Chapter VI
IDENTITY IN TAJIKISTAN

Identity is a means through which an individual or a group of individuals recognizes itself which has some distinct features that are different from the others. It is not a single phenomenon. Rather, it is the result of the interactions among a multiplicity of phenomena which gather around a sensitive core and give it expression. Since the interactions among the contributing phenomena are diverse, the relations that emerge from the interactions, too, are necessarily diverse, fluid and, thereby, susceptible to change. The following abbreviated model illustrates the multi-functionality of identity, Tajik identity included.

At the most elementary level, the individual is conceived of as a biological entity; a universally defined genetic code assures his or her corporeal development. The individual also carries a memory imprint which, among others, accommodates the body's mental and spiritual needs against the outside forces that comfort him or threaten his survival. In what follows, we shall refer to these outside forces, which determine the identity of the holder of the biological code and the memory imprint, with the term Other. After birth, the physical part of the body expands according to the dictates of the genetic code and its interaction with Other. The individual's main features, for instance, remain as coded while the individual's general appearance conforms to the dictates of Other. At the end, the combination of genetic coding and Other emerges as a human being with a specific physical description. Twins and look-alikes, for instance, accidentally or otherwise, share a similar genetic coding and a similar Other. Physical description is a facet of personal identity. The latter emerges as a result of interactions between the memory imprint and the more abstract and complex side of Other. Visual experience plays a major role in relating the two "worlds" to each other.

While physiologists and psychologists concern themselves with an understanding of the body and the mind, philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists concern themselves with the relationships that obtain as a result of the interactions among the templates within Other. These templates, which reflect the contributions of generations of memory imprints, not only play a pivotal role in the formation of presuppositions but also in the analysis of
current information leading to authoritative decisions and choices. In other words, consciously or otherwise, the individual's world view, social mode of existence, ideological inclination, and ethnic and regional preferences are moulded by authority in conjunction with the information in these templates (Holzner and Robertson, 1979).

After all, as Holzner and Robertson state;

"identity and authority stand in a relationship of mutual dependency".

Identity, whether personal, collective or generational, consists of a fluid set of relations. It develops as a consequence of the interactions among the genetic code, the memory imprint, and other. It does not assume a unique shape and never ceases development.

Figure 6.1: Ethnic groups in Central Asia

Source: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/casia_ethnic_93.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/casia_ethnic_93.jpg)
PEOPLES OF TAJIKISTAN

There are three major population groups in Tajikistan, the Tajiks being the largest with 65%. The next large group is of Uzbeks with 25% population and the Russians 3.5%, which is declining because of their continuous emigration. According to the religious beliefs there are: 85% Sunni Muslims and the population of Shi'a Muslims is about 5%.

The original population of ancient Turkestan and of Steppe Region was of the Iranian stock. In the fifth century White Huns or Ephthalite conquered Turkestan. White Huns were probably also having Iranian descent. During the sixth century the Turks overran the whole region. By the time of the Arab conquest in the eighth century the nomad Iranians had been removed from Central Asia but the Sughdians, who were sedentary Central Asian Iranians remained there. From then onwards the Turkicisation process began, particularly regarding the language, but the effect of Persian culture on Transoxiana, the country lying between Amu Darya and Syr Darya remained and is still visible. The Arab conquests eventually resulted in the most populous part of the region coming under Persian domain. The Karakhanid and Seljuk invasions of the eleventh century carried Turkicisation still further but do not appear to have resulted in the large-scale colonization. Such Mongols as did settle in the region were quickly assimilated with the local population and adopted Turkic languages, Islam and the local culture.

After the establishment of the empire of the nomad Turks in the sixth century, the main influences, which affected the population of Central Asia, were those of Islam and Russian conquest. The effect of the first was deep and lasting. It was almost entirely cultural, although in the fourteenth century the urban population was to some extent affected by the emergence of architects, artisans, artists and captured slaves as a result of Timur's conquests in Mesopotamia, Syria, India and Persia. Very little is known of the way in which Islam was spread, but it was probably more the result of penetration of Muslim merchants than of forcible conversion at the point of the sword. Be that as it may, there can be no question but that Islam is the most prevalent, penetrating and lasting influence, which has so far reached Central Asia.
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At the beginning of the Russian impact, and indeed up to the beginning of the Soviet regime, the distinction of the peoples of Central Asia was not as between nationalities, or even as between Turkic and Iranian groups, but as between nomad and sedentary peoples. At the time of Russian conquest the nomads were exclusively Turkic, but the sedentary peoples included both Iranian (Tajiks) and Turkic (Uzbeks, Karakalpaks, etc.) elements.

Anthropologically the peoples of Central Asia can be classified as follows. The Uzbeks and Tajiks belong to the Caucasoid race of the type known as Central Asian riverain; who are brachycephalic, of medium height and have dark hair and dark eyes. Mongoloid features can be observed among the Tajiks of the plains, and to a lesser extent among the mountaineers of Karategin, and Darvaz and also among the Uzbeks of northern Khwarezm and the Kypzhak Uzbeks of Ferghana (Wheeler: 9). Among the Tajiks of the western Pamir and the Uzbeks of southern Khwarezm no Mongoloid features are present. The Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs belong to the South Siberian type formed as a result of the mingling of the Central Asian Mongoloids with the ancient population of Kazakhstan. The Turkmen are in some respects in a different ethnic class. They have predominantly Caucasoid physical features, but unlike the Caucasoid Uzbeks and Tajiks, they are dolichocephalic and considerably taller. Their type, which is sometimes called the Khurasan type, is related to the Mediterranean group and includes a small but clearly distinguishable Mongoloid element.

