be upon you.

Soldier:	May peace be upon you.	Салом Алейкум!	saalom aaleykum!
Local:	And upon you be peace.	Вуалейкум Ассалом.	voo-aaleykum aasaalom

A man may shake hands with a woman, but he should let her initiate the handshake. Religiously observant Muslims in Tajikistan avoid contact with the opposite sex.¹⁵⁹ Guests in Tajik homes are treated with great respect. Guests greet new arrivals by rising and shaking hands with them. Honored guests are seated farthest from the door. In Tajik culture, visitors are guests for three days, after which they become part of the family and must contribute to chores.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Culture Crossing, “Tajikistan: Greetings,” n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=7&CID=201

¹⁶⁰ Travel Tajikistan, “Cultural Guidelines: Being a Guest,” 2004, http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html#being_a_guest

Male/Female Interactions

Gender roles differ greatly between rural and urban areas. Progressive urbanites usually follow Soviet-style gender equality norms, whereby males and females have at least the outward appearance of equality. In rural areas, highly formalized traditional gender roles are followed. For example, some women may refuse to answer questions posed to them by an unknown man. Sexual division of labor is strict, and men exert a high degree of control over all aspects of family and community life.^{161, 162}

Regardless of location, men and women refrain from physical contact. Young people in cities are beginning to push the boundaries of this custom, but not without resistance from older and more traditional Tajiks.

Because of its conservative religion and culture, public displays of affection might be countered aggressively by locals, especially in rural areas. Same sex relationships are not prohibited by law, but attitudes remain conservative.^{163, 164, 165}



© Steve Evans
Tajik woman

Hospitality and Gift-Giving

Gift-giving is common in Tajikistan. When Tajiks present a gift, they expect the courtesy to be returned. Visitors to a Tajik home customarily bring a gift to the host. Locals bring chocolates, fruit, or flowers.

Exchange 4: This gift is for you.

Soldier:	This gift is for you.	Ин тӯҳфа ба шумо.	een tooh-faa baa shoomo
Local:	I cannot accept this.*	Раҳмат лозим нест.	Raah-maat lozeem nest

* Note: He/ She may reject your gift 2-3 times, just to be polite, however you should offer several times.

Foreign visitors should bring a gift that reflects their country or culture. Bringing toys for children is appropriate. Inappropriate gifts include pork products and alcohol.^{166, 167}

¹⁶¹ Culture Crossing, "Tajikistan: Gender Issues," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=12&CID=201

¹⁶² Travel Tajikistan, "Cultural Guidelines: Men and Women," 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html>

¹⁶³ Travel Tajikistan, "Cultural Guidelines: Men and Women," 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html>

¹⁶⁴ Culture Crossing, "Tajikistan: Gender Issues," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=12&CID=201

¹⁶⁵ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Travel Advice: Tajikistan," 7 February 2013, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/tajikistan>

¹⁶⁶ Culture Crossing, "Tajikistan: Gift Giving," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=23&CID=201

¹⁶⁷ Travel Tajikistan, "Cultural Guidelines: Gifts," 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html>

Eating Habits/Types of Food

Because of the poverty of the region, Tajiks eat simple food. Tea, bread, and soup with vegetables such as carrots, onions, and potatoes are commonly consumed. Rice dishes are frequently eaten, as are tomato and cucumber salad. Bread is very important to Tajiks, and a meal is never eaten without it. Tajiks bake large, flat round loaves called *non* that can be prepared using any number of grains and ingredients. If bread is lacking, a person claims to have no food no matter how much food the person has.



© Luigi Guarino
Men having lunch

All bread is treated with reverence. It is taboo to place bread face down, and leftover bread or bread crumbs are never thrown away or allowed to fall to the ground. People usually use leftover bread and bread crumbs to feed animals.^{168, 169, 170, 171}

Exchange 5: The food tastes so good.

Soldier:	The food tastes so good.	Ин хӯрок, хеле бомазза аст.	een KhooRok, Kheley bomaaza aast
Local:	Thank you.	Раҳмат	Raah-maat

Because Tajikistan is a predominantly Muslim country, eating pork is taboo. Meat usually consists of mutton and goat. Fruit is also a traditional part of Tajik cuisine. Meals are served on a low table known as a dastarkhan. Green tea is common at meals, and tea is served almost continuously throughout the day. Tajik men frequent teahouses (chaikhana) almost daily.^{172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177}

¹⁶⁸ Travel Tajikistan, “Cultural Guidelines: Bread,” 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html>

¹⁶⁹ Menu.tj, “Our Traditions: Tajik Bread,” 2012, <http://menu.tj/en/posts/photo-stories/our-traditions-tajik-bread/>

¹⁷⁰ Marilyn F. Petersen, “Tajikistan: Food and Economy,” in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2179.

¹⁷¹ East Time, “Cuisine of Tajikistan,” 3 November 2011, http://easttime.info/reference_info/tajikistan/cuisine-tajikistan

¹⁷² Travel Tajikistan, “Cultural Guidelines: Bread,” 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/info/guidelines.html>

¹⁷³ Menu.tj, “Our Traditions: Tajik Bread,” 2012, <http://menu.tj/en/posts/photo-stories/our-traditions-tajik-bread/>

¹⁷⁴ Marilyn F. Petersen, “Tajikistan: Food and Economy,” in *Countries and Their Cultures*, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2179.

¹⁷⁵ East Time, “Cuisine of Tajikistan,” 3 November 2011, http://easttime.info/reference_info/tajikistan/cuisine-tajikistan

¹⁷⁶ OrexCA, “Cuisine of Tajikistan,” 2012, <http://www.tajikistan.orexca.com/cuisine.shtml>

¹⁷⁷ Advantour, “Tajik Cuisine,” 2013, <http://www.advantour.com/tajikistan/cuisine.htm>

Dress Codes

Dress codes are generally conservative throughout much of Tajikistan. Although many urban businessmen prefer Western-style suits and ties, women wear traditional clothing more than Western-style dress. Young people, on the other hand, are beginning to prefer Western attire to traditional Tajik clothing.¹⁷⁸

Exchange 6: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	Инро пӯшидан иҷозат ҳаст мӣ?	eenRo poosheedaan eejozaat haast mee?
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

Recently, government officials have begun to institute bans on Islamic dress for both men and women. Some areas of the country have banned women from wearing the Islamic headscarf (hijab) in public places, such as bazaars, public buildings, and schools. In an effort to try to curb Islamic dress and, according to the government, the Islamic extremism that accompanies it, Tajik officials have launched a campaign encouraging women to wear traditional Tajik clothing.^{179, 180}

Men have fallen under bans concerning their facial hair. Tajik officials claim that long beards are an outward sign of Islamic radicalism and have issued regulations pertaining to beards. Schoolteachers below age 50 may not wear beards of any length, while those above 50 may not grow a beard longer than 3 cm (1.2 in). Bearded men report difficulties finding work. Many men have been detained by security forces and police because of their beards.^{181, 182, 183}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Man in skullcap

¹⁷⁸ Culture Crossing, “Tajikistan: Dress,” n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=23&CID=201

¹⁷⁹ Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, “Tajik Pressure Said to Be Growing Over Islamic Dress,” 17 September 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Pressure_Said_To_Be_Growing_Over_Islamic_Dress/2160501.html

¹⁸⁰ Dilafruz Nabiyeva, “Tajik Government Promotes Ethnic Clothing over Islamic,” Central Asia Online, 19 October 2010, http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2010/10/19/feature-01

¹⁸¹ Roger Boyes, “Tajikistan Orders Men to Cut Their Beards,” *Times*, 22 November 2012, <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/asia/article3607261.ece>

¹⁸² RIA Novosti, “Tajikistan Limits Beard Length,” 20 November 2012, <http://en.rian.ru/world/20121120/177615071.html>

¹⁸³ George Camm, “War on Terror Tajik-Style: Shave Those Beards,” Eurasianet, 20 October 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62210>

Non-Religious Celebrations

Tajiks celebrate a number of secular holidays annually, among them the Persian New Year (Navruz), Independence Day, National Unity Day, and Constitution Day.

Navruz

Each year around March 21, Tajiks celebrate Navruz, a highly important holiday. Occurring on the spring equinox, the holiday celebrates the coming of the spring season. The festival honors new life and rebirth, friendship and renewal.



© Ibrahim Rustamov
Table prepared for Navruz

Exchange 7: Will you be celebrating Naurooz?

