THE MATERIAL CULTURE AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE JEWS OF CENTRAL ASIA

1800-1920

Universiteit Leiden - Research Master's in Middle Eastern Studies

Maïra Kaye

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those who helped me carry out this research project, namely my advisor Dr. Elena Paskaleva, IICAS director Dimitry Voyakin, Alim Feyzulayev, and all the staff at IICAS. I am grateful to the University of Samarkand (SamDU) for hosting me in their dormitory for three months. I thank Rafael Elnatanov for his great hospitality in inviting me to *Shabbat* dinners and introducing me to other members of the Jewish community in Bukhara, as well as Valeria Kraeva and Behruz Kurbanov for their help with my research in Bukhara.

In the age of working from home (wherever that is), the website of Library Genesis and SciHub are indispensable, so a shout-out to Alexandra Elbakyan, as well as to Brewster Kahle for the fantastic Internet Archive. Free access to knowledge for all!

To my family, Mom, Dad, Théo, Tavi, vovó, and, *in memoriam,* vovô.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAPS

ABBREVIATIONS

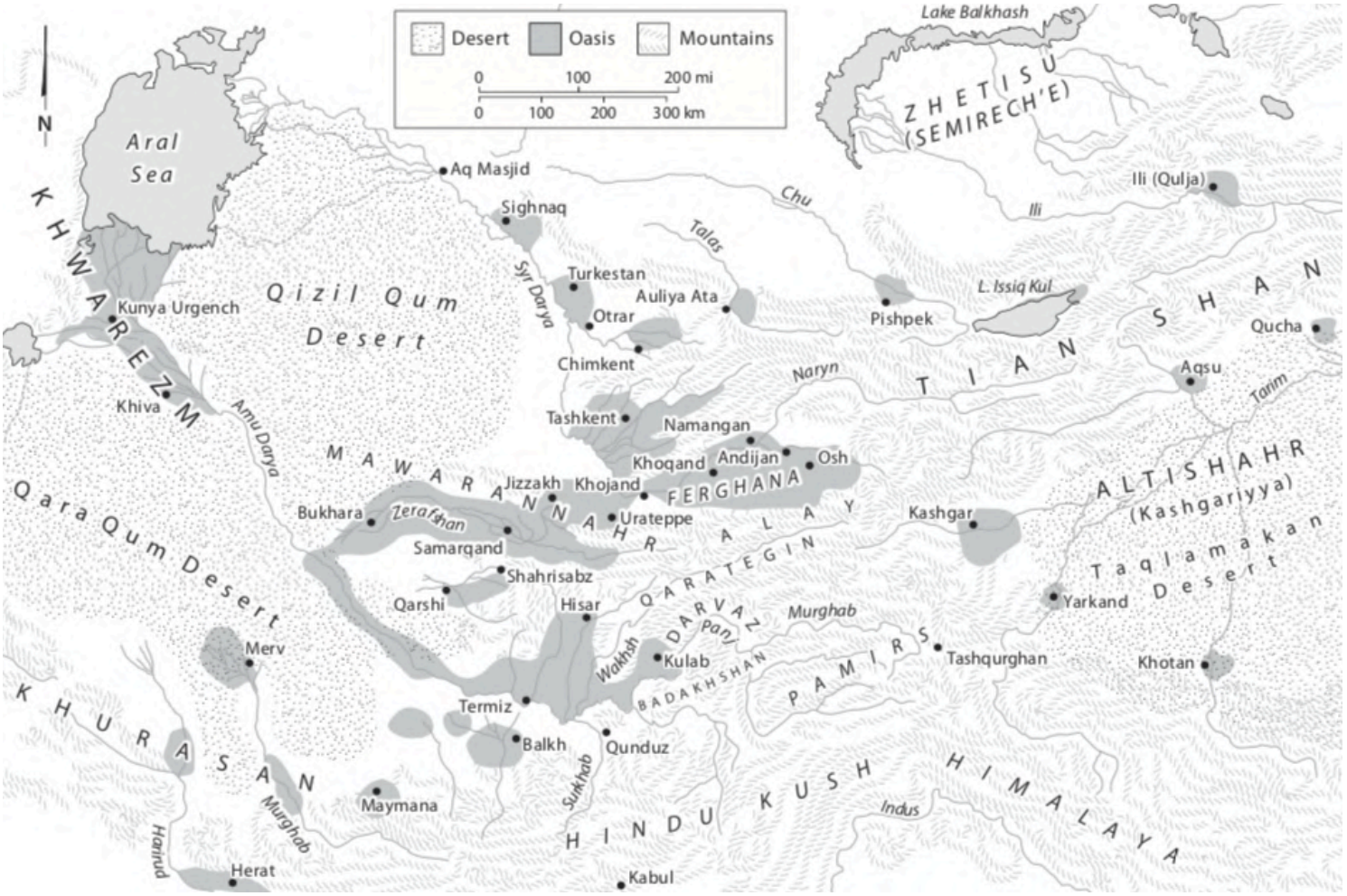
b.	birth
d.	death
Hb.	Hebrew
MS	manuscript
r.	reign
Rs.	Russian
Tj.	Tajik
St.	street
Uz.	Uzbek

GLOSSARY

Ashkenazi	Jews of central or eastern European descent, speakers of Yiddish (a Germanic language), Jews of Russia.
Bukharan Jew	Jews of Central Asian descent, speakers of Tajik.
chala	In Tajik, “not this nor that,” term applied to Bukharan Jews forcibly converted to Islam who secretly maintained their Jewish faith.