Following nationalities were residing in Tajikistan (Astrid, Buschkow and Manutscharjan 2002: 40).

Table 6.1: Population Distribution in Tajikistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native People</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>31,72,420</td>
<td>62.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>11,97,841</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>11,376</td>
<td>0.233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzs</td>
<td>63,832</td>
<td>1.253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>20,487</td>
<td>0.402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.2: People of other nationalities living in Tajikistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of people</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russian, Belorussian, Ukranian</td>
<td>4,37,103</td>
<td>7.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatar</td>
<td>79,442</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td>13,431</td>
<td>0.264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>96,508</td>
<td>1.895</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: From the last groups same are mentioned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>32,671</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>14,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossetians</td>
<td>7,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bashkari</em></td>
<td>6,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>5,651</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But there has been steady increase in the population of Tajiks and decline in the population of the other nationalities, almost all the Russians have left Tajikistan, who once were visible in all the major Tajik cities.
THE TAJIKS

The Tajiks are the largest Iranian people in Central Asia. They are also the oldest ethnic group in Central Asia, but apart from their language and the fact that they have always been sedentary, there now seems to be no real distinction between them and the Uzbeks other than that of language. A large number of Tajiks are bilingual. According to Barthold the word Tajik is derived from Tay, the name of an Arab tribe. In the tenth century, Tazi, a corruption of Tay, was used locally as a generic term for all Muslims.

The Tajiks/Persians gave this name to Arabs in general, and the Sughdians followed their example. After the conquest of Central Asia by Muslims, not only Arabs but also growing numbers of Persians and Tajiks professed the new religion, and all of them came under the term ‘Tajik’. At last the Tajik/Persian speaking converts outnumbered the Arabs, and the ethno-nym, which had once been the name of an Arab tribe, ended up being revived for Tajik/Persian speaking Muslims of Central Asia and their language (Soucek 2000: 32). In the eleventh century the nomad Turkic invaders called the settled population Tajik. Although there is no doubt that the Tajiks can fairly be called the descendants of the ancient Soghdian and Bactrian population of Central Asia, traces of ancient Iranian civilisation do not seem to be any more marked among them than among the Uzbeks, except possibly among the so-called mountain Tajik of the Gorno-Badakhshan region.

Similarly, it is now accepted that no generally accepted definition is available of the people who are now called the ‘Tajiks’. Historians have noted that the term Tajik is derived from the ancient Persian name for the Arab. The term Taz or Tajik thus applied only to the Arab in Persia. In the later times due to Arab inter-marriage with the people of the region meant that in the succeeding generations Persians called them Tajiks. It has also been suggested that since the word was a Persian one it was restricted to the territories which were formally under Persian suzerainty. Barthold traces the appearance of the term to the middle ages. The entire settled Muslim population of the Central Asia thus came to be known as Tajiks, as well as all Irani speaking aboriginal population in the region.
However, some historians are of the opinion that the Tajiks were not the original inhabitants of the region. They were transplanted Iranians who, in the course of the trade mission along the Silk Route, found the region to be attractive. Nineteenth century Persian sources, however point out that the Tajiks were the original inhabitants of Central Asia who had been ejected from the hinterland to the mountains by the Turks. The controversy about the origin of the Tajiks continues. What is being summarized below is this controversy particularly in terms of the continuing debate on the nature of the indigenous population in the region.

Most scholars point out that Turan was inhabited by the Tajiks who were descendants of the Aryans and that the Turks were later immigrants in the region who dispossessed them of their lands thus confining them to the cities and the mountains. The records of the American consul Schuyler who records that Scythians inhabited Central Asia repeat this. Turks were late immigrants and drove out the Scythians/Persians or Irani tribes. Each successive wave of Turkish invaders forced the Tajiks into the innermost recesses of the region. The urban population of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva had a larger number of Tajiks in their midst whereas Turkish element forms the mainstay of the population on the right banks of the Syr Darya.

Similarly, the author of Waqai Tassalut i Russiya bar Asiya categorically points out that the Tajiks are of Irani origin while the Turks and Tatars are of Turani stock. He then goes on to elaborate the differences between the two, based on the fact that the Tajiks are peace loving and devoted to agriculture whereas the nomads spent their lives in warfare. The Tajiks are scattered all over Central Asia. More than 8 million Tajiks live in neighbouring Afghanistan. According to some estimates between 1.6 million Tajiks reside in Uzbekistan while 50,000 live in China and tens of thousands are in Iran (Kuzmin 2001: 175). Some Tajiks live in Uzbekistan, whereas some live in the upper lands of Surkhan Darya, in the valley of the Shirabad Darya, in the mountain valleys of the river Katta Ura Darya, in the high lands of Kashka Darya and the Karshi oases. In the valley of Zerafshan, the Tajiks lived in an isolated manner in the northwestern part from Jizzak to Nur Ata. In the Ferghana valley also the Tajiks are found scattered everywhere in the region surrounded by Turkish speaking population. In the valley of Soz in the south of Kokand, and in the southwest and north of
Namangan. A large number of Tajiks inhabited the Khante of Kokand. A small ethnic group of Yagnoytsev speaking a variant of the eastern Iranian language group were said to be descendants of the Soghdians. In the Surkhan region and in the place between Baisunam and Guzar live a group called the Tajiks who are known by the name of Karburi. Abdul Ghazi had used the word Sart which stemmed from the word Syr. In Bukhara, however, he applied the term Tajik to the settled dwellers. Shergul, however, asserts that Tajiks were infact inhabitants of the region and real natives of the place (Haider: 2000).