Soldier:	Will you be celebrating Naurooz?	Шумо Наврӯзро ҷашн мегиред?	shoomo naavRoозRo jaashn megeeRed?
Local:	Yes!	Ҳа.	haa

People pay their debts and forgive those they feel have insulted them. Navruz is Zoroastrian in origin, harkening back to Tajikistan’s pre-Islamic roots. Dressed in clean clothing, people ritually light torches that symbolize hope.^{184, 185, 186, 187}

Independence Day

Tajik Independence Day falls on 9 September and commemorates the country’s independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Parades are given, and young people in traditional dress ride on the floats. Traditional dance performances are staged, and the president and local officials offer speeches.^{188, 189, 190}

National Unity Day

National Unity Day falls annually on 27 June. It commemorates the signing of the peace agreement in 1997 that ended the nation’s 5-year civil war. The government often organizes

¹⁸⁴ Travel Tajikistan, “Holidays: National Holidays,” 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/practicalities/holidays.html>

¹⁸⁵ Advantour, “Tajikistan: National Holidays,” 2013, <http://www.advantour.com/tajikistan/holidays.htm>

¹⁸⁶ Euronews, “Tajikistan Hosts International Nowruz Celebrations,” 20 March 2012, <http://www.euronews.com/2012/03/20/tajikistan-hosts-international-nowruz-celebrations/>

¹⁸⁷ Orexca, “Navruz: A Celebration of Life,” n.d., <http://www.orexca.com/navruz.shtml>

¹⁸⁸ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations with Tajikistan,” 16 November 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5775.htm>

¹⁸⁹ A Global World, “Tajikistan Independence Day: September 9,” n.d., <http://aglobalworld.com/holidays-around-the-world/tajikistan-independence-day/>

¹⁹⁰ Bruce Pannier, “As Tajikistan Celebrates Its Independence, Let’s Recall What the President Won’t,” Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 8 September 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan_independence_celebrations_rahmon_history/24322679.html

large charity events to celebrate the holiday. In 2012, the government paid all the expenses to marry 60 poor couples and sponsored a massive birthday party for children born on National Unity Day. The president and other government officials host several state functions to celebrate the holiday.^{191, 192, 193, 194}

Constitution Day

Each year on 6 November, Tajikistan commemorates the 1994 signing of its constitution. Constitution Day is one of the most important holidays in the nation.^{195, 196, 197}

Other

As in the United States and other Western countries, showing one's thumb through the middle and index fingers is an obscene gesture.¹⁹⁸ Showing the bottoms of one's feet when sitting and blowing one's nose in public are also considered rude. People are required to apologize if they step on someone's foot, and they should never step over a person's legs or in front of people who are sitting.¹⁹⁹



© Steve Evans
Feet flat on the ground

¹⁹¹ Nazim Kalandarov, "Tajiks Celebrate National Unity Day by Wedding 60 Couples," Central Asia Online, 27 June 2012, http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2012/06/27/feature-02

¹⁹² Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, "Tajiks Celebrate National Unity Day," 27 June 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1069487.html>

¹⁹³ Asia-Plus, "Tajikistan Marks National Unity Day," 27 June 2012, <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan-marks-national-unity-day>

¹⁹⁴ Avaz Yuldoshev, "IRP Makes Preparations for National Unity Day," Asia-Plus, 14 June 2012, <http://www.news.tj/en/news/irp-makes-preparations-national-unity-day>

¹⁹⁵ Pardokht.tj, "Constitution Day!," 27 January 2011, http://www.pardokht.tj/en/view_news.php?id=79

¹⁹⁶ Avaz Yuldoshev, "Tajikistan Marks Constitution Day," Asia-Plus, 5 November 2012, <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan-marks-constitution-day>

¹⁹⁷ Erikson Barnes, "2 Border Guard Posts Open in Tajikistan," Army.mil, 14 November 2012, http://www.army.mil/article/91179/2_border_guard_posts_open_in_Tajikistan/

¹⁹⁸ Culture Crossing, "Tajikistan: Gift Giving," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=23&CID=201

¹⁹⁹ Culture Crossing, "Tajikistan: Taboos," n.d., http://www.culturecrossing.net/basics_business_student_details.php?Id=14&CID=201

Dos and Don'ts

Do shake hands with a person of the same sex when meeting.

Do accept offers of food and drink.

Do dress conservatively.

Do make eye contact when talking with someone.

Do apologize if you step on someone's foot.

Do bring a gift when visiting a Tajik home.

Don't point the bottoms of your feet at anyone when you are sitting.

Don't make physical contact with Muslims.

Don't wear revealing clothing.

Don't display affection in public.

Don't use obscene gestures, such as placing the thumb between the index and middle fingers.

Don't use the left hand for exchanges and handshakes; it is considered unclean.

Don't blow your nose in public.

Don't give gifts of pork products or alcohol.

CHAPTER 3 ASSESSMENT

1. A man may initiate a handshake when meeting a woman in Tajikistan.
False
A man may only shake hands with a woman if she initiates the handshake. Religiously observant Muslims in Tajikistan avoid any contact with the opposite sex.
2. Gender roles in Tajikistan are the same in urban and rural areas.
False
Urbanites usually follow Soviet-style gender equality norms, whereby males and females have at least the outward appearance of equality. In rural areas, traditional gender roles prevail.
3. Gift-giving is a common practice in Tajikistan.
True
When Tajiks present a gift, they expect the courtesy to be returned. Visitors to a Tajik home customarily bring a gift to the host.
4. Bread is very important to the Tajiks.
True
No meal is eaten without bread, which is treated with reverence. A person who has no bread claims that he or she has no food, no matter how much food the person has.
5. Pork is eaten frequently in Tajikistan.
False
Because Tajikistan is a predominantly Muslim country, eating pork is taboo. Meat usually consists of mutton and goat.

CHAPTER 4: URBAN LIFE

Introduction

Tajikistan is a marginally urbanized country. Approximately 25% of the country's population of 7 million lives in urban areas. Urbanization took hold during the Soviet era, mostly because of an influx of settlers from the Soviet Union. Urban growth stalled after independence in 1991. The resulting civil war, which lasted through most of the 1990s, devastated the infrastructure of Tajikistan's few cities. Roads were left to degrade, and apartment blocks, schools, and other buildings were damaged or destroyed. Poverty kept the government from implementing effective urban development programs after the civil war. In recent years, countries such as China, Iran, and Russia see business opportunities in Tajikistan. They have begun investing in the country and helping to develop its infrastructure.



© Brian Harrington Spier
Block of apartments

Urbanization Issues

Tajikistan is the poorest of the 15 former Soviet Republics. About 21% of Tajikistan's urban residents are severely food insecure. These families consume poor diets of limited nutritional value, resulting in child malnutrition and poor general health among family members.²⁰⁰ Access to clean water has also become an issue in recent years. More than 90% of urban Tajiks have access to clean drinking water and hygiene, but in recent years droughts have negatively impacted water supplies, and some hospitals have suffered from a lack of clean water.^{201, 202} Water resources in Tajikistan come mainly from rainwater and glacial runoff, which are abundant. Access problems stem from poor or outdated infrastructure, and the poverty endemic in the region prevents municipalities from improving deficiencies in infrastructure.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ World Food Programme, Government of Tajikistan, "Emergency Food Security Assessment in Urban Areas of Tajikistan" (report, June/July 2008), <http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/wfp188194-full.pdf>

²⁰¹ World Health Organization, "WHO Provides Assistance for Reconstruction of Water Supply System to District Hospital in Tajikistan," 17 July 2012, <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/environment-and-health/water-and-sanitation/news/news/2012/07/who-provides-assistance-for-reconstruction-of-water-supply-system-to-district-hospital-in-tajikistan>

²⁰² World Health Organization, "Tajikistan Water Safety Report: Rudaki Central District Hospital," May 2010, http://www.tajwss.tj/site/images/reports/Tajikistan_Rudaki_District_Hospital_Report.pdf

²⁰³ UN News Centre, "Tajikistan: UN Review Finds that Access to Clean Water Among Most Pressing Environmental Challenges," 14 December 2012, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43774&Cr=tajikistan&Cr1=#.UR54AvvsN9g>

Work Problems in Urban Areas

Since the end of the civil war in 1997, Tajikistan's economy has seen sustained, consistent growth. Still, the nation suffers one of the highest unemployment rates in the region. Poverty prevents entrepreneurial enterprises. Although the service industry has grown since the late 1990s, the agricultural industry remains the largest employer in the country. In January 2011, the official unemployment rate measured by the Tajik Labor and Social Security Ministry was 54.5%.