crypto-Jew	Jews who are forced to hide their Judaism while publicly maintaining the faith of the majority religion. *Marrano*s in Spain and Portugal, *jadīd*s in Iran, *chala*s in Central Asia, called *anusim* in Hebrew.
emir	Title of a Muslim ruler (Tj, Uz.).
Emirate of Bukhara	Muslim polity ruled by the Mangit dynasty (1785-1920). Most of its territory (including Samarkand but not Bukhara) was lost to Russia in 1868.
dhimmī	Christians and Jews in Muslim lands, forced to pay a poll tax and live with certain restrictions.
ganch	Carved clay gypsum/plaster, used to decorate rich houses, palaces, mosques (Tj., Uz.).
guzar	Neighbourhood (Tj.)
ḥeder	Jewish school for children (Hb.)
ikat	Central Asian tie-dyed warps made of silk, used for coats (*khalat*).
Khanate Kokand	Muslim polity in the Ferghana Valley region (eastern Uzbekistan, modern Kyrgyzstan, eastern Tajikistan and south-eastern Kazakhstan) from 1709 to 1876.
Khwarezm	Region around the Amu Darya river (parts of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). Its most important city was Khiva.
kosher	Meat butchered and food prepared following Jewish law.
mahalla	An enclosed, semi-isolated neighbourhood (Tj.).
miqveh	Ritual bath (Hb.).
Mizrahi	Jews of local Middle Eastern descent who are not Sephardic. This usually includes Iranian Jews.
Tanakh	The Hebrew Bible (an acronym of the three divisions of the Bible; Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim)
Torah	The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.
tuzemnyĭ	"Native" (Rs.), applied to Bukharan Jews by Russians, as opposed to "foreign Jews" (who could not prove they had resided in Turkestan for generations).

vassa	semi-cylindrical poles on the ceiling of Central Asian rich houses, palaces, mosques (Tj., Uz.).
oblast'	Russian administrative region (Rs.)
Pact of Omar	Apocryphal treaty specifying the rights of minorities under Muslim rule.
parokhet	Torah ark curtain (Hb.)
Sart	Settled inhabitant of Central Asia, including Tajiks and Uzbeks.
Sephardic	Jews of Spanish or Portuguese descent, speakers of Judeo-Spanish. Sephardic Jews spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Though Bukharans followed the Sephardic rite until they became Lubavitchers, they are not Sephardic Jews.
suzani	Embroidered tapestry (Tj., Uz.)
Transoxiana	Region between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, southern Kyrgyzstan, and southwest Kazakhstan).



Map 1: Central Asian Geography (from Scott C. Levi, *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand, 1709-1876.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), xxii).

Map 2: Main Jewish settlements in Central Asia. Blue dots correspond to areas inhabited by the Mashhadi Jewish diaspora, while red dots correspond to cities settled by Bukharan Jews (which also include a fair proportion of Mashhadi Jews). For a more detailed view, see the Google Map created by author: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1PVk8FcyfudUKIMfS-StQjINYauwuMKAN&usp=sharing.

INTRODUCTION

The Bukharan Jews exist in the popular imagination of Western Jewry as an exotic faraway community, descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel, with a hazy history extending to the distant past.[1] In fact, Bukharan Jews are well documented in the history of the past few centuries, were spread across Central Asia ―modern-day Uzbekistan, eastern Turkmenistan, northern Tajikistan, and eastern Kyrgyzstan―, and spoke Judeo-Tajik, a Tajik dialect closely related to standard Persian. Their second language, since the late 19th century, has been Russian, due to the enormous influence wielded by the Russian Empire (later politically reorganised as the Soviet Union) in the region through its colonialism and cultural imperialism from 1867 to 1991. Educated men are, furthermore, versed in Hebrew. Rather than a people frozen in time, the history of Bukharan Jews demonstrates their dynamism, filled with economic ambition and enterprise to better their social position and that of their community.

This thesis concerns the material culture and architecture of the Jews of Central Asia, the vast majority of which dates to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when Jewish communities of the region experienced a period of great economic prosperity, in large part due to trade with Russia, and the newly found political safety from forced conversions to Islam with its restrictions of dhimmihood that they had endured under the rule of the Emirate of Bukhara (1753–1920).[2] These favourable conditions allowed a certain class of Jews to build richly decorated houses in Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, and Tashkent. A portion of these houses were expropriated by the state during the Sovietisation of Uzbekistan in the 1920s, and have in large part been sold or abandoned

[1] Back in 1846 Joseph Wolff (1795-1862) travelled to Bukhara "in order to see whether the Jews there are of the ten tribes of Israel." Joseph Wolff. *Travels and adventures of the Rev. Joseph Wolff.* (Saunders, Otley and Co., 1861), 295.
[2] Rudolf Lowenthal, *The Judeo-Muslim Marranos of Bukhara: Two Russian Articles,* Central Asian Collectanea, No. 1. Washington D.C. For *dhimmī,* see Glossary.

following the emigration of nearly all of Uzbekistan's Jewry to either Israel or the United States after the 1991 independence of Uzbekistan from the Soviet Union.[3]

This thesis will analyse the artefacts and architecture of Bukharan Jews during this century of enormous change. It will examine textiles, amulets, and religious paraphernalia, which are spread across museum collections in Europe, Central Asia, the United States, and Israel. It will also investigate the architectural remains of houses, synagogues, cemeteries, and *miqveh*s built during this period. Though much of this material is available online, no-one has yet used it for a comprehensive study, since most work on Bukharan Jews has mostly been historiographical in nature, dealing with texts. This thesis shall show how objects and architecture can enrich our perspective on history, giving us a greater understanding of the socio-cultural life of Jews in Central Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries.

This study will help expand our knowledge of the variety of Jewish experience throughout the Islamic world, particularly in the under-explored realm of Jewish art. Studies of Jews in the Islamic world is predominantly concerned with socio-economic history and Jewish scholarship, due to the enormous amount of manuscript evidence which have survived, particularly of epistolary or theological nature.[4] These studies, of immense interest to understanding the social life of Jews

[3] Catherine Poujol and Elyor Karimov. "Les juifs de Boukhara ou la fin d'un espace-temps doublement minoritaire (1897-1918)," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 107-110 (2005): 351-374.