Veki Velidi Togan has examined the ethnic origins of the Central Asian peoples in detail. This examination of the ethnic origins of the Uzbeks and the Tajiks is being represented in detail not only because it reflects the complexity of determining the true origins of the two groups but also because it shows how ethnographic studies themselves reflect the personal positions of the ethnographer in the course of the study. For instance, Togan’s pan Turkic sentiment is evident from the fact that he points out that the Tajiks of the region are a mixture of the Turks with the Iranian elements and that their Kavims (may be translated as clan or tribe) had since very early times spoken in Turkish and Farsi/Tajik. Similarly, he notes that Faizullah Khodjaev and Abdulrauf Fitrat, are city Tajiks, who ‘do not for an instant consider themselves to be Iranian, but count themselves as the kavim of Kent Turks. This is extremely interesting as these two men who are projected as leaders of the reconstituted Uzbek nation are claimed by the Tajiks as being of Iranian origin. On the one hand, Togan’s statement substantiates the Tajik claim, on the other it is a reflection of the complexities of the ethnographic situation in the region as also to the problems of determining clear ethnographic boundaries between various groups. Time and again Togan writes of ethnic groups who merged with larger groups and were henceforth known by the name of the peoples he was writing about which makes this an interesting study.

According to Togan, from the historical and ethnological point of view the Turks of the Turkestan can be said to constitute three groups:

(1) The Kypchak group consisting of the Kazakhs, Uruglu Uzbeks, (the word urug may be translated as clan) Mangit- Nogay, and the Kazan Turks or Tatars;
(2) Turk-Cigil group, this includes those who live in towns and small townships, Kent Turks Tarachi, Kashgars and Kyrgys. These first two groups as well as the Onasya or near Asian Turks are grouped together under the name of ‘Orta Turks’ or middle Turks;

(3) The third group is that of the Turkmen Oguz group. They are part of the southwestern Turks and the Yakuts, Sayan and the Altay Turks who constitute the North eastern Turk group. The Turk-cigil group, has been identified by Togan as the most important. Apart from the Kyrgys, they are settled. The Kypchak group still follows a partially nomadic life and has not yet forgotten its clan and tribe oriented lifestyle.

Tajiks are also living in Uzbekistan. The Uzbek census puts this figure around five per cent of the total population. But it is disputed by many writers and statisticians (Foltz, 1996: 213-216). The population of Tajiks in Uzbekistan is estimated to be around 25 to 30 per cent of the total population of Uzbekistan.

The Tajiks in Uzbekistan are facing some problem regarding their language and culture. The pedagogical institute was closed in 1992 and there have been lesser number of publications even in predominant Tajik areas. According to some statistics, Tajiks constitute about 70% of the population in Samarkand and 90% in Bukhara.

**Ethnic Relations**

The leaders of clans manipulate events to serve their own ethno-regional views. The Khujand clan in the north is identified with hard-line communism; the Kulyab clan, also pro-Russian, gained control of the government after a power struggle in 1994; and the Gharm clan region is a stronghold of the Islamic Renaissance movement.

Although Sunni Islam is the most important cultural commonality, it has become a dividing force. The lack of leadership from the Islamic hierarchy allowed fundamentalists to proliferate after independence, and the revival of some ancient traditions in the Fergana Valley could lead to conflict with the neighbouring countries. However, tribal loyalties, Western cultural influences, and the growth of a free-market economy have militated against such movements. The hardships caused by the civil war and the economic transition have
created a negative attitude toward sovereignty and a desire among many people to return to Soviet statehood.

The Uzbeks

Uzbeks are the largest Turkic group in Central Asia, and the largest in the world after the Turks of Turkey. Their name was probably derived from the Uzbek, one of the Khans of the Golden Horde. Since Uzbek himself became a Muslim, his name came to be applied to the Muslim element of the Golden Horde, which constituted its ruling class (Wheeler: 10). During the fifteenth century the Uzbeks occupied the country between the lower Volga and Aral Sea. They first came into historical prominence when Shaibani Khan at the beginning of the fifteenth century conquered and settled in the regions of Bukhara and Samarkand, and later of Urgench and Tashkent, thus supplanting the Timurid Empire. By this time the Uzbeks were no longer in any sense homogeneous: they had become mixed with the many nomadic groups. After the disappearance of the Shaibanid Empire, from sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the term Uzbek related primarily to the predominating elements in the populations of the Bukhara, Khiva and Khokand Khanates. In 1914, the Uzbeks were officially described as constituting the preponderant element in the Samarkand oblast.

The Qarluqs

The Qarluqs were formed as a people after the dissolution of the Turkish Khaghanate in the 8th century. Originally hunter-gatherers and herders, the Qarluqs gradually became involved in settled life as farmers. Since the Silk Road passed their settlements, in Hafrud, they also became involved in trade. In 861, the Qarluqs captured Kashghar and by 960, when they accepted Islam, they were a major force in the kingdom of the Qarakhanids. In time, however, they lost their autonomy as a distinct political group and, seemingly, vanished in the great Turkish melting pot.

During the Soviet era, the Qarluqs were moved south to the Faizabad region of present-day Tajikistan. They can also be found in Sarchashma, Chandqartash, and Bisharik.
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The Qunqrats

The ancestors of the Qunqrats, too, were from the plains of Mongolia. They came to Transoxania as a part of the army of Chingiz Khan in the 13th century. Here they were assisted by the Oguz Turks, the Qipchaks, and the other Turkish and Mongol tribes that had preceded them.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, tribes of the Qunqrats settled in Khurasan, northern Afghanistan and the Shirabad region of Hissar. From there, they expanded into the Zarafshan valley, Mirzachul, and the Khwarazm regions of Uzbekistan.