Unemployment rates tend to stay high because skilled, technical labor is in short supply.^{204, 205, 206, 207}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Working on the tractor

Men have traditionally been the breadwinners in Tajikistan. But the poor economy has driven many men abroad to find work. Women are often left to survive on remittances sent home by their husbands or other male family members. The remittances are frequently not enough to support families, and, beyond that, women face entrenched bias in the workplace. The education and healthcare systems—two of the lowest-paid industries in the country—favor female over male employees. Women are increasingly working in the informal economy, which is unstable at best.²⁰⁸ Privatization of business has been on the rise since the end of the civil war. Numerous businesses have opened, and employment in the private sector has continued to grow. But only around 70% of private businesses in Tajikistan function properly.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴ Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA), “Tajikistan,” n.d., <http://www.finca.org/site/c.6fIGIXMFJnJ0H/b.6088577/k.2146/Tajikistan.htm#.USOmgvvsN9g>

²⁰⁵ International Labour Organization, “Over Two Percent Unemployment Rate Logged in Tajikistan,” 27 February 2011, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/news/2012/0227.htm>

²⁰⁶ Jafar Olimov, “Informal Economy in Tajikistan” (study, UN Development Programme, Tajikistan), 2007, http://www.undp.tj/files/pubs/inf_ec_report_draft.pdf

²⁰⁷ BBC, “Half of Tajikistan’s Workforce Is Informal,” 10 June 2010, http://www.undp.tj/files/BBC-HALF-TAJIK-WORKFORCE-INFORMAL-June-2010_Eng.pdf

²⁰⁸ International Labour Organization, “Work and Family: The Republic of Tajikistan,” 18 December 2009, http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/info/publ/box_eng.pdf

²⁰⁹ Larissa Jones, Richard Black, and Ronald Skeldon, “Migration and Poverty Reduction in Tajikistan” (working paper, Institute for Development Studies, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, February 2007), http://www.migrationdrc.org/publications/working_papers/WP-C11.pdf

Health Issues/Clinics

Although Tajikistan suffers no shortage of hospitals, clinics, or medical doctors, facilities operate well below Western standards. Vaccinations for the populace are inconsistently administered, so outbreaks of polio, typhoid, hepatitis A and B, tuberculosis, and other vaccine-preventable diseases occur regularly. Shortages of key medical supplies frequently take place, and many hospitals and clinics reuse disposable supplies out of necessity.

Exchange 8: Is there a hospital nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a hospital nearby?	Дар наздики ягон беморхона ҳаст мӣ?	daaR naazdeekee yaagon bemoR-Khonaa haast mee?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	Ҳа, дар маркази шаҳр.	haa, daaR maaRkaazee shaahR

Because energy services are interrupted during the winter months, the country's hospitals and clinics may be unable to offer medical services for periods of time during outages. Poor infrastructure also negatively impacts healthcare; waterborne parasites and sewage can contaminate waters supplies. Malaria and tick-borne illnesses pose real threats in most regions of the country.^{210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215}



© USAID
Children getting vaccinated

²¹⁰ Farangis Najibullah, "Porcupine Meat to Cure TB? Tajiks Turn to Risky Folk Remedies," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 12 March 2012, http://www.rferl.org/content/tajiks_turn_to_folk_remedies/24513501.html

²¹¹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Tajikistan: Country Specific Information: Medical Facilities and Health Information," 7 February 2013, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1037.html#medical

²¹² Smartraveller, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Travel Advice: Tajikistan," 7 February 2013, <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Tajikistan>

²¹³ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Travel Advice: Tajikistan," 19 February 2013, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/tajikistan#health>

²¹⁴ National Travel Health Network and Centre, "Country Information: Tajikistan," n.d., http://www.nathnac.org/ds/c_pages/country_page_TJ.htm

²¹⁵ Government of Canada, "Tajikistan: Health," 19 February 2013, <http://travel.gc.ca/destinations/tajikistan>

Education

Education rates high in the Tajik system of values. Most families claim that the education of their children is a high priority, pointing to the country's near 100% literacy rate as proof of their desire to see their children receive a good education. In reality, the education system in the country is failing. One out of every five schools was destroyed during Tajikistan's civil war. Although measures have been taken to rebuild the country's educational infrastructure, much work remains. Many schools have yet to be rebuilt. Additionally, natural disasters and emergencies occur frequently. Earthquakes, landslides, contamination of water, and heating and electrical shortages make it impossible for many children to attend school.^{216, 217}



Poverty necessitates that young people contribute to the household labor force. Youths are frequently kept home to watch infants and toddlers while parents are out working. A gender imbalance also exists, especially in the higher grades and tertiary education. Tajik culture assumes that male children will benefit the family more through education, so young girls are kept at home. Poor educational quality is problematic in Tajik schools. Extremely low pay for teachers ensures that few people enter the profession and that teachers have little incentive to improve their qualifications. Government funding has been sporadic and has decreased in recent years. Graft is also part of the educational system. Teachers routinely accept cash payments in return for grades. In tertiary education, which is provided free in Tajikistan, corruption is rampant as well. Grade buying occurs regularly, and many students are admitted to colleges only after providing hefty payments to members of admissions boards.^{218, 219, 220, 221, 222}

²¹⁶ UNICEF, "Country Profile: Education in Tajikistan," 5 December 2008, <http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Tajikistan.pdf>

²¹⁷ Aga Khan Development Network, "Education Activities in Tajikistan," 2007, http://www.akdn.org/tajikistan_education.asp

²¹⁸ Alexei Ivanov, "Tajikistan: The Education System Gets a Failing Grade," Eurasianet, 19 February 2009, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav022009a.shtml>

²¹⁹ Emma Sabzalieva, "Global, but Not Local: Tajikistan's New Education Minister Overlooks Basic Reform Needs," 22 January 2012, <http://sabzalieva.wordpress.com/2012/01/22/new-tajik-education-minister/>

²²⁰ Zarina Ergasheva, "Corruption in Tajik Ministry of Education Was Reportedly Systematic in 2010," Asia-Plus, 16 April 2011, <http://news.tj/en/news/corruption-tajik-ministry-education-was-reportedly-systematic-2010>

²²¹ European Commission TEMPUS, "Higher Education in Tajikistan" (document, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, October 2010), http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/tempus/participating_countries/reviews/tajikistan_review_of_higher_education.pdf

²²² UNICEF, "Country Profile: Education in Tajikistan," 5 December 2008, <http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/Tajikistan.pdf>

Restaurants

The average Tajik dines out infrequently. On the other hand, formal business dinners are not uncommon. In dining situations, guests are taken care of by the host. It is customary for the host to serve guests because certain cuts of meat are reserved for specific guests. Honored guests may be served goat or sheep's head. To refuse food that is offered is considered offensive.^{223, 224, 225, 226}

Exchange 9: What type of meat is this?

Soldier:	What type of meat is this?	Ин гӯшти чӣ?	een gooshtee chee?
Local:	It's lamb.	Ин гӯшти гӯсфанд.	een gooshtee goosfaand

Foreign guests should refrain from eating pork products or drinking alcohol. Although Tajikistan was greatly influenced by Soviet eating habits and alcohol consumption, it remains a Muslim country; eating pork and drinking alcohol may offend some people. Tea is very important to Tajiks. Guests should never refuse to drink tea that is offered to them. Although eating with utensils is common in restaurants, communal eating occurs regularly. Dishes from which everyone takes food are placed in the center of the table. When eating communally, diners should always use their right hand because the left hand is considered unclean. If utensils are provided, one should use them.^{227, 228, 229, 230}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Tajik food stall

²²³ iExplore, "Tajikistan Travel Guide," 2013, <http://www.iexplore.com/travel-guides/middle-east/tajikistan/food-and-restaurants>

²²⁴ Safari the Globe, "Tajikistan: Food, Dining, and Drinks," March 2013, http://www.safaritheglobe.com/food_tajikistan.aspx

²²⁵ Invest In, "Living in Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.investin.info/country/tajikistan/living-in-tajikistan/>

²²⁶ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2179.

²²⁷ iExplore, "Tajikistan Travel Guide," 2013, <http://www.iexplore.com/travel-guides/middle-east/tajikistan/food-and-restaurants>

²²⁸ Safari the Globe, "Tajikistan: Food, Dining, and Drinks," March 2013, http://www.safaritheglobe.com/food_tajikistan.aspx

²²⁹ Invest In, "Living in Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.investin.info/country/tajikistan/living-in-tajikistan/>

²³⁰ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2179.

Marketplace and Street Vendors

In urban Tajikistan, much of people's daily shopping is conducted at their neighborhood or local bazaar or street market. Numerous bazaars exist in each Tajik urban area, and they provide locals with a variety of items, including food, clothing, personal hygiene products, religious gear, and automotive parts. Bargaining is acceptable in bazaars.



© Anton Ruiter
Marketplace

Exchange 10: Do you sell toqi?