[4] The Cairo Geniza has provided information on Jews throughout the Islamic Mediterranean, see Shlomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean society: the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza, vol. I: Economic foundations.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Moshe Gil, "The Jewish Quarters of Jerusalem (AD 638-1099) According to Cairo Geniza Documents and Other Sources." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41.4 (1982): 261-278. Phillip I. Ackerman-Lieberman, *The Business of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and Economic Life in Medieval Egypt*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014). Mark R. Cohen,"Correspondence and social control in the Jewish communities of the Islamic world: A letter of the nagid Joshua Maimonides." *Historiya yehudit= Jewish history* 1.2 (1986): 39-48. Shai Srougo, "The social history of Fez Jews in the gold-thread craft between the Middle Ages and the French colonialist period (sixteenth to twentieth centuries)." *Middle Eastern Studies* 54.6 (2018): 901-916.
For general overviews of Jewish history in the Islamic world (based solely on written evidence): Bernard Lewis, *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. Mark R Cohen, *Under crescent and cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press, 1994. Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora, eds., *A History of Jewish-*

in cities of the Islamic world, their role in trade and medicine, their political organisation, and their treatment by the majority Muslim population, unfortunately make little to no reference to the material culture of the people in question. This is due to the fact much of the study of Jews in the Islamic world has been performed by social historians, economic historians, and literary scholars. Only recently has the material world of Oriental Jews attracted interest, with most attention paid to Jews from Iran.[5]

Methodology

The research for this thesis was conducted by accessing a variety of digital archives, the most important of which is the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art, established by the Center for Jewish Art, a research institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Created in 1979, the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art digitally exhibits objects of Jewish art in 700 museums, libraries, private collections and synagogues across forty-one countries, and is completely free to access and use. It contains 592 Jewish items from Uzbekistan. Many of these are photographs of Jewish

Muslim Relations: From the origins to the present day. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). Norman A. Stillman *The Jews of Arab lands.* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979).
For Jewish scholarship, see Frank, Daniel H., and Oliver Leaman, eds., *The Cambridge companion to medieval Jewish philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Arthur Hyman, "Jewish philosophy in the Islamic world." *History of Islamic Philosophy* 1 (1996). Colin F. Baker, "Islamic and Jewish medicine in the medieval Mediterranean world: the Genizah evidence." *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 89.10 (1996): 577-580. Lisa Lital Levy, *Jewish writers in the Arab East: Literature, history, and the politics of enlightenment, 1863–1914.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). Dov Schwartz, *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*. (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Rina Drory, "Literary Contacts and Where to Find Them: On Arabic Literary Models in Medieval Jewish Literature." *Poetics Today* (1993): 277-302. William M. Brinner, "Popular Literature in Medieval Jewish Arabic," *Judaeo Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1997), 75-88.

[5] Qaṭrin Qoğman-Appel, *Jewish Book Art Between Islam and Christianity: The Decoration of Hebrew Bibles in Medieval Spain*. (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Shalom Sabar, "From Amsterdam to Bombay, Baghdad, and Casablanca: The influence of the Amsterdam Haggadah on Haggadah illustration among the Jews in India and the lands of Islam." *The Dutch Intersection*. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 279-299. ————. "The Preservation and Continuation of Sephardi Art in Morocco." *European Judaism* 52.2 (2019): 59-81. Esther Juhasz, *The Jewish Wardrobe: From the Collection of the Israel Museum* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2016). Jihan-Jennifer Radjai, "The Judeo-Persian Carpets of Kashan: Zionist Art and Cultural Craft Manufactured in Iran." *Studia Rosenthaliana* 45 (2014): 135-152. David Yerushalmi, *Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews*. (Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2013). See the articles by Sabar, Carmeli and Goldstein concerning the material culture of the Jews of Iran in Houman M. Sarshar, ed. *The Jews of Iran: The history, religion and culture of a community in the Islamic world.* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014).

houses, taken by a project headed by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, under the direction of architect and archaeologist Zoya Arshavsky. Her project digitised the photographs, architectural plans and Soviet architectural reports of sixty Jewish houses from Bukhara, Samarkand, Shahrisabz, Kokand, Ferghana, and Margilan from the late 19th to early 20th century, as well as fifteen synagogues.

In addition to the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art, I accessed the online collections of the Jewish Museum of New York, the Jewish Museum of London, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Musée d'art et d'histoire du Judaïsme in Paris (MAHJ), which all contained photographs of objects owned by Bukharan Jews and which now reside in these museum collections.

With regards to physical archives, few could be visited. I was able to gain entry to the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore thanks to letters and support from the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS) in Samarkand, with whom I was put in touch by my supervisor. Yet, due to the pandemic restrictions, it became difficult to visit other museums. There is also a large collection of items in the in the Bukharian Jewish Museum in New York City (2,000 artefacts from Uzbekistan, including textiles, ceramics, metal trunks, brass pots, as well as Soviet objects),[6] but it could not be consulted due to their lack of an online collection.

Besides digital and physical archives, the information gathered for this thesis was enriched by fieldwork, through visits to the many synagogues and old Jewish houses in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. Walking in the cities, speaking with Bukharan Jews, spending *Shabbat* dinner and going to synagogue services with them provided context, which studying objects as digital photographs on a screen would have lacked. Research in other countries could not be carried out due to the travel restrictions under the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, it would have been

[6] Daniel Belasco. "A Museum Grows in Queens," March 1, 2002. https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/a-museum-grows-in-queens/

interesting to visit the small to medium-sized towns in Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan (and Afghanistan) where Bukharan Jews had synagogues and cemeteries in the late 19th century, but where no Jewish communities remain, and to see if anything is left of those sites. Hopefully, the lists I have compiled of these sites and the information in this thesis can help any future scholar curious to find more about the history of Jews in these locations.

Chapter 1 of this thesis shall present an overview of Bukharan Jewish history in order to provide a context for the study of the material culture. It shall also examine how Jews of Central Asia have been studied by ethnographers and attempts to display their material culture, thus serving as a literature review. Chapter 2 shall analyse Bukharan Jewish artefacts, namely textiles and their religious artefacts—amulets, Torah cases, Torah finials. Finally, in Chapter 3, we shall explore the architecture of Bukharan Jewish houses and synagogues, as well as examine other physical locations of Jewish identity in Central Asia. The thesis shall show how Bukharan Jewish material culture in the 19th-20th centuries translated a unique melting pot of influences from eastern Iran and Afghanistan, Israel, and Russia, all whilst maintaining their own distinct identity by using local textiles and local architectural techniques.