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the Qunqrats were still semi-nomadic herders. Today, they can be found in southern Tajikistan in Qabadian as well as in parts of Qurghantepppe.

The Laqais

Essentially, from the Turko-Mongol tribes that migrated to Transoxania from the Qipchak plain, the Laqais were among the last to arrive. Earlier this century, the Laqais lived in Dehnau and Surkhandarya in present-day Uzbekistan and in Hissar and Baljuan in Tajikistan.

During the Soviet period, the Laqais contributed to the recovery and development of marshlands in Vakhsh, Kafirnihan, and Yavansu. As a result of their active participation in these and other projects on the lower reaches of the Yakhsu and Qizilsu, today we find good size Laqai settlements in the rayons of Vosse, Moscova, Shahrtuz, and Lenin. There are even some Laqai settlements around Dushanbe and in Urateppe. The Laqais speak a variety of Uzbeki that is close to the Qipchak language of the Kazakhs and the Karakalpaks.

At the present, as agriculturists, they blend with Uzbeks and the Tajiks. They are involved in industry as well as in the other aspects of social development in the republic.
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Identity in Tajikistan

The Kinegas

The Kinegas, a major Turkish group and a contender for the rulership of Central Asia before the Soviet era, are scattered all around the map, from Kazakhstan and Karakalpakistan to Samarqand, Karmina, Bukhara, the Ferghana valley, and northern Afghanistan. Major populations of the Kinegas, however, are found in Shahr-i Sabz and Kitab in present-day Uzbekistan. The Kinegas are herders and farmers. During the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, the Kinegas blended with a number of other tribes to form the present-day Uzbek nation.5

Manghits

Having been swept into the Kipchak plain by the Mongols, the Manghits roamed the region between the Volga and the Urals for about a century. Then they accepted the Turkish language, formed a separate orda as Nogais and invaded Transoxania. Assuming the identity of the Turko-Mongol ruler, Khan Uzbek, who had converted them to Islam, they became part of the Kazakh and Karakalpak population of the region. As the rulers of the Emirate of Bukhara, the heads of the clans lived in Bukhara. The majority of the population, however, lived around Qarshi. Others lived on the shores of the Zarafshan, and in Charju, Jizzakh, and Khwarazm. Influenced by the Tajiks, by the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, most Manghits lived a semi-nomadic life.6

The Qataqans

The Qataqans are settled primarily in northeastern Afghanistan. Before the Soviet era, they used the pastures on both sides of the Panj. Later on, some groups settled in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In 1924, they numbered 27,200.

During the Soviet era, large populations of the Qataqans were included in the populations of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan, they live in the valleys of the Vakhsh, Surkhab, Panj, and Yakhsu rivers. The Kulab rayon accommodates a considerable number of Qataqans in its Paytugh region.
Chapter VI

Identity in Tajikistan

Ismailis

The ismailis are the largest religious minority living in Tajikistan, most of them live in the Badakhshan Autonomous Region. Their practice of Islam is quite different from that favoured by the Sunni Tajiks. For example it is only the Ismailis who recognize the supreme authority of the Ismaili spiritual leader, Imam Agha Khan. Among the Ismailis, Nizarya are the largest branch, and make up over two thirds of Ismaili Muslims. The Ismaili in turn together make up the second largest denomination of Shia Muslims. The Nizariya differ from the Mustaliya in that they believe that the successor-Imam to the Fatimid caliph al-Mustansir was his elder son al Nizar. However, the Fatimid Regent appointed al-Mustansir's younger son al-Mustali as caliph and as a result, al Nizar died in prison when he attempted to claim the throne by rebellion. The current Nizari Imam is Prince Shah Karim Al-Husayni, famous as the Aga Khan IV. There are also several small Ismailis communities found in other parts of the country. They speak a dialect of the Tajik language, mainly Shughnani.

According to government estimates, there are about 2,50,000 to 3,00,000 Ismailis living in Tajikistan. A significantly larger number of Ismailis live in other parts of Asia, the Americas, Africa and Europe. Those living outside of Central Asia provide significant financial, administrative and technical assistance to the Ismailis and other communities in Tajikistan.

Other Minorities

Several other smaller ethnic minority groups are also there in Tajikistan. The Kyrgyzs live mostly in the mountainous areas in northern Tajikistan close to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. These people live mainly in small villages, high in the mountains and make their

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1 Agha Khan is the title of the Imam of the Nizari Muslims, the largest branch of the Ismaili followers of the Shia faith. The Ismaili sect broke with majority Shia teaching in 765 C.E., when Ismail bin Jafar and his followers claimed the Imamate ahead of the designated successor, Ismail's younger brother, Musa al-Kazim, the Seventh in the line of Twelver Shia Imams.

2 The Mustali group of Ismaili Muslims are so named because they accept al-Mustali as the ninth Fatimid caliph and the legitimate successor to his father, al-Mustansir. In contrast, the Nizarya believe the rightful ninth caliph was Mustali's brother, Nizar. The Mustaliya are also referred to as the Taiyabi or Tayyibi group, named after the last Imam recognized by them, Tayyab Abil Qasim. Originally, there was a distinction between Taiyibiya and Hafiziya (who recognized the Fatimid rulers of Egypt between 1130-1169 as legitimate Imams, not Tayyab Abil Qasim).