Soldier:	Do you sell toqi*?	Шумо тоқӣ мефурӯшед?	shoomo toqee mefRooshed?
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

*traditional Tajik hat

Prices for goods can be high by Tajik standards, but local artisans and craftspeople continue to do a thriving business. Importing goods into Tajikistan remains costly, so local goods are available when the country is not suffering shortages.^{231, 232}

Urban Traffic and Transportation

Tajikistan has an extensive transportation infrastructure that was built by the Russians during Soviet rule. After independence in 1991, the poverty of the new nation made it impossible to maintain and develop the existing infrastructure. Today, foreign investment has resulted in limited improvements that have allowed Tajikistan to ship and receive goods. Because the country is remote and mountainous, most roads outside main cities close in late November and remain closed until the following May.^{233, 234}



© Veni Markovski
Public bus, Dushanbe

Exchange 11: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	Дар наздики стансияи поезд ҳаст мӣ ?	daaR naazdeekee staanseý poezd haast mee
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

²³¹ Eurasianet, "Tajikistan: Bazaar Blaze Highlights Market Shortcomings," 11 September 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65895>

²³² Kiva, "Holiday Shopping in Tajikistan," 1 December 2008, <http://pages.kiva.org/fellowsblog/2008/12/01/holiday-shopping-in-tajikistan>

²³³ Jane's, "Infrastructure (Tajikistan)," *Sentinel Security Assessment—Russia and the CIS*, 22 March 2011, <http://articles.janes.com/articles/Janes-Sentinel-Security-Assessment-Russia-And-The-CIS/Infrastructure-Tajikistan.html>

²³⁴ Travel Tajikistan, "Getting Around by Road," 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/roadrail/intercity.html>

Urban areas, therefore, remain isolated from one another for much of the year. In some cities, the urban infrastructure is adequate, although it falls below the standards of developed Western nations. Most people cannot afford their own automobiles, but public transportation services abound. Buses, private-hire cars, and taxis move people around within and between cities. Armed police and military personnel at checkpoints frequently stop drivers to check documentation. They are notorious for exacting bribes. Drivers in vehicles with government-issued license plates often speed, ignore traffic lights, and refuse to stop at checkpoints. Public transportation is generally unreliable, unsafe, and overcrowded.^{235, 236, 237, 238}

Street Crime and Solicitations

Because of its location bordering countries such as Afghanistan, terrorism poses a risk in Tajikistan. Urban areas are relatively stable and safe, but petty crime occurs on a regular basis. Muggers, pickpockets, and thieves have been known to target foreigners or those who appear affluent. Passports are attractive targets for thieves, who use them to commit more crimes. Women must exercise greater care than men, since some criminals have targeted women specifically. Threats to women range from verbal and physical harassment to rape, often involving “date rape” drugs. All visitors should exercise great caution while in Tajikistan. Avoid going out alone. Unless it is necessary, do not go out after dark, which is when criminal activity increases. Criminals often operate in groups and may be violent and undeterred by resistance. Tajik police are poorly funded and poorly trained. They often offer no assistance to victims.^{239, 240, 241, 242}

²³⁵ Travel Tajikistan, “Getting Around by Road,” 2004, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/roadrail/intercity.html>

²³⁶ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Tajikistan: Country Specific Information,” 7 February 2013, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1037.html#traffic_safety

²³⁷ Smartraveller, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Travel Advice: Tajikistan,” 7 February 2013, <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Tajikistan>

²³⁸ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Travel Advice: Tajikistan,” 19 February 2013, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/tajikistan#health>

²³⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Tajikistan: Country Specific Information,” 7 February 2013, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1037.html#traffic_safety

²⁴⁰ Smartraveller, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Travel Advice: Tajikistan,” 7 February 2013, <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Tajikistan>

²⁴¹ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Travel Advice: Tajikistan,” 19 February 2013, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/tajikistan#health>

²⁴² Government of Canada, “Tajikistan: Security,” 19 February 2013, <http://travel.gc.ca/destinations/tajikistan>

CHAPTER 4 ASSESSMENT

1. Tajikistan has a booming economy.

False

Tajikistan is the poorest of the 15 former Soviet Republics. About 21% of Tajikistan's urban residents are severely food insecure.

2. Urban Tajiks have full access to abundant water supplies.

False

In recent years droughts have negatively impacted water supplies. Access problems stem from poor or outdated infrastructure; poverty prevents municipalities from improving deficiencies in infrastructure.

3. The agricultural sector employs more people in Tajikistan than the service sector.

True

Even though the service industry has grown since the late 1990s, the agricultural industry remains the largest employer in the country.

4. Women often work in the informal economy in Tajikistan.

True

Because many women are not adequately supported by their husbands or families, they look for work in the informal economy, which provides an unstable form of income.

5. Tajikistan has a modern medical system.

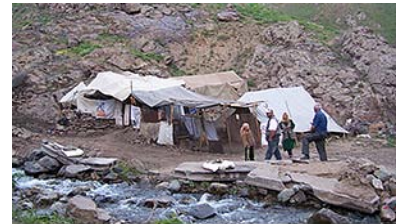
False

Tajikistan suffers no shortage of hospitals, clinics, or medical doctors, but its facilities operate well below Western standards.

CHAPTER 5 RURAL LIFE

Introduction

Tajikistan is a primarily rural country in which poverty is endemic. Food insecurity has become a way of life for most rural Tajiks. Limited infrastructure throughout the mountainous terrain makes it nearly impossible for people to access agricultural and grazing lands for much of the year. Cold conditions prevail throughout the winter, and landslides and flooding occur in the spring. Children have become a vital source of labor, and many rural children work instead of going to school. Limited healthcare facilities prohibit people from getting efficient care. Local forms of traditional governance, which are most frequently used in rural areas, are not legally recognized by the central government. Numerous minefields exist along international borders. The southern border with Afghanistan is highly dangerous. Smugglers operate extensively in the area, and violence erupts often.



© rugbyxm / flickr.com
Rural Tajikistan

Land Distribution/Ownership

Approximately 74% of the Tajik population lives in rural areas. Because agricultural land is scarce and agricultural output is considered crucial to the nation's survival, the vast majority of Tajikistan's limited agricultural resources belong to the state. When the Soviet era ended, the Tajik government gave unused and underutilized farmland in the Pamir Mountain region to Tajik citizens willing to become farmers. Limited access to pasture and farmlands, brutal weather conditions, mountainous terrain, limited and disintegrating infrastructure, and insufficient energy supplies make agricultural life difficult for farmers in the region.²⁴³ Soviet-era collective farms were restructured into small private holdings across Tajikistan. Called *dekhan* (peasant farms), these small, privately owned farms became the new model for agriculture, although about a third of *dekhan* have merged into collective farms. The model has improved agriculture minimally. Although private landholdings have increased from 1% to around 50% of agricultural land, many of the *dekhan* collectives are only private in name. The reality of farming in Tajikistan is that production remains severely limited. A full 76% of rural Tajiks are food insecure, despite owning and living on arable land.²⁴⁴



© EC/ECHO/H.Veit
Field worker

²⁴³ Thomas Breu and Hans Hurni, "The Tajik Pamirs: Challenges of Sustainable Development in an Isolated Mountain Region" (publication, Centre for Development and Environment, Institute of Geography, University of Berne, 2003), 21–23, http://www.cde.unibe.ch/CDE/pdf/The_Tajik_Pamirs.pdf

²⁴⁴ Zvi Lerman and David Sedik, "The Economic Effects of Land Reform in Tajikistan" (study, EC/FAO Food Security Programme, 18 June 2009), <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/aj285e/aj285e00.pdf>

Exchange 12: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	Соҳиби ин замин шумо хастед мӣ?	soheebē een zaameen shoomo haasted mee?
Local:	No.	Не.	neh

Land reform has been a focus of attention in recent years. Farmers have been able to address legal issues that have cropped up over land ownership and rights. Today, because of legal reforms, women have a greater ability to own land and to jointly own land they receive with their husbands when they marry. Women are also less likely to lose their land in the event of divorce. In 2012, women owned 13.4% of farms, up from 2% in 2000.^{245, 246}

Rural Economy

Agriculture is the primary source of income in rural Tajikistan, employing roughly two-fifths of the nation's labor force.²⁴⁷ Private plots, small farms, and small herds of animals provide a subsistence existence for many rural Tajiks. But few people have the resources to save or produce a surplus of food or goods. As a result, they are often forced to sell portions of their limited resources.²⁴⁸ By necessity, many rural Tajiks cultivate cotton, Tajikistan's main agricultural export crop. Government regulations and subsidies provide the resources necessary to employ large numbers of people. In reality, government corruption permeates the industry. Many rural residents have been forced to plant cotton to the exclusion of other crops, leaving people without sufficient food supplies. The resulting poverty has forced families to resort to child labor; children earn money from picking cotton to help their families survive the long winters. The country also exports limited amounts of fruit, vegetables, and silk products.^{249, 250, 251}



© Ibrahimjon

²⁴⁵ Tajikistan Newswire, "Tajikistan to Help Farmers Navigate Private Land Ownership," 19 April 2011, <https://centralasianewswire.com/Tajikistan/viewstory.aspx?id=3858>

²⁴⁶ Central Asia Online, "Tajikistan Strengthens Women's Land Ownership Rights," 12 October 2012, http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2012/10/12/newsbrief-03