CHAPTER 1. THE HISTORY AND STUDY OF BUKHARAN JEWS

1.1. Historical Context

1.1.1. The Jewish Past in Central Asia, between History and Legends

There is much speculation as to the first appearance and settlement of Jews in Central Asia. Most evidence prior to the 19th century relies on scant historical documents, a few isolated mentions by travellers, practically no archaeological material, and a variety of local legends. Although there has been a Jewish presence in greater Central Asia since at least the sixth century BC (in Khorasan),[7] they did not remain in one area continuously. Most Jews of the region before and during the Arab conquest of Central Asia lived in the regions of Khorasan (in Iran), from which they eventually migrated to Khwarezm (in Turkmenistan). Hebrew inscriptions dating to the first and third century AD and ossuaries dating to the sixth century were found in the city of Marv and Bayram-Ali. Jewish religious scholar Semu'el bar Bisena lived in Marv during the fourth century.[8] As Parvaneh Pourshariati has argued, "from the eve of [the] Arab conquest of Transoxiana in the middle of the seventh century well into [the] early Abbasid period, there was a very direct and intimate connection between the Jewish communities of Marv, Juzjanan [Guzgan, Afghanistan], Gorgan, and finally Rayy."[9] This intimate connection between the Jews of the cities of Khorasan and Khwarezm (Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran) would continue throughout medieval period into the 19th and 20th centuries, as we shall see below.

[7] This is the time when they are estimated to have been in greater Iran under Achaemenid rule. Michael Zand. "Bukhara Jews," Encyclopædia Iranica. New York; London, 1989. Vol. IV.: http://www.iranica.com/articles/bukhara-index-350.
[8] V. A. Livshits and Z. I. Osmanova, "New Parthian Inscriptions from Old Merv." In *Irano-Judaica III*, ed. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer, 99–105. (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994). The inscriptions were found in the old city citadel "Erk-qala". Albert Kaganovitch, "The Jewish Communities of Central Asia in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods." *Iranian Studies* 52.5-6 (2019): 923.
[9] Parvaneh Pourshariati ,"Patterns of Jewish Settlement in Iran," in Houman M., ed. *The Jews of Iran: The history, religion and culture of a community in the Islamic world*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 16.

After the Arab conquest of Khwarezm, some Jews spread eastwards to Transoxiana, while others continued to inhabit the region around Marv and Khwarezm.[10] The earliest reference to Jewish presence in Samarkand is made in 1167 by medieval traveller Benjamin of Tudela, who estimated a Jewish population of 50,000 (though this may be an exaggeration) and wrote that "among them are wise and very rich men".[11] The first mention of Jewish presence in the city of Bukhara is in 1239 (when a great massacre of Jews and Christians was ordered by a Sufi), and a substantial number of copies of religious manuscripts are made in the city in the 15th century, indicating that the community had grown and thrived during this period, despite occasional persecution.[12] According to Ibn Battuta, Chagatai khan Buzun (r. 1334-5) allowed Jews and Christians to rebuild their centres of worship (this after the previous khan had destroyed them, and the khan following Buzun did not extend any more favours to *dhimmī*s).[13] In the early 14th century, Arab historian al-Omarī reported that Jews (and Christians) were allowed to own up to one hundred houses in the city of Khwarezm.[14] Jews thus had a medieval presence in Khwarezm, Samarkand, Bukhara, and their surrounding areas.

From the 14th to 20th centuries, there is a continuous Jewish literary production in Central Asia, through the compilation of Hebrew-Persian dictionaries, the translation of sections of the *Tanakh* (Hb. Pentateuch) from Hebrew into Judeo-Persian, the composition of commentaries on the Tanakh, and the writing of Judeo-Persian poetry.[15] The earliest known Jewish work from Central Asia is the 1339 Judeo-Persian/Hebrew dictionary, *Sefer ha-Meliẓah*, compiled by

[10] Ṭabarī mentions Jews residing in the cities of Kat in 712 and Marv in 747 (Zand, "Bukhara Jews").
[11] Marcus Nathan Adler, *The itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: critical text, translation and commentary*, ed. Henry Frowde, 1907, https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/tudela.html.
[12] Zand. "Bukhara Jews," Kaganovitch, "The Jewish Communities," 932
[13] H.A.R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325-1354, Volume 3*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 545.
[14] Kaganovitch, "The Jewish Communities"
[15] Amnon Netzer, "Judeo-Persian Communities Ix. Judeo-Persian Literature," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, XV/2, 139-156, accessed at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-ix-judeo-persian-literature.

Shelomo b. Shmuʿel in Gorganj (modern-day Urgench, a city in the Khwarezm region), and copied in Marv in 1473.[16] The 17th-19th centuries were especially fruitful for the production of Judeo-Persian poetry in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, with surviving manuscripts of poems by Khwaja Bokharaʾi and Yusuf Yahudi from Bukhara, and Elishaʿ ben Shamuʾel (known as "Mulla Raghib") from Samarkand. Bukhara of the period is considered the "center of Judeo-Persian literature and learning," the "crown jewel" of which would be Khwaja Bokharaʾi's 1606 *Danial-nameh,* adapted and rewritten a century later by the Kashani poet Amina.[17] It can be deduced that Judeo-Persian poets from Central Asia and Iran read each other's poetry, and they likely considered themselves as part of the same literary tradition. Bukharan poet Yusuf Yahudi (1688–1755) was inspired by earlier Jewish Shirazi poets Shāhīn and ʿEmrānī to write epics based on biblical heroes, such as *Haft Braderan* ("The Seven Brothers") about the martyrdom of Hannah.[18] The 1809 Judeo-Tajik poem *Ba Yodi Khudoidod* ("In the memory of Khudoidod") by Ibrahim ibn Abi'l Khair recounts the distress of a Bukharan Jew named Khudoidod ("God gave," using the Tajik word *khudo* for God), who prefers death to forced conversion to Islam, a prevalent practice in Bukhara in the 18th and 19th centuries.[19] Ibrahim ibn Abi'l Khair's description of forced conversion in early 19th century Bukhara continues the legacy of similarly themed epics from Iran, such as the *Ketāb-e Anusi* ("The Book of a Forced Convert"), about forced conversions in Kashan.[20]