The Hafizi view lost all support after the downfall of the Fatimid Dynasty; current-day Mustaliya are all Tayabiya.
livelihood by breeding animals—specifically yaks, hirses, prized breeds of sheep—and by commercial farming in the small valleys of northern Tajikistan.

There is also a small community of Yaghnubis, people who speak a dialect of Persian that is different from Tajik. The Yaghnobis trace their origins to a group of ancient people known as the Sughdians. In the past the Yaghnobis lived in the small, extremely isolated Yaghnob river valley, but authorities have moved them into the valleys of northern Tajikistan. Other minorities found in Tajikistan include small numbers of Tatars, Turkmens and Kazakhs.

ORIGIN OF TAJIK IDENTITY: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to the Orkhon inscriptions, under Muhan (d. AD 553), Bumin, and Eshtemi, the Turks ruled a vast area to the north and East of Transoxania. The western wing of this Empire, known as the Empire of the Western Turks became involved in Iranian affairs when it collaborated with Khusrau I in overthrowing the mighty Hephthalite Empire in the 6th century. The Iranian monarch and the Turkish Overlord recognized the Amu river as the boundary between their respective nations. Transoxania, thus came under Turkish influence. Following the dictates of their tribal lifestyle, however, the Turks occupied only the areas that were best suited to their nomadic way of life. The towns and villages were left to themselves.

The 8th century Islamic invasion of Transoxania reversed the situation. The forces of Islam pushed the Turks out of Tranoxiana and held them at bay beyond the Syr River. Fortifications were established at various points to keep the infidel Turks away from the Islamic domains. These check points also served as trade and proselytisation centres. Henceforth, Turks could enter Islamic domains either as slaves or as newly-born Muslims. The circumstances under which such individuals entered the Islamic domains, however, divested them of their nomadic way of life. Indeed, the newly converted were settled in the lime as examples of the good life offered by Islam to those who would accept the religion, settle, and contribute to the expansion of the faith.
During the period when power over Transoxiana was concentrated in the hands of Samanids, the process of formation of Tajik people was complete (Ghafurov: Tajikan, 103). During the Samanid period many cultural traditions were revived, and new cultural values were created.

According to some scholars the word "Tajik" is of Turko-Mongol origin and means (literally) Non-Turk. It has the same root as the word Tat which is used by Turkic-speakers for the Persian-speaking population of the Caucasus. In a historical context, it is synonymous with Iranian and particularly with Persian. Since the Turko-Mongol conquest of Central Asia, Persian-speakers in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Iran and all the way to Pakistan, Kashmir and India have been identified as Tajiks. The term is mainly used as opposed to "Turk" and "Mongol".

History of the Term ‘Tajik’

First mentioned by the Uyghur historian Mahmoud Al-Kashghari, Tajik is an old Turkic expression referring to all Persian-speaking peoples of Central Asia. From the 11th century on, it came to be applied principally to all East-Iranians, and later specifically to Persian-speakers. It is hard to establish the use of the word before the Turkic- and Mongol conquest of Central Asia, and since at least the 15th century it has been used by the region's Iranian population to distinguish themselves from the Turks. Persians in modern Iran who live in the Turkic-speaking areas of the country, also call themselves Tajik, something remarked upon in the 15th century by the poet Mir Ali Sher Navai. In addition, Tibetans call all Persian-speakers (including those in Iran) Tajik.

The word "Tajik" in medieval literature

Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Balkhi (known to the West as Rumi), who made the first usage of the term, Tajik in literature in reference to himself. The word Tajik is extensively used in Tajik/Persian literature and poetry, and various traits of them has been mentioned.
Chapter VI

Perhaps to the King be said,
Your Turk shed the blood of a Tajik

Upon and enumerating infirmities;
Tughral said: To me, it appears to be a reward that we must ready our baggage and move towards rural areas and capture Gurgan and other neighbouring areas as Tajiks are less resource full and without weapons. (Baihaqi: 611).

Seeing the feebleness;

بتاکیک خون بیربخت تو ترک

Perhaps to the King be said,
Your Turk shed the blood of a Tajik

***

اندک بینن وضع شماری
طرف ر گفت: مرا صواب آن می نمایید که به بخش کنیم وسوی دهستان رویم و گر گان (نام محل) وآن نواحی ب گیریم که تاجیکان سبک مایه و بی آلتند
611

Upon and enumerating infirmities;
Tughral said: To me, it appears to be a reward that we must ready our baggage and move towards rural areas and capture Gurgan and other neighbouring areas as Tajiks are less resource full and without weapons. (Baihaqi: 611).

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ناتوان بینی
وتاجیکان که سی سال است تا مال می دهند و هم گان به نواویند و چه کا کردهاند که ما بدین بزر گی (دراند) بس ایشان پله تاید کرد.
بیهقی، ص 257

Seeing the feebleness;
Chapter VI Identity in Tajikistan

And Tajiks have been paying bounties for thirty years and all are capable to do that. What have they done so that they have such huge wealth! Thus they must be knelt down. (Baihaqi: 257).

Compulsion and coercion;

If there is a war we would take Tajiks’ horses as war could not be fought on camels. (Baihaqi: 417).