²⁴⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tajikistan: The Economy," 2013, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/581047/Tajikistan/73597/Settlement-patterns#toc73599>

²⁴⁸ Thomas Breu and Hans Hurni, "The Tajik Pamirs: Challenges of Sustainable Development in an Isolated Mountain Region" (publication, Centre for Development and Environment, Institute of Geography, University of Berne, 2003), 21–23, http://www.cde.unibe.ch/CDE/pdf/The_Tajik_Pamirs.pdf

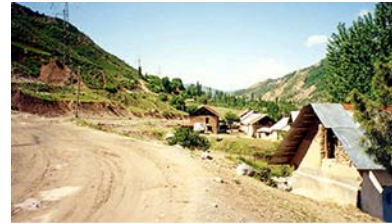
²⁴⁹ Government of Tajikistan, "The Cotton Sector of Tajikistan: New Opportunities for the International Cotton Trade" (document, April 2007), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTAJIKISTAN/Resources/MB_300407_E.pdf

²⁵⁰ *New York Times*, "Cotton Farmers in Tajikistan," n.d., http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2008/10/14/world/1015-TAJIKISTAN_index.html

²⁵¹ David L. Stern, "In Tajikistan, Debt-Ridden Farmers Say They Are the Pawns," *New York Times*, 14 October 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/15/world/asia/15tajik.html?partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>

Rural Transportation Issues

More than 90% of Tajikistan is mountainous, making an extensive network of roads too expensive for the cash-strapped nation. Roads are unevenly distributed throughout the country; they are concentrated in the western portion of the nation where mountains are lower and populations are more concentrated.²⁵² Moreover, extreme weather conditions bring torrential rains, freezing temperatures, and heavy snowfalls each year, which can lead to landslides that destroy the primitive roadways in rural areas. Often it takes months for roadways to become passable after landslides. The civil war that took place in the 1990s negatively impacted rural transportation infrastructure.²⁵³ In most rural areas, four-wheel drive vehicles are necessary to access small mountain towns. Many rural roads are only open for vehicular traffic during the summer months. They are inaccessible or too dangerous the rest of the year. In some rural areas, such as the southwest near the Afghanistan border, road travel poses serious risks because of criminal activity and smuggling in the region. Poorly delineated borders complicate the risks when traveling near international borders in Tajikistan.^{254, 255} Military checkpoints occur frequently, and armed checkpoint personnel have been known to respond vigorously to conflict and perceived threats. In 2012, dozens of people were killed at military checkpoints near the eastern city of Khorog.^{256, 257}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Rural Road

²⁵² Tajik Gateway, “Transportation,” n.d., <http://www.tajik-gateway.org/index.phtml?lang=en&id=1163>

²⁵³ Gregory Gajewski et al., “Estimating the Poverty-Reduction Potential of Roads Projects in Regions Experiencing Institutional Instability Due to Conflict and Post-Conflict Conditions” (conference paper, European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy, Crete, 28–31 October 2004), http://www.louisberger.com/Insights/~media/Files/LBG/PDF/Insights/eaep_e_p_rp.pdf

²⁵⁴ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Travel Advice: Tajikistan,” 19 February 2013, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/tajikistan#travelSummary>

²⁵⁵ Smartraveller, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “Travel Advice: Tajikistan,” 7 February 2013, <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Tajikistan>

²⁵⁶ Tajikistan Newswire, “Military Checkpoints Dismantled in Khorog,” 17 August 2012, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/tajikistan/viewstory.aspx?id=12635>

²⁵⁷ Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, “Tajik Military Checkpoints Removed from Scene of Recent Clashes,” 16 August 2012, <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajik-checkpoints-removed-in-east-town/24679033.html>

Health Issues

Like many other services in Tajikistan, rural healthcare services fall below Western standards. Economic devastation resulting from the civil war had severe consequences for rural healthcare. Many rural areas lacked healthcare professionals, and people were required to travel to urban areas to seek medical treatment. The problem persists today, despite programs aimed at improving rural residents' access to healthcare professionals and services. The World Bank has funded the Basic Health Project since 2006 in an effort to provide quality family care to rural Tajik communities.



© ECHO/J. George
Training local Emergency Response Team

Exchange 13: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	Дар наздики ягон духтурхона ҳаст мӣ?	daaR naazdeekee yaagon dooKhtooR-Khonaa haast mee?
Local:	Yes, over there.	Ҳа, дар онҷо.	haa, daaR onjo

Much remains to be done, and the majority of rural Tajiks lack basic healthcare services. Basic medical supplies are lacking in most areas. Travel to and from clinics is impeded during much of the year when roads are impassable. Frequent shortages of electricity and water impede services. Pharmaceuticals are often in short supply as well. When available, many brand-name drugs are almost certainly counterfeit. Food- and waterborne illnesses are common, and tuberculosis, typhoid, and malaria strike as a matter of course in rural areas.^{258, 259, 260, 261, 262}

²⁵⁸ Dilya Zoirova, "Tajik Family Doctors Working in Healthier Communities," World Bank, 2013, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:23170871~menuPK:141310~pagePK:34370~piPK:34424~theSitePK:4607,00.html>

²⁵⁹ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Tajikistan: Country Specific Information," 7 February 2013, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1037.html#medical

²⁶⁰ Smartraveller, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Health: Tajikistan," 7 February 2013, <http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/Tajikistan>

²⁶¹ British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Health: Tajikistan," 19 February 2013, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/tajikistan#health>

²⁶² Government of Canada, "Tajikistan," 13 December 2012, <http://travel.gc.ca/destinations/tajikistan>

Available Schooling in Rural Areas

The pervasive poverty in Tajikistan makes it difficult for families to educate their children. In recent years, economic hardship has forced many rural men to migrate abroad to find work. Their general failure to effectively support their families in Tajikistan has forced many to keep their children home from school. The labor of children is required to help feed families. In addition, parents are often too poor to cover the expenditures of education, such as shoes, clothing, books, and supplies. This often results in a gender gap in the schools. When forced to choose, parents prefer to educate their boys rather than their girls.^{263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268}

Preschool attendance in rural areas has attenuated, which in turn leaves many children unprepared for further schooling. The result is high dropout rates. Administration of the rural education system is a function of the central government, but it cannot develop overreaching educational reforms because they do not meet the needs of rural school districts. The population of Tajikistan is growing rapidly, especially in rural areas. These growth trends suggest that Tajikistan will not be able to meet growing educational demands. Schools are poorly built and are sorely underdeveloped. Teachers are poorly trained and remunerated. Resources for rural schools are outdated or, more often than not, nonexistent.^{269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274}



© Feed My Starving Children / flickr.com
Child working in watermelon field

²⁶³ World Bank, “Data: Tajikistan,” 2013, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/tajikistan>

²⁶⁴ Education Policy and Data Center, “Tajikistan,” 17 December 2010, http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Tajikistan_coreusaid.pdf

²⁶⁵ UNICEF, “Tajikistan: Life-Saving Hygiene Programme for Students in Rural Tajikistan,” 10 March 2008, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tajikistan_43161.html

²⁶⁶ Aga Khan Development Network, “Rural Development in Tajikistan,” 2007, http://www.akdn.org/rural_development/tajikistan.asp

²⁶⁷ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan, “National Strategy for Education Development of the Republic of Tajikistan (2006–2015)” (report, Dushanbe, August 2005), <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Tajikistan/Tajikistan%20Education%20Plan%202006-2015.pdf>

²⁶⁸ Aga Khan Development Network, “Education Activities in Tajikistan,” 2007, http://www.akdn.org/tajikistan_education.asp

²⁶⁹ World Bank, “Data: Tajikistan,” 2013, <http://data.worldbank.org/country/tajikistan>

²⁷⁰ Education Policy and Data Center, “Tajikistan,” 17 December 2010, http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Tajikistan_coreusaid.pdf

²⁷¹ UNICEF, “Tajikistan: Life-Saving Hygiene Programme for Students in Rural Tajikistan,” 10 March 2008, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Tajikistan_43161.html

²⁷² Aga Khan Development Network, “Rural Development in Tajikistan,” 2007, http://www.akdn.org/rural_development/tajikistan.asp

²⁷³ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan, “National Strategy for Education Development of the Republic of Tajikistan (2006–2015)” (report, Dushanbe, August 2005), <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Tajikistan/Tajikistan%20Education%20Plan%202006-2015.pdf>

²⁷⁴ Aga Khan Development Network, “Education Activities in Tajikistan,” 2007, http://www.akdn.org/tajikistan_education.asp

Village Life

The formal government in Tajikistan is designed to allow varying levels of self-governance. The central government is meant to focus on national issues. Oblasts, the divisional regions of the country, deal with regional issues. Oblasts are divided into rayons and cities, each with its own executive body (*khkukmat*) and council (*majlis*). The lowest level of government is the *jamoat*. This tier is legally recognized in Tajikistan's constitution and functions as local self-government. These formally recognized levels of government are designed to provide for government decentralization so that local communities can implement policies for their own benefit. In reality, Tajikistan's culture of nepotism and providing favors ensures that the hierarchy of control extends in a direct line from the president.^{275, 276, 277}



© Eric Haglund
Mom and child in rural village

Exchange 14: Does your Raisi Mahalla* live here?