[16] Wilhelm Bacher. *Ein hebräisch-persisches Wörterbuch aus dem vierzehnten Jahrhundert*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900). Jewish Theological Seminary, MS 1497.
[17] Habib Borjian, "Judeo-Iranian Languages." *Handbook of Jewish languages.* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 234-297.
[18] Walter Fischel, "Yahudi, Yusuf" in *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 4 ed. Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007), 273.
[19] Salemann studied a manuscript in the St. Petersburg collection of Oriental Manuscripts; Adler sold another to the Jewish Theological Seminar (MS 1493). Carl Salemann. "Chudaidat. Ein Jüdisch-Bucharisches Gedicht." *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, VIIe Série. Tome XLII, No. 14. St. Petersburg, 1897.
[20], Vera Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study on Bābāī ibn Luṭf's Chronicle (1617–1662).* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987). ————. *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion: The Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān of Bābāī b. Farhād*. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990).

Most Judeo-Persian manuscripts dating to this period were acquired in Bukhara by European collectors, in the largest quantity by Elkan Nathan Adler, who travelled to Bukhara in 1886. He acquired manuscripts by bidding to inhabitants at their houses, as well as by trying to loot the *genizah*s of the cemetery ("the cemetery was also dug up in five places, but unfortunately the worm-eaten and earth-stained fragments we found were not worth all the trouble") and of the synagogue ("in the old synagogue at Bokhara was in an attic in the eaves of the roof. Sifre Torah, I was told, had been walled up in the alcoves of the building some ten years ago, but only Sifre Torah as they said. Notwithstanding that assurance, I would have done my best to have the plaster removed and have seen for myself..."). [21] He mentions that the manuscripts from Bukhara were written in places from across the Persianate world (Herat, Teheran, Cashmere, Mashhad, Isfahan, Yazd, Rasht, Kashan, as well as Bukhara). They include astrological charms, short stories, Hebrew-Tajik daily prayers (*siddur*), Pentateuch translations, Jewish liturgical poems (*piyutim*) and secular poetry in Judeo-Persian.

Fortunately for the public, in 1921 Adler sold most of his private collection, which consisted of at least sixty Judeo-Persian and Hebrew manuscripts from Bukhara and Samarkand, to the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati and the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York. [22] Another collection, of twenty-eight Bukharan manuscripts bought in 1915, is in the St. Petersburg Collection of Oriental Manuscripts, assembled by the German-born Russian orientalists Carl Salemann and Vladimir Ivanov. [23]

[21] Elkan Nathan Adler, "The Persian Jews: Their Books and Their Ritual," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 10.4 (1898): 584-625. A *genizah* is a room used to store old texts.
[22] Dalia Yasharpour, "ADLER, ELKAN NATHAN," Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition, 1982, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/adler-elkan-nathan
[23] I. I. Gintsburg, *Catalog of Jewish Manuscripts in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science*s. (Memorial Edition New York and Paris, 2002).

The historical evidence of Jewish settlement in Central Asia outlined above can be compared with legends that Bukharan Jews hold over their own history. There are competing theories; some say that they are indeed one of the ten lost tribes, others affirm with precision that their ancestry dates back 2,000 years (hence, around the year zero, or seven centuries prior to the Arab conquest), while others attribute their presence to a myth by which they were brought from Baghdad (or Shiraz) in 1401 by emir Tīmur (r. 1370-1405, known in Western sources as Tamerlane). In the 17th century, the Persian-speaking Jews of China were recorded narrating a similar version of this legend, according to which Tīmur would have brought the Jews to China. [24] The Jewish-born Christian missionary Joseph Wolff visited the Jews of Bukhara in 1832, and recorded this Chinese migration story (though they said it was under Chinggis Khan, rather than under Tīmur, that Jews migrated from the cities of Khorasan, Balkh, and Kabul to China), and the following account of their relocations across Central Asia:

> They lived in this empire for centuries, until they were expelled by the Tshagatay, the people of Tshinghis Khan; and then they settled in Sabziwar, and Nishapoor in Khorassan, and Shahr-Sabz; and, centuries afterwards, the greater part returned from Shahr-Sabz to Bokhara, Samarcand, and Balkh. And Timoor Koorikan (called falsely by the Europeans, Tamerlane) gave them a great many privileges; and, at Balkh, the mother of cities, he gave them a whole beautiful quarter of their own, with a gate to enclose it; and so they lived in peace and prosperity.[25]

According to amateur historian/*kraeved*[26] Michael Shterenshis, there is a letter kept in the collection of the Ahmad Donish Institute, which dates to 1450 and corroborates the story that Jews lived in Bukhara under and after Tīmur: "His grandfather had a large trade when Tīmur the Strong was in full power," wrote the Jew Yosef b. Musa of Sokhar (near Bukhara).[27].

---

[24] Pan Guangdan, "Jews in Ancient China-A Historical Survey," in Shapiro, S. (1984*) Jews in Old China*, (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1983), 72.
[25] Wolff, *Travels and Adventures*, 339.
[26] More on this term in section 1.2.3.
[27] Quoted in Michael Shterenshis, *Tamerlane and the Jews*. (London: Routledge, 2013), 45. He does not give an accession number to this letter, so its existence cannot be confirmed. According to Shterenshis, there are also legends

Some Jews set a much later date to their arrival in the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand; the Jews encountered by Russian Orientalist explorer and Turkologist Radloff in 1880 informed him that they had migrated from Persia to Bukhara 100 or 150 years prior (hence, around 1730-1780), and from there had gone on to Samarkand.[28] In 1834, Scottish traveller Alexander Burnes noted: "[t]here are about 4,000 Jews in Bokhara, **emigrants from Meshid in Persia,** who are chiefly employed in dying cloth."[29] Another European visitor, Armenius Vámbéry, wrote in 1835 that "in their origin, they are Jews from Persia, and have wandered hither from Kazvin and Merv, about 150 years ago."[30] Many Jews in Bukhara state to this day that they are originally from Iran, brought to Bukhara 200 years ago by a Persian king.[31] Hence, while there certainly is a medieval history of Jews living across the cities and regions of Marv, Khwarezm, Samarkand, and Bukhara, migrations from Iran in the 18th century brought a large new demographic influx into the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, transforming them into important centres of Central Asian Judaism.