Bravery and Valour;

Tajiks are the great warriors, most of them are master spear thrower and breakers of columns of soldiers. (Amir Khusro: Qaransus Sadain)
The Tajik slaves stood well and fought fiercely (Baihaqi: 624)

Expressing their inaccessibility and unfamiliarity vis a vis Tajiks:

We are new and strange people, do not know the custom of Tajik. (Baihaqi: 554)

And fifty thousand valiant Tajiks who did not turn up on the day of fighting with those who were as strong as lion and as furious as elephant. They had the strength of twenty giant elephants.... (Al Mojab: p6).
Chapter VI  
Identity in Tajikistan

Regarding the beauty and charm of Tajik maids and young girls;
My beloved Tajik sweat heart plunders hundreds of houses

With her love stricken eyelashes and charming eyes

And if a Turk is the headman of ten Tajiks and if a Tajik becomes the headman of ten Turks then perhaps the country’s affairs would be looked upon properly

Tajik word was used by the Persian speaking communities of Iran, Khurasan and Transoxiana almost in the periods of the 14th and the 15th centuries.  
(Kitabun Naqz: 476)

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in the dictionary of Anand Raj is mentioned that Tajiks were the descendants of Arabs who grew outside Arab land and most of them were traders. So, sometimes Tajik also means traders.

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It is clear that he, too, uses the word as opposed to Turk and other meanings also. The oldest known reference of the word Tajik in Tajik literature, however, can be found in the writings of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, himself being a Tajik-speaker - and thus a "Tājik" - from Central Asia. There are other meanings of the word too. At certain periods of history, the word Tajik also referred to Persian-speaking scholars and clerks of early Islamic time who were schooled in Arabic. In the Safavid Empire, Tajik referred to the Iranian administrators and nobles of the kingdom, linked to the so-called Qezelbāš movement. According to some old Tājik folktales, as well as old Persian books, the word "Tājik" literally refers to the "people having the crown" ("Tāj" means crown in Persian). It is believed that it initially refers to the East-Iranian people who ruled over the Bactrian, Soghdian and Badakhshan highlands and later over other areas of Central Asia and beyond - a region traditionally known as the "crown of the world".

STRUGGLE FOR IDENTITY IN INDEPENDENT TAJIKISTAN

The new nations in the former Soviet Union (FSU) face many challenges in the near future of the kind mentioned above. No nation in the FSU has more symbolic resources, and more confusion about how to marshal them, than Tajikistan.

The cultural dilemmas that the Tajik people face in trying to forge a new nation out of their former Soviet territory, most of these choices do not involve questions of the use of tangible resources, but rather decisions about symbolic resources. Moreover, these choices involve much more than simply choosing from a menu of identities and symbols. These
intangible resources are still ambiguous and somewhat unformed. They will undergo manipulation and concretization in the next few years as Tajikistan creates itself.

The process of symbolic nation construction is already well underway in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. A national epic and hero in Kyrgyzstan, Manas has been incorporated into the constitution. Uzbekistan has decided (for better or worse) that Timur Lang (Tammerlane) is a suitable national hero. The Kazaks are a bit more conflicted about their national identity but they have moved their capital closer to the centre of the nation to split the geographical distance between the principal ethnic groups that make up their population. These nations have the admirable advantage of having financial resources to plan and build. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have potential oil wealth, and Kyrgyzstan substantial financial assistance from the United States and other Western nations.

The Republic of Tajikistan is the smallest and most isolated of the new nations of former Soviet Central Asia. With a population of around six million, and virtually no arable land, it is also the poorest of the new republics. Devoid of virtually all natural resources save hydroelectric power, the Tajiks have a very difficult economic future.

The ethnic composition of Tajikistan is approximately 65 percent Tajik, 23 percent Uzbek, 10 percent Ethnic Russian and two percent Other. Tajiks also live in neighbouring nations, especially Uzbekistan in the largely Tajik cities of Samarkand and Bukhara and the areas surrounding them. The most notable fact about the ethnic composition of Tajikistan is that its population is virtually an island of Aryans in a sea of Turks. That is, most of the Central Asian republics are Turkic. The nation thus has a greater cultural affinity with its Afghan and Pakistani neighbors to the south and with its Iranian neighbors to the west than with its immediate neighbors in the FSU.

Another serious geographical dilemma for the nation has to do with the mountains that split it into three parts that are for all intents culturally separate. One cannot travel between them by road for most of the year. In addition, one of the three regions, the Pamir or Gorno-Badakhshan region has a population which is 95 percent Ismai’li Muslim, a branch of Shi’a Islam owing allegiance to the Aga Khan. This is in sharp contrast to the rest of the nation where the inhabitants are Sunni Muslim, or atheists. The Badakhshan region was an
autonomous oblast under the Soviet Union, and has retained this status in the new nation of 
Tajikistan. The residents of Badakhshan do not speak Tajik or Russian as their first language, 
but rather a variety of Indo-European languages—practically one for each of the isolated 
valleys of the region—that are largely mutually unintelligible.

Tajikistan has suffered under a civil conflict that has debilitated the nation for close to 
ten years. This conflict is puzzling for the outside world. It involves regional groups which, 
in the past, held power at different times. One rough gloss for the conflict would be “northern 
groups” versus “southern groups,” but because of complex alliances throughout the region, 
even this is not strictly accurate. The conflict erupted at the time of independence when 
groups that had been out of power since the establishment of Soviet authority over the region 
re-emerged. These historical power groups won initial elections but were prevented from 
taking office by groups that had enjoyed power in the Soviet Union and (backed by Russia) 
wanted to maintain that power. The older power groups then formed an opposition that 
fomented the civil conflict. A settlement to the conflict in 1997 provided for a sharing of 
power between the “government” and the “opposition,” but fighting continued sporadically 
for a longer period.