Soldier:	Does your Raisi Mahalla* live here?	Хонаи раиси маҳалла дар инҷо мӣ?	Khoney Raa-eesee maahaalaa eenjo mee?
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

*government appointed village leader

Because of this, local governance is overseen by groups called *mahallas*. Although they are not legally recognized in Tajikistan, they have a long history in the culture. A revival of the *mahalla* took place in rural areas during the Soviet era. Today, they are losing ground but still function as part of the cultural identity of rural Tajiks. The *mahallas* are governed by a council of elders known as *shura aksakal* and deal with all issues relevant to the daily lives of people in a particular community.

²⁷⁵ Sabine Freizer, "Tajikistan Local Self-Governance: A Potential Bridge Between Government and Civil Society?" (article, Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science, 5 April 2004), <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan020514.pdf>

²⁷⁶ Mamadsho Ilolov and Mirodasen Khudoiyev, "Local Government in Tajikistan: Developing New Rules in the Old Environment," 3 June 2002, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan008038.pdf>

²⁷⁷ USAID, "Local Governance and Citizen Participation Program in Tajikistan" (final report, Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance, November 2009), http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACA478.pdf

Exchange 15: Respected Raisi Mahalla, we need your help.

Soldier:	Respected Raisi Mahalla, we need your help / advice / opinion.	Мӯҳтарам раиси маҳалла ба мо кӯмаки /маслиҳати /фикри шумо лозим аст.	muh-taaRaam Raa-eesee maahaalaa, baa mo kumakee / maasleehatee / fikRee shoomo lozeem aast
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

Mahallas make decisions concerning the resolution of disputes among family members and neighbors; they decide on marriages, divorces, and other family issues. They also organize public works and services, such as the building and repair of irrigation systems, the building of schools and other public and religious structures, and the care of widows and the elderly. Issues revolving around agriculture, herding, grazing, and water access are all dealt with in the *mahallas*. Funding for projects comes through local contributions of money, supplies, and labor. Because *mahallas* have no legal status in Tajikistan, participation and adherence to the rulings of the *mahalla* are strictly voluntary. But Tajiks demonstrate a high level of trust in their local governing bodies. They actively participate in *mahallas* and go to their village elders first in times of need, crisis, and legal jeopardy. Only when the *mahallas* fail to resolve an issue do locals turn to the *jamoat*.^{278, 279, 280}

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

Tajikistan is a landlocked country that shares borders with four countries: Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Cultural differences, poverty, crime, and long-term international warfare in the region necessitate numerous armed and military checkpoints and border crossings. An important checkpoint/border crossing is the Kulma crossing. In 2012, it began operating year round. Previously, it had operated from May–November, excluding weekends. The crossing lies within mountain passes that rise more than 4,000 m (13,123 ft) above sea level.^{281, 282}



© Ibrahimjon Rustamov
Tanj river, Tajikistan/Afghanistan border

²⁷⁸ Sabine Freizer, “Tajikistan Local Self-Governance: A Potential Bridge Between Government and Civil Society?” (article, Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science, 5 April 2004), <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan020514.pdf>

²⁷⁹ Mamadsho Ilov and Mirodasen Khudoiyev, “Local Government in Tajikistan: Developing New Rules in the Old Environment,” 3 June 2002, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan008038.pdf>

²⁸⁰ USAID, “Local Governance and Citizen Participation Program in Tajikistan” (final report, Urban Institute Center on International Development and Governance, November 2009), http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PDACQ478.pdf

²⁸¹ Zarina Ergasheva, “Kulma Crossing on Tajik-Chinese Border to Operate Year Round,” Asia-Plus, 2 December 2012, <http://news.tj/en/news/kulma-crossing-tajik-chinese-border-operate-year-round-0>

²⁸² Travel Tajikistan, “Arriving by Road,” 2 February 2005, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/roadrail/road.html>

Exchange 16: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Soldier:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	Пости наздиктарин дар кучо?	postee naazdeektaaReen daaR koojo?
Local:	It's two kilometers.	Аз инҷо ду киллометр.	aaz eenjo doo keelometR

Four border crossings exist between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, but because the two countries continue to dispute their border in the Isfara Valley, transport across the Tajik-Kyrgyz border can be denied without cause. Mountainous terrain makes travel dangerous. During winter, roads may become impassable. Similar conflicts have existed between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Although relations between the two countries have improved, border crossings between the nations can be difficult. Uzbeks must purchase exit visas to enter Tajikistan, and Tajik vehicles are routinely turned away from the border.^{283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288}

Exchange 17: Show us the car registration.

Soldier:	Show us the car registration.	Ба мо ҳуҷҷатҳои мошинро нишон диҳед.	baa mo hoojaat-hoy mosheenRo neeshon deehed
Local:	Right away.	Ҳозира худаш.	hozeeRaa Khoodaash

Border crossings along the Tajik-Afghan border are understandably sensitive. Because of the long-standing war in Afghanistan, greater controls have been placed on cross-border trade and relations. Smuggling and other criminal enterprises have sprung up in the region, and violence erupts regularly along the border. Westerners are strongly advised by their governments not to travel in this region. NATO troops still transport supplies to and from Afghanistan through Tajikistan, but the borders are frequently closed to civilian travelers. Most of the checkpoints between these two countries cross the Panj River, making crossings increasingly treacherous.^{289, 290, 291, 292}

²⁸³ Caravanistan, "Kyrgyzstan Border Crossings," 12 September 2013, <http://caravanistan.com/border-crossings/kyrgyzstan/>

²⁸⁴ Travel Tajikistan, "Arriving by Road," 2 February 2005, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/roadrail/road.html>

²⁸⁵ Konstantin Parshin, "Uzbekistan and Tajikistan: Souring Political Relations Damaging Human Ties," Eurasianet, 3 October 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65994>

²⁸⁶ Sergei Medrea, "New Round of Tensions in Uzbek-Tajik Relations," Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 25 January 2012, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5705>

²⁸⁷ Erkin Akhmadov, "Incident on Tajik-Uzbek Border Highlights Uneasy Relations," Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 4 October 2012, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5851/print>

²⁸⁸ Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, "Tajik Police Officer Killed, Another Wounded Near Uzbek Border," 14 January 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-police-killed/24823822.html>

²⁸⁹ Travel Tajikistan, "Arriving by Road," 2 February 2005, <http://www.traveltajikistan.com/roadrail/road.html>

²⁹⁰ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "Borders Team," 2013, <http://www.osce.org/secretariat/43457>

Landmines

Tajikistan acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty in 1999 and has since developed the Tajikistan Mine Action Center (TMAC), which continued until 2011 to report on the country's progress in fulfilling the Mine Ban Treaty. Tajikistan is also party to the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) but has not fulfilled the protocols demanded by the CCW. Landmines, cluster munitions, and explosive remnants of war (ERW) are problematic in Tajikistan. The official stance of the Tajik government is that it has never produced or exported antipersonnel mines. But the Tajik government states that Russian and Uzbek forces mined numerous border locations in the beginning years of the century. The Tajik government destroyed all its stockpiles of antipersonnel mines, leaving none for training purposes. Russia maintains active military posts in Tajikistan, which are reported to have stockpiles of various kinds of antipersonnel mines. The Russian Ministry of Defense has not disclosed to the Tajik government the number and kinds of mines it has stockpiled in the country.^{293, 294, 295, 296, 297}



© Poulpy and NASA
Satellite image of Tajikistan

Exchange 18: Is this area mined?