1.1.2. The 19th and 20th centuries

During the first half of the 19th century, Jewish traders began making incursions into the territories east of Samarkand. Some merchants and dyers of silk began to settle in cities of the Ferghana Valley, in Kokand and Khujand. They traded their wares, primarily textiles, all the way to Russia, as trade routes between Russia and Central Asia became easier to travel since Russia

about David ha-Tsadik (a Jewish equivalent to the Nasredin Ependim figure), who is said to have been minister to Tīmur This may be the minister in Balkh about whome the Bukharans told Wolff: "One of the prime ministers, who was called 'the second after the king' (in Hebrew, Shenee-lameleti), and was the chief secretary to royalty, was a Jew from Germany," *Travels and Adventures*, 339.

[28] V. Radloff, "Srednyaya zerafshanskaya dolina," *Zapiski Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva 6*, (Saint Petersburg: Obshchestva po otdelu etnografii 1880), 38.

[29] Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara, Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia.* (London: John Murray, 1834), vol. 2, 235. My emphasis.

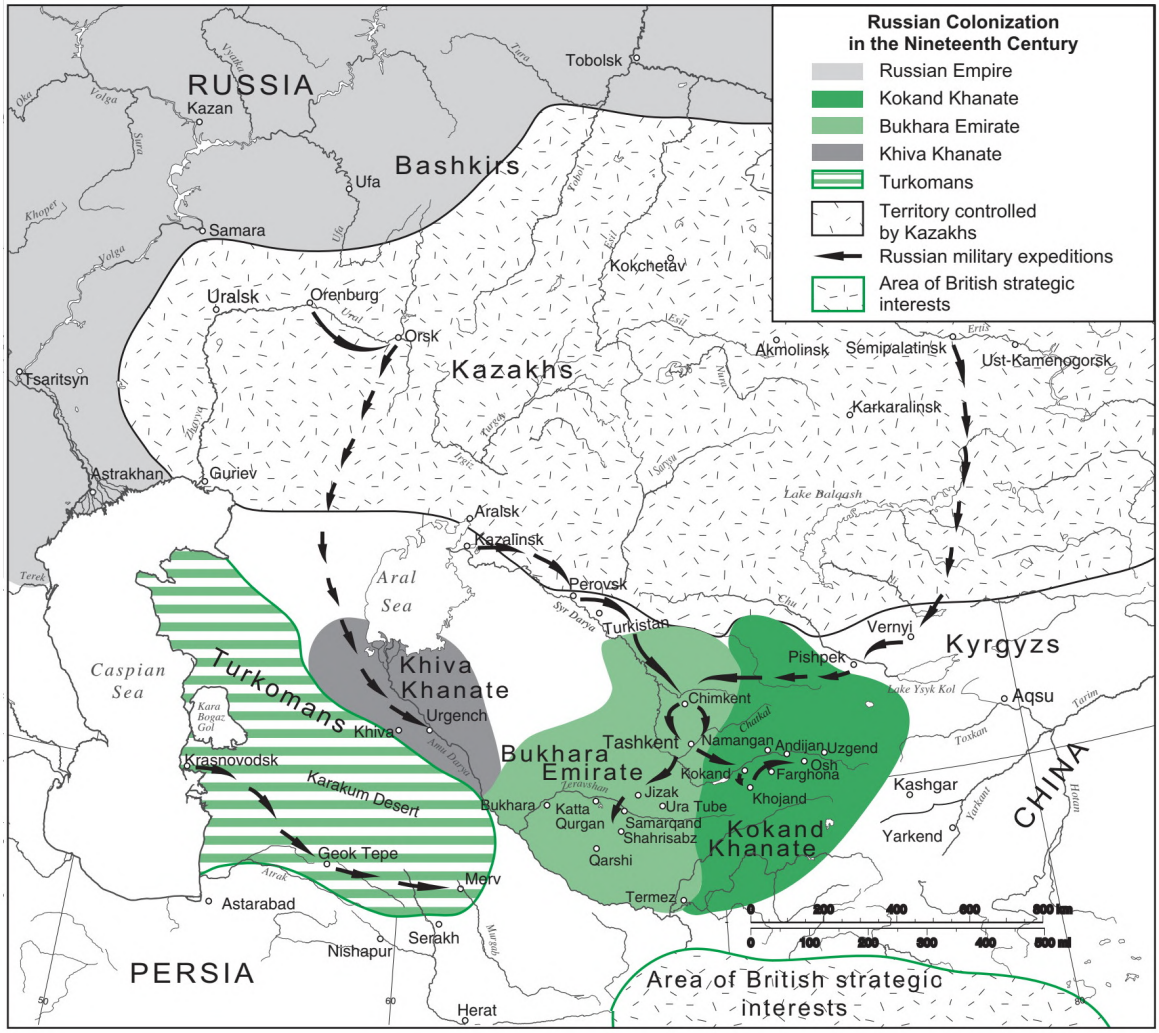
[30] Arminius Vámbéry. *Travels in Central Asia.* (London: John Murray, 1864), 423.