With peace breaking out, the Tajiks can now turn seriously to the problem of nation 
building. In a sense, the Tajik nation is a step beyond Benedict Anderson’s notion of an 
imagined community—it is a community of necessity. Tajiks have been given an impossible 
piece of territory with a disparate population and have been forced to make a nation out of it. 
Had Soviet leaders been more perspicacious and anticipated that the Tajiks would have to go 
it on their own, they might have dealt them a better hand, and allowed them the great cultural 
centres of their past—Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Marv—but it was not to be.

Still, the unification of the nation requires the use of some symbolic core. The Tajiks 
face a large range of choices in this matter. Consider the following dimensions from which 
they must choose.
DETERMINANTS OF TAJIK IDENTITY

Tajikistan, a country with long history and vibrant culture has got several determinants on the basis which it is trying to forge a national identity in the contemporary world which is increasingly becoming globalised and cultures are coming as closer and closer to each other. It imperative for a country to have an its national identity to remain least affected by the other cultures.

Race

Tajiks being the only Central Asian country with Aryan race are consolidating themselves on the basis of race. They are surrounded by the Turks on all sides except Afghanistan. Soon after independence there were fears of pan-Tukism which has now subsided. Year 2006 was celebrated as the year of Aryan Civilisation.

Delivering a speech on the occasion President of Tajikistan said;

"The ignorance of the achievements and values of ancient civilization, not paying attention to their historical and creative role for bringing up today’s and future developing generations, will have negative consequences."

"The fate of Aryans, whose true ancestors, as some other nations of the world, we -Tajiks is an amazing and vivid pages in the history of humanity. The Aryan civilization laid the foundation of the history of our ancestors, the birth and development of the tradition of statehood, culture and other national values and additionally it played the role of historical stage for the formation of self-awareness and cognition of the world."

Shrugging of the charges of racism and chauvinism he said;

"In spite of this, concerning our decision to celebrate the year of Aryans’ civilization voices were heard that, as if our initiative has a smell of nationalism and racism. But as we confirmed many times, our steps do not have any political or ideological undercover and do not have and could not have any connection with racism and chauvinism. We know our ancient history and numerous written heritages,
written on our mother language – Tajik very well. Our nation during all its history never picked up a sword.”

Defining the aims of the celebration he added;

“Our aim for celebrating the year of Aryans civilization is once again with new unbiased look see the ancient culture of our nation and get close to its historical roots and its last culture. More than once we spoke about our aspiration as Tajik nation, as other peoples and nations in process of rebirth of its national statehood and rise of the level of national self-consciousness has a complete moral right to guard Aryans history and civilization as real heritage of its ancestors, study its best achievements for its future development. Each deserving representative of the nation should know that our ancestors – Sughdians, Bokhtarians are the ancestors of Aryans tribes, our mother language like other languages in the region, including Persian and Dari takes its roots from ancient Aryan languages.”

Thus the state of Tajikistan is having great emphasis on defining identity its people linking with the ancient Aryan civilisation.

Language

Language is one of the most important components necessary for the formation of a national identity. Specially Tajiks are very particular about their language even during the pre-independence they successfully passed the law declaring Tajik as the language of the republic. Most of the Tajiks speak this and it is the lingua franca of the country.

The problem is that there is a large number of non-Tajiki speakers too present in the country and they are also having their separate schools imparting education in their respective languages. This hinders the close integration of Tajiks as a nation.

The choice of an official language, and by extension a writing system, for Tajikistan is a serious question. National sentiment favours using Tajik as the official language of the nation. Political speeches by both government and opposition officials are given in Tajik. However practicality demands that Russian be retained as an official language, if only a
secondary one. The difficulty is made clear when the instructional system is taken into consideration. In post-Soviet Tajikistan the government would like all school instruction to take place in Tajik. There are several obstacles, however. One simple obstacle is that there are still a large number of people in the country who do not speak Tajik well enough to be educated in the language, whereas Russian is a lingua franca that nearly all adults understand. A second obstacle is that there are simply not enough instructional materials in Tajik to carry students through a full high-school curriculum, much less a college curriculum.

The use of Russian as an instructional medium also has difficulties. Since independence during the years of civil conflict students in rural areas have stopped learning Russian. Thus, a whole generation of young people is growing up without Russian skills. Most of these students have not yet reached high school or college, but the educational problem will be acute in a few years.

The public media is fully bilingual at this time. Newspapers appear in both Tajik and Russian, and Russian and Tajik television programs are available.

The question of the use of Uzbek poses a separate dilemma. Uzbek is primarily used in the Northern region of the country in the Ferghana valley north of the Fan Mountains. In this region, children are educated using Russian, Tajik and Uzbek. But, the financial and administrative strain of this effort is very great.

Media

Government and its agencies are trying to instil the feeling of nationalism through various media. Newspapers cover the stories of that fashion, television programmes are designed in such way that the message of nationalism is there is almost 60% of the broadcast by the government television channel. On regular intervals they play national song of Tajikistan, special programmes about the things to be proud of Tajikistan. There is also emphasis on the ‘values’, Tajiks through various media are told to remember their social, religious and cultural values. During the month of Ramazan there are special programmes broadcast discussing the religious topics. (for details see appendix-3).
But here again the problem is that there are multiple channels, Russian channel have their own agenda and programmes, Uzbek language channel air programme in that language focussing the issues related to the Uzbeks in Tajikistan.

National Heroes

Tajiks are trying to forge a national identity by rallying peoples of different regions, languages and backgrounds to be proud of their national heroes. Famous Tajiki/Persian writers of the past are remembered, their works are glorified. Year 2008 was celebrated as the year of Abu Abdullah Rudaki, 2009 is being celebrated as the year of Abu Hanifa.