Soldier:	Is this area mined?	Дар ин минтақа мина ҳаст мӣ?	daaR een meentaaqhaa meenaa haast mee?
Local:	No.	He.	neh

²⁹¹ Hilfswerk Austria International, "2011 Monitoring Report for Import and Export of Shipments at Two Customs Checkpoints in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan," 1 August 2011, http://www.agroinform.tj/project2/publications/en/Border_monitoring_report_ENG.pdf

²⁹² Roman Kozhevnikov, "Tajikistan Seals Afghan Border, NATO Trucks Can Pass," Reuters, 27 July 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/27/us-tajikistan-security-nato-idUSBRE8600L820120727>

²⁹³ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Tajikistan," 2 November 2011, http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/590

²⁹⁴ UN Mine Action Gateway, "Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.mineaction.org/country.asp?c=169>

²⁹⁵ Kamar Ahror, "Landmines Still a Threat on Tajik-Uzbek Border," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 12 September 2012, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/landmines-still-threat-tajik-uzbek-border>

²⁹⁶ Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), "Country Operations: Tajikistan," n.d., <http://www.fsd.ch/country-operations/tajikistan>

²⁹⁷ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "OSCE Office Facilitates Visit of Afghan Demining Experts to Tajikistan," 7 November 2012, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/96924>

Tajikistan has failed to accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The government claims that it does not produce, use, or stockpile cluster munitions, although they were used frequently during the country's civil war in 1992–1997. The Tajik government blames the use of cluster munitions during this time on Uzbek forces operating within Tajik territory. Minefields exist in numerous locations in Tajikistan, mostly as a result of the civil war. Despite efforts to de-mine these areas, the government does not know the extent of minefields being created by an armed group, the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan. The borders with Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan are known to be mined. Approximately 7 sq km (2.7 sq mi) along the Afghan border and 2 sq km (8 sq mi) in central Tajikistan have been formally recognized as hazard areas. The government is conducting surveys of other areas suspected of mine contamination. Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense and the TMAC are working with the Commission on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, Norwegian People's Aid, Humanitarian Demining Team, and Union of Sappers of Tajikistan to create a mine-free country.^{298, 299, 300, 301, 302}

²⁹⁸ Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, "Tajikistan," 2 November 2011, http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/590

²⁹⁹ UN Mine Action Gateway, "Tajikistan," 2013, <http://www.mineaction.org/country.asp?c=169>

³⁰⁰ Kamar Ahror, "Landmines Still a Threat on Tajik-Uzbek Border," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 12 September 2012, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/landmines-still-threat-tajik-uzbek-border>

³⁰¹ Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), "Country Operations: Tajikistan," n.d., <http://www.fsd.ch/country-operations/tajikistan>

³⁰² Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), "OSCE Office Facilitates Visit of Afghan Demining Experts to Tajikistan," 7 November 2012, <http://www.osce.org/tajikistan/96924>

CHAPTER 5 ASSESSMENT

1. Rural people make up the majority of Tajikistan's population.

True

Approximately 74% of the population lives in rural Tajikistan, working land that belongs almost entirely to the state.

2. Rural Tajiks generally have enough food because they are farmers.

False

Agricultural production in Tajikistan is severely limited. About 76% of rural Tajiks are food insecure, despite owning and living on arable land.

3. Women have gained land ownership rights in recent years.

True

Women have a greater ability to own land and to jointly own land they receive with their husbands when they marry.

4. Agriculture plays a small role in Tajikistan's overall national economy.

False

Agriculture is the main source of income in rural Tajikistan, employing roughly two-fifths of the nation's labor force.

5. Government corruption exists in the cotton industry.

True

Government corruption permeates the industry. Many rural residents have been forced to plant cotton to the exclusion of other crops, leaving people without sufficient food supplies.

CHAPTER 6: FAMILY LIFE

Family Structure

Families in Tajikistan tend to be large, although family size has begun to decline in recent years. The nuclear family is the basic family unit. When families have more than one son, the youngest remains at home with his parents after he marries. In this family structure, the elder father rules the family, and the daughter-in-law falls under the authority of the mother.^{303, 304, 305, 306}



© Steve Evans
Tajik women

Exchange 19: Are these people part of your family?

Soldier:	Are these people part of your family?	Ин одамон аҳли оилаи шумо мӣ?	een odaamon aah-lee o-eeley shoomo mee?
Local:	No.	He.	neh

Labor migration is common among Tajik men, which has given rise to a phenomenon known as “distance families.” Many men live and work abroad and do not see their families, sometimes for years at a time.

Exchange 20: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	Ин ҳамаи оилаатон мӣ?	een haamaay o-eelaaton mee?
Local:	No.	He.	neh

Still, they are considered husbands, fathers, and heads of households, although women carry out the role of head of household in the absence of their husbands or other males in the family. Female-headed homes are becoming increasingly common in Tajikistan, especially in rural areas.^{307, 308}

³⁰³ Marilyn Petersen, “Tajikistan,” in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2183.

³⁰⁴ I. Bashiri, “Tajiks,” in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, vol. 4, *Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (New York: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 943.

³⁰⁵ Colette Harris, “Family Relations: Central Asia,” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, vol. 2, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 141–42.

³⁰⁶ AFS, “Tajikistan: Lifestyle and Family,” 2013, <http://www.afsusa.org/host-family/countries/tajikistan/>

³⁰⁷ Sofiya R. Kasymova, “Gender Relations in Tajik Society,” in *Gender Politics in Central Asia: Historical Perspectives and Current Living Conditions of Women*, eds. Christa Hämmerle et al. (Köln, Germany: Böhlau Verlag GmbH, 2008), 43.

³⁰⁸ Colette Harris, “Household Forms and Composition: Central Asia,” in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, vol. 2, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 252.

Male/Female Interactions

From a young age, Tajiks are taught that females should be submissive to male authority. Even adolescents model this behavior. Younger girls submit to the authority of older males.³⁰⁹

Status of Elders, Adolescents, Children

Elders

Highly respected, elders always receive a place of honor in the family. Male elders govern their families, and female elders have authority over younger female family members, such as daughters-in-law. Positions of local authority and governance are held by respected elders in villages and neighborhoods.^{310, 311}



© Veni Markovski
Elderly man

Adolescents

Adolescents play a strong role in the Tajik family. Although many teens attend school, a large number of them have left school and entered the workforce. Because of extreme poverty in the country, their labor is needed to help their families survive economically. For some teenage girls, life can become very difficult. Some girls are married off to older men. Still others find themselves lured by false promises of lucrative employment abroad, only to be sold into sexual slavery in places like Russia or the United Arab Emirates. Some teens try to keep up with Western trends. Many wear Western fashions, listen to Western music, and enjoy spending time with friends.^{312, 313, 314, 315}

³⁰⁹ Colette Harris, "Family Relations: Central Asia," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, vol. 2, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 141–42.

³¹⁰ AFS, "Tajikistan: Lifestyle and Family," 2013, <http://www.afsusa.org/host-family/countries/tajikistan/>

³¹¹ Marilyn Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2183.

³¹² Say No-UNiTE, "A New Life for Tajik Teens," 13 January 2013, <http://saynotoviolence.org/around-world/news/new-life-tajik-teens>

³¹³ Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, U.S. Department of State, "Country Narratives: T–Z and Special Case: Tajikistan," in *Trafficking in Persons Report 2012*, n.d., <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2012/index.htm>

³¹⁴ Sabrina Shakirova and Max Maksudov, "Human Trafficking Plagues Tajikistan," Central Asia Online, 26 May 2010, http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2010/05/26/feature-01

³¹⁵ American Councils Study Abroad, "Foreign Culture and Youth in Tajikistan," n.d., <http://www.aceurasiabroad.org/content/foreign-culture-and-youth-tajikistan>

Children

Children are required to be submissive to parents in Tajik culture. As they grow older, they gain power and influence in the family. Children are respected and loved, but poverty creates numerous hardships for them. Their access to quality healthcare, nutrition, and education is limited. Often they are kept out of school to work, especially in rural areas closely tied to the cotton industry.^{316, 317, 318, 319}



© Jeremy Weate
Tajik bride

Married Life, Divorce, Death

Married Life

In some instances, usually in rural areas, marriage arrangements are made for young people. In urban areas, it is much more common for young men and women to choose their own marriage partners, with their parents' consent.

Exchange 21: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	Шумо оиладор мӣ?	shoomo o-eelaadoR mee?
Local:	Yes.	Ҳа.	haa

Marriage between first cousins is a common practice in all regions of the country. Young brides join their husband's family. Their role and behavior are strictly regulated, and they must prove themselves through silence, diligence, and hard work. They are referred to as *kelin*, which denotes their provisional status, until they have proved themselves, usually by bearing sons.^{320, 321}

³¹⁶ Colette Harris, "Family Relations: Central Asia," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, vol. 2, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 141–42.

³¹⁷ Save the Children, "Tajikistan," July 2012, <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGIpI4E/b.6153149/>

³¹⁸ Valentine Fau, "Children of Tajikistan: Realizing Children's Rights in Tajikistan," trans. James England, Humanium, 1 December 2011, <http://childrensrightsportal.org/tajikistan/#01>

³¹⁹ International Labour Organization, "Activities for the Elimination of Child Labour in Tajikistan, 2005–2010" (factsheet, 30 June 2011), http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/moscow/info/publ/ipec/factsheet_tajikistan_en.pdf

³²⁰ Colette Harris, "Family Relations: Central Asia," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, vol. 2, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 141–42.