[31] Personal communications. According to Ruben Nazarian "It is universally acknowledged that the ancestors of the contemporary Bukharan Jews moved here from Iran." in Markiel' Fazylov (ed.) *Gody, ljudi, fakty...: Sbornik statej i ocherkov o buharskih evrejah Samarkanda (1918–1993 gg.)*, (Samarkand: Sugdian, 1992), 26.

had begun to combat Kazakh tribes and establish forts along the Kazakh steppe. Jews became well known for their commerce of Cashmere shawls; the Kabuli Jew Mehdi Rafaelov, well-acquainted with the Russians in the fort of Semipalatinsk, brought a shipment of Cashmere shawls to St Petersburg in 1811.[32] Joseph Wolff observed in 1845 that the "Jews of Khiva, Khokand, and Tashkand visit sometimes the following marts and fairs: those of Makariev, Orenbourg, and Astrachan, in Russia; and go even as far as Leipsie.[33]"

Economic activity between Central Asia and Russia intensified after Russia's progressive conquest of Turkestan during the course of the 19th century, opening a new chapter for Jewish history in the region. The empire had been making incursions from the East through its gradual conquest of the Kazakh steppe, building a line of forts on the Syr Darya river. Russian troops Chernayev conquered Tashkent (part of the Kokand Khanate) in 1865, parts of the Bukharan Emirate in 1866, Samarkand in 1868, signed a treaty turning the Kokand Khanate into a vassal state in 1868, and defeated Khiva in 1873. The Government-General of Turkestan was established in 1867, and in 1876 the former territories of the Kokand Khanate were incorporated into the Ferghana and Syr Darya *oblast'*s, fulling absorbing them into the Russian empire. What remained of the Emirate of Bukhara became an autonomous Russian protectorate under the rule of the Muslim emir until 1920.[34]

[32] Rafaelov, Grigorii Glazenap, *Vneschnyaya politika Rossii XIX u nachala XX veka. Dokumenty Rossiiskogo Ministerstva inostrannyx del.* (Series 1. T. VI. Politizdat, 1962), 160.
[33] Joseph Wolff, *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara in the Years 1843-1845 to Ascertain the Fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Connolly*. (London, 1846), 160.
[34] Scott C. Levi, *The Bukharan Crisis: A Connected History of 18th Century Central Asia.* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020). James Pickett. *Polymaths of Islam: Power and Networks of Knowledge in Central Asia.* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2020).



Map 3: Polities in Central Asia at the time of the Russian conquest. (https://weaponsandwarfare.com/2020/04/04/great-game-of-central-asian-dominance-i/).

Map 4: Russian Turkestan c. 1900. (Wikipedia Commons).

Jews in Turkestan, who had formerly lived under Muslim rule as *dhimmī*s (religious minorities forced to pay an extra tax and with less rights than Muslims), were now under Russian rule. Those living in the Emirate Bukhara continued to endure *dhimmī* status, which English traveller Henry Lansdell witnessed first-hand in 1893:

> In Bokhara the Jews still labour under many restrictions. They may not wear a garment of silk, for instance, with a belt and a turban, but are compelled to wear a cotton *khalat* and black calico cap, and to be girded only with a piece of string. Again, they may not ride a horse in the city, and in the fields are made to dismount from an ass before a mounted Muhammadan, who, if he choose[s], may smite a Jew, but the Jew must not retaliate.[35]

[35] Henry Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia: A Ride to Little Tibet.* London: Low, Marston & Company, Ltd, 1893), vol. 1, 69.

Some Jews in Bukhara, known as *chala*s, were also forcibly converted to Islam. Joseph Wolff took note of forced converts and how they were ostracised by both Jews and Muslims in Bukhara in 1834:

> There are at Bukhara about 300 families of Jews turned to Mohammedanism; the Osbek do not intermarry with them, and they therefore take the daughters of the...Gholoom, or slaves of Persians.[36]

After the establishment of Russian Turkestan, a territory in which they could live as citizens with rights, *chala*s from Bukhara began to emigrate from the Emirate to cities in Russian Turkestan, in order to practice Judaism freely as well as to seek economic opportunities.[37] The *chala*s built houses in Kartag, Katta-Kurgan, Samarkand, Shahrisabz, Andijan, Khujand, Kokand, and Margilan, where other Jews lived, all while maintaining their *chala* identity. [38]

In Russian Turkestan, wealthy Jews who conducted trade with Russians quickly took on European manners, and were particularly receptive to Russian education in comparison to other ethnic groups of Central Asia (in 1872, half of the students at the Russian school in Samarkand were Jewish).[39] The Europeanisation of Jewish life is especially visible in the architecture of wealthy Jewish houses in Samarkand and Kokand, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. During this time, Ashkenazi Jews from the Russian Empire began to migrate to the cities of Tashkent and Samarkand, and would continue to do so in great numbers up until the 1930s. They also went to more suburban regions; for example, the Ashkenazi Jews of Karakol (Kyrgyzstan)

---

[36] Though Wolff does not precise that they had been forcibly converted, there is other evidence, such as *Khodaidod.* Joseph Wolff, *Researches and Missionary Labours Among the Jews, Mohammedans, and Other Sects*, 193.

[37] Kaganovitch cites the petition for immigration of the *chala* Jews Yakubovs-Iskhakovs in 1901, kept in the Central State Archive of Uzbekistan. Albert Kaganovitch, "The Muslim Jews - Chalah in Central Asia 1865-1917," in *Bukharan Jews: History, Language, Literature, Culture*, ed. Hano Tholmas (Jerusalem: World Bukharian Jewish Congress, 2006), 111-141

[38] Ibid.

[39] According to the magazine *Beseda*, cited in Albert Kaganovitch, "L'acculturation de la communauté juive boukhariote et l'émancipation féminine." *Asie centrale - Transferts culturels le long de la route de la soie*, ed. Michel Espagne, (Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016), 591.

grew from one inhabitant in 1885 to 31 in 1910.[40] Ashkenazis and Bukharan Jews frequently lived in separate quarters of the cities they inhabited, with Ashkenazis in the modern Russian quarter, and Bukharans in the old city, though some Bukharans also moved into the Russian quarter. This phenomenon is particularly salient in the cities of Samarkand, Kokand, Andijan, Osh, and Kagan (the Russian quarter of Bukhara, located thirteen kilometres from the old city).