Names of the cities, streets educational institutions and others are changed to Tajik figures so that people be aware of their past. President himself is taking the initiatives in such matter. Recently a Decree was issued to change the name of an institute.

Translation into English
Decree of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan

Regarding the government Educational Institute “Islamic College of Tajikistan”

According to the Article 69 of the Constitution of Tajikistan, towards the observance of 1310th anniversary of Abu Hanifa Noman ibn Thabit (Imam Azam) along with his invaluable contribution to the promotion of culture, Islamic civilisation and the importance of his regard to the world heritage in terms of spirituality, in the realm of national identity and dialogue among civilisations; it is being Decreed upon:

1. The Government Educational institute “Islamic College of Tajikistan” should be named as “Imam Azam” Government Educational Institute.
2. The Government of Tajikistan would conform its standard legal documents along with this Decree within two months.

President of the republic of Tajikistan
City of Dushanbe, 3rd March, ear 2009, No. 629

Imomali Rahman

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The reason behind this is given that during the Soviet period Tajiks were deliberately kept away from knowing their past. The present generation does not recognise their heroes and their works and contribution to the Tajik society and to the world so there is an urgent need to make them aware so that they develop a sense of attachment with their nation.

Religion

Religion is another area where Tajiks are trying to develop their identity on its basis. More that 90% of the Tajiks are Sunni Muslims and this is a great binding force for the nation. Earlier the government of Tajikistan was vary of using this as a tool, but now it has decided to use this medium too, Quran were distributed by the government of Tajikistan, free of cost, to the people of Tajikistan. Religious and semi-religious programmes are organised by the government increase the sensitivity among the masses. It is serving dual purpose, bringing the people closer and people can have the correct interpretation of religious
scriptures and keep off from the extreme interpretation and end up being used by the extremist forces.

**History**

For Tajiks history is also a big source which binds them together. Their first empire was formed in the 10th century under the Samanid rulers. Statues of Samani rulers have been installed at many places. National currency has been named as ‘Samani’ for the simple reason that people up to the grass root level be aware of who Samanids were.

Values of freedom are propagated among the common people so that they can have the feeling of an independent nation and contribute to its development.
Other Identities

Apart from the above mentioned identities there are identity at work in Tajikistan as well.

Working Class Identity

Division of Labor: Jobs are assigned according to education and specialization or they are regionally determined. Political leaders and people in law enforcement usually come from the ruling clan, farmers come from the Garm area, and the Pamiris dominate the fine arts. Technical and professional jobs often go unfilled, but the most pressing economic problem is unemployment, particularly among young people. Approximately three-fourths of graduates of middle schools do not go on to receive higher education and cannot find employment. Wages are so low that even professionals take low-skill jobs to supplement their incomes.

Cultural Identity: Changing of Names

During the Soviet period Tajiks were forced to adopt the Russian suffixes for their names. For a long time they used to refer one another with their first name which is followed by their father’s names. And there was also the system of people adopting suffixes for their names which indicated their place of origin like Abu Abdullah Jafar ‘Rudaki’, Abu Abdullah from Rudak area, which is in Tajikistan.

During the Soviet period, names of individuals went under major changes, they were Russianised. There are no last names or traditional family names in Tajik culture any more so the Soviets created family name by taking the father’s name and adding a Russian ending: -ov or -ev for males and for females it was -ova or -eva. In addition, Russian style patronymics, which indicated the father’s first name, were introduced. The patronymic usually ended with a Russianised -vich for males and -ovna for females. Following Soviet name rules, Suleiman Rahman (or Suleiman son of Rahman) was changed to Suleiman Rahmanovich Rahmanov (Suleiman, son of Rahman of Rahmanov family). In formal settings, people called one another by their full names. When talking informally the first name was good enough.
In the post-Soviet era some people decided to “de-Russify” their family names by dropping the Russian endings. Thus Muradov became Murad. Traditionally Tajiks –like most of the peoples in central and southern Asia– have used various titles with their names, mainly with their first names, and have often been sensitive to the use of proper titles. For example, a younger person is encouraged to refer to an older person as aqa while an older or senior person refers to a younger person as uqo. In everyday life, people add the ending jan to first names, as Muradjan to show the politeness. In the pre-Soviet period titles such as Mirza, Bai and Khan were wiedely used in addressing nobility, landlord and officers of the state administration. The title khanum, madam, was used to address the females of the upper class. During the last decade, the use of some of these pre-Soviet titles is being revived.

The Tajiks love their children and are very proud of them. Therefore they often try to chose most poetic or historic names for their children. Many are based from classics Tajik literature. Others have an Arabic origin. Typical names for Tajik girls are Tahmina, Zarina (golden), Zeba (beauty) and Dilafroz (the one who awakens the heart). Typical names for Tajik boys include Alisher (Ali the lion, sher means lion), Ilham (inspiration). Through changing names Tajiks are trying to define themselves as Tajiks and none. They are going back to their historical heroes to name their coming generation.

The issue of identity is hotly debated in Tajikistan. Since independence they are trying to identify themselves with their heroes in the past, their literature. This is same with every Central Asian nations. Each is sifting through its history to find out famous heroes so that they can identify themselves with those great personalities. Tajiks are claiming Samanids as their first state, which was about thousand years ago from now. The establishment of Tajikistan has identified several other determinants like, race, religion, culture, language to proclaim their separate identity. Being a new nation it will certainly some time that the identity is formalised and Tajiks of present day Tajikistan are becoming aware of their national identity, which can unify them into a nation.

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3 Tahmina was the female protagonist of the classic Tajik work ‘Shahname’ by Firdausi