³²¹ Gulandom Sharifova, "The Traditional Marriage Ritual 'Nikoh' in Two Tajik Families," in *Transcultural Studies* 2–3 (2008): 309–14, <http://www.schlacks.com/downloads/TS23/Sharifova.pdf>

Divorce

Divorce is on the rise in Tajikistan. Partly as a result of labor migration, divorce is beginning to lose some of its stigma. Economic instability and poverty are partly responsible for divorce as well. Spouses who cannot afford to support their families often initiate divorce to reduce their financial burden. Absentee husbands sometimes divorce their wives because they create new families abroad. Women are also beginning to initiate divorces in Tajikistan. Although women remain second-class citizens, social reforms and necessity have turned many of them into breadwinners. Women have begun to initiate divorces against husbands who are incapable or unwilling to contribute to the financial survival of the family. Divorced women are frequently turned out of their in-laws' home, often with no way to support themselves if they cannot return to their parents' home.^{322, 323}



© Steve Evans
Mother and son

Death

Tajiks believe that people are rewarded or punished for their conduct after they die. People will be judged by their deeds. Those who lived well will go to heaven, and those who failed to live righteously will be sentenced to hell.^{324, 325}

³²² Colette Harris, "Family Relations: Central Asia," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*, vol. 2, eds. Suad Joseph (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 141–42.

³²³ Gulandom Sharifova, "The Traditional Marriage Ritual 'Nikoh' in Two Tajik Families," in *Transcultural Studies* 2–3 (2008): 309–14, <http://www.schlacks.com/downloads/TS23/Sharifova.pdf>

³²⁴ Countries and Their Cultures, "Tajiks: Religion and Expressive Culture: Death and Afterlife," 2013, <http://www.everyculture.com/Russia-Eurasia-China/Tajiks-Religion-and-Expressive-Culture.html>

³²⁵ Pew Research, "The World's Muslims: Unity and Diversity," 9 August 2012, <http://www.pewforum.org/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-3-articles-of-faith.aspx>

Family Social Events

Weddings

Weddings in Tajikistan are elaborate affairs that last up to seven days. They begin with separate banquets for the bride and groom that last for three days. On the fifth day, friends and family of the groom accompany him to the bride's house, where the two make their oaths to each other before an imam. At this point, the marriage is complete. Singing and dancing take place until the bride's family comes to spend the night at the groom's home. The purity of the bride is of the utmost importance. She must prove her purity to her mother-in-law after the conjugal night. Weddings are costly, and poor people in Tajikistan save for years to pay for them. As a result, President Emomali Rahmon has tried to formally ban lavish weddings.^{326, 327, 328, 329}



© Brian Harrington Spier
Wedding party

Funerals

Tajiks are predominantly Muslim and follow Islamic protocols when a person dies. Autopsies are forbidden, and preparations for burial take place the same day a person dies. Family members wash the body and wrap it in a white cloth. The body is placed in a simple coffin, which is carried in a procession to the cemetery. Custom dictates that burials take place on the day of death. Tajiks celebrate anniversaries for the deceased on several occasions after the death: after 7 days, 20 days, 40 days, 6 months, and 1 year. Each anniversary celebration is an organized affair that requires the family to conduct separate ceremonies for female and male guests. Food and drink must be provided for the large numbers of people who attend. The cost for funeral ceremonies and their anniversaries places an enormous economic strain on families.^{330, 331}

Rites of Passage

Circumcision is a rite of passage for Tajik boys. At the age of five, an elaborate ceremony is conducted at which a local religious leader performs the circumcision of the boy. Marriage and giving birth are considered rites of passage for girls and young women.^{332, 333}

³²⁶ Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Culture: Tajikistan Weddings," 2012, <http://www.tajikembassy.in/Culture.html>

³²⁷ Marilyn Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2183.

³²⁸ BBC, "Tajik Weddings Hit by Austerity Law," 14 April 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13065495>

³²⁹ Farangis Najibullah, "Tajikistan: President Seeks Limits on Wedding, Funeral Spending," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 29 May 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1076782.html>

³³⁰ Marilyn F. Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2185.

³³¹ Farangis Najibullah, "Tajikistan: President Seeks Limits on Wedding, Funeral Spending," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 29 May 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1076782.html>

³³² Marilyn Petersen, "Tajikistan," in *Countries and Their Cultures*, vol. 4, eds. Melvin Ember and Carol R. Ember (New York: Macmillan, 2001), 2184.

Naming Conventions

Traditionally, because of their Zoroastrian and Iranian roots, Tajik names took on Persian forms. During the Soviet era, Slavic endings became common, and people added them to their names. The current president of Tajikistan, formerly known as Emomali Rahmonov, removed the Slavic ending of his name and now formally uses Rahmon. The president decreed in 2007 that all Tajiks should follow suit. He has also strongly encouraged people to avoid names that relate to war, insisting instead that people choose names for their children from the Persian epic poem *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*). But Islamic names have become fashionable in the country. Some young people are changing their Persian and Tajik names to Islamic names, and many new parents are giving Islamic names to their newborns.^{334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339}



© Steve Evans
Tajik toddler

³³³ I. Bashiri, "Tajiks," in *Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*, vol. 4, *Asia and Oceania*, eds. Timothy L. Gall and Jeneen Hobby (New York: Gale, Cengage Learning, 2009), 941.

³³⁴ Tahir Kabuli, "Tajik Names," Tajikam, 2011, http://tajikam.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=37

³³⁵ Farangis Najibullah and Zarangez Navruzshoh, "In Tajikistan, Islamic Names Are the New Fashion," Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 6 October 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/In_Tajikistan_Islamic_Names_Are_The_New_Fashion/2182689.html

³³⁶ Richard Orange, "Tajik President Warns Parents of Dangers of 'Scary Names'," *Telegraph*, 3 June 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/tajikistan/8554796/Tajik-President-warns-parents-of-dangers-of-scary-names.html>

³³⁷ Ilan Greenberg, "Tajik President Outlaws Slavic Endings on Names," *New York Times*, 28 March 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/28/world/asia/28tajikistan.html?_r=0

³³⁸ Financial and Banking Information Infrastructure Committee, "A Guide to Names and Naming Practices" (guide, United Kingdom, March 2006), https://www.fbiic.gov/public/2008/nov/Naming_practice_guide_UK_2006.pdf

³³⁹ Press TV, "Tajiks Revert to Persian Naming Conventions," 24 March 2007, <http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/3696.html>

CHAPTER 6 ASSESSMENT

1. Tajik families tend to be small.
False
Families in Tajikistan tend to be large, although family size has begun to decline in recent years.
2. In Tajikistan, all children are expected to leave the family home after they marry.
False
When families have more than one son, the youngest remains at home with his parents after he marries.
3. Female-headed households are becoming increasingly common in Tajikistan.
True
Many women must carry out the role of head of household in the absence of their husbands or other male family members.
4. Females have equal status in the Tajik family structure.
False
From a young age, Tajiks are taught that females should be submissive to male authority.
5. Elders are highly respected in Tajik families.
True
Elders always receive a place of honor in the family, and positions of authority and governance in the community are often held by respected elders.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Tajik teenagers are crucial to the economic survival of their families.
True or False?
2. Tajik parents are generally permissive with their children.
True or False?
3. Arranged marriages continue in Tajikistan.
True or False?
4. Divorce is on the rise in Tajikistan.
True or False?
5. Tajikistan's president has stipulated how Tajiks should name their children.
True or False?
6. The government of Tajikistan is a dictatorship.
True or False?
7. Tajik journalists face harassment and censorship.
True or False?
8. Mineral exports are the largest part of Tajikistan's economy.
True or False?
9. Tajikistan has numerous natural resources.
True or False?
10. Tajiks are a minority in their own nation.
True or False?
11. Equality between the sexes exists in Tajikistan.
True or False?
12. Religious culture in Tajikistan has reduced the rights of women and children.
True or False?
13. The Tajik government arranges for Muslims to participate in the hajj each year.
True or False?

14. Jews in Tajikistan have limited facilities for worshipping.
True or False?
15. Tajikistan has very few mosques.
True or False?
16. Western dress is very common in Tajikistan.
True or False?
17. The Tajik government controls how people dress.
True or False?
18. Non-religious celebrations are banned in Tajikistan.
True or False?
19. Tajiks drink large amounts of coffee.
True or False?
20. It is taboo to step on a Tajik person's foot.
True or False?
21. Hospitals and clinics in Tajikistan are able to offer medical services year round.
True or False?
22. Tajiks value education highly.
True or False?
23. Tajikistan's education system is effective.
True or False?
24. Urban roads meet Western standards in Tajikistan.
True or False?
25. Tajik Police forces in urban areas act aggressively to control crime. Visitors to Tajikistan must be wary of crime.
True or False?
26. Tajikistan has an extensive, well-developed system of roads.
True or False?
27. The majority of rural Tajiks lack basic healthcare services.
True or False?

28. Most rural Tajik children are sent to school from a young age.

True or False?

29. Rural villages make use of traditional forms of local government to resolve issues.

True or False?

30. Russia maintains active military bases in Tajikistan.

True or False?

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