After the establishment of a Russian administration in 1876, migration of Bukharan Jews to the Ferghana Valley took on a greater pace. The Ferghana Valley, which had long been valued for its silk, became an important locus of cotton production for the Russian market. Bukharan Jews also moved east of Ferghana, towards what today is Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, to the cities of Turkestan, Ak-Mechet, Osh, and Bishkek, at first temporarily as traders, and later settling in permanently.[41] A caravan of Jews from Bukhara led by camels was photographed arriving in Kazalinsk in the 1870s (Figure 1). While in the 1840s-80s the migrants to these areas were for the most part male merchants, from the 1890s onwards Jewish families are documented, many having settled there from Bukhara.

[40] Irena Vladimirsky, "The Jews of Kyrgyzstan," Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot https://www.bh.org.il/jews-kyrgyzstan/

[41] Robert A. Pinhasov, *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev*, (New York: Klub "Roshnoi-Light", 2005), 21. M. C. Kupovetskij. "Buxarskie evrei na territorii Kazaxstana v XIX-nachala XX vv.: rasselenie i chislennost'." in *Istoria, Pamiat', Liodi. Materiali VVI mejdunarodnoj nauchno-prakticheskoj konferentsii. 18 oktiabria 2012.* (Almaty: 2013), 208-214.

Figure 1: "Syr Darya Oblast'. Arrival of Jews from Bukhara to Kazalinsk," Turkestan album, Ethnographic Part, 1872, part 2, volume 1, pl. 43, no. 116. Library of Congress

Another important factor in the 19th-century life of Bukharan Jewry is the influx of Mashhadi Jews. While we saw above that many Jews from Iran, including the city of Mashhad, had migrated to Bukhara in the late 18th century, a new migratory wave occurred from Mashhad to northern Central Asia after 1839, when all the Jews of Mashhad were forcibly converted to Islam. These Jews (known as *Jadīd al-Islam*) maintained a distinct identity apart from other Iranian Jews due to this event, called the *Allahdād*. Those who remained in Mashhad pretended outwardly to be Muslim (secretly practicing Judaism at home), while those who emigrated could openly live as Jews. Mashhadi Jews settled in and formed permanent communities at first in the cities of northern Afghanistan—Herat, Balkh, Maimana—and Turkmenistan— Yolotan, Deregez, Sarrakhs Tejen, Tahta-Bazar, Annau, Marv, Bayram-Ali, Khiva, where they mostly dealt with Turkmen—, then later in the predominantly Tajik cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. There, they could go to the

synagogue, practice the Sabbath by closing their shops, celebrate their public holidays without living in fear or needing to dissimulate. Wolff recounts the story of Joseph of Talkhtoon, "a Jew from Meshed, but who lived among the Tūrkomauns at Talkhtoon, and in the fame of sanctity, returned to Meshed as soon as the event of Allah-Daad had taken place; became Muhammedan-took his wife and child-went to Candahar, where he again returned to Judaism."[42]

Joseph Wolff's account of Jews living in Sarrakhs shows how integrated such Jews were in the daily life of the Turkmen regions of Central Asia, and well-respected by the local population.

> Wolff took up his abode in the tent of one of the most respectable of these Jews. All of them were dressed like the Turcomauns, by whom they were highly respected. In fact, no Turcomaun undertakes any affair of importance without first consulting a Moosaae [a Jew], and asking his blessing. They chiefly demand from them charms, in order that they may be kept safe in battle. They also ask the blessing of a Jew, that they may have children; and whenever the Sabbath approaches, and a Turcomaun happens to come near a Jew's tent, the Jew looks out, glances seriously at the Turcomaun, and says to him in a loud voice, *Amrooz Shabot*, which means, "Today is the Sabbath." The Turcomaun then devoutly strokes his beard, and retires, without giving the slightest sign of having taken offence.[43]

Traders of silk, cotton, and wool, Mashhadi Jews pursued many of the same commercial enterprises as Bukharan Jews, and intermediated trade between Bukhara and Iran.[44] A good example of the interconnectedness between Mashhad and Transoxiana is found in the words of Joseph Wolff, who encountered a Mashhadi Jew who had journeyed from Sarrakhs to Mashhad. His account also attests to the rivalry between Jewish groups living across these regions, showing that they were very aware of each other, enough to form stereotypes).

> Nissim is a complete infidel in sentiments: at Messhed he is a Mussulman, and a Jew at Sarakhs, Khiva.... He gives a very bad account of the Jews of Khiva; which account I heard confirmed all over Turkestan: they are traitors, despisors of the Law, have Mussulman concubines, and rob foreign Jews who go among them. The Jews of Khiva are called *mamzerim*, i.e. bastards, even by those of Bokhara, as Nissim assures me; for all of them left Bokhara on account of their ill conduct.[45]

---

[42] Wolff, *Narrative of a Mission*, 160.
[43] Wolff, *Travels and adventures*, 306.
[44] Albert Kaganovitch, *The Mashhadi Jews (Djedids) in Central Asia*. (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2019).
[45] Wolff, *Researches and Missionary Labours*, 108.

Mashhadi Jews have frequently been excluded from studies of Judaism in Central Asia, which almost entirely focus on Bukharan Jews as an isolated block.[46] Furthermore, studies of Mashhadi Jews are mostly concerned with their history in Mashhad or their migration to the United States[47] Exceptions in this regard is the fieldwork on Mashhadi Jews in Central Asia conducted by Russian scholars Zarubina in 1920 and Kupovetskiy and 1986, and the more recent work by Albert Kaganovich, *The Mashhadi Jews in Central Asia*. In Central Asian cities, Mashhadi Jews, called *Ironi*, sometimes had their own synagogue, distinct from the local population's —such was the case in Samarkand— while in Soviet Kagan, they attended the same synagogue as Ashkenazi Jews.[48] More research remains to be conducted on the Mashhadi experience in Central Asia, but it appears that since Soviet times, they have assimilated to the local Bukharan Jewish population. Mashhadi and Bukharan Jews share many common traits, as they are from regions of similar cultures. The Mashhadis who migrated to Jerusalem in the early 20th century settled in the Bukharan quarter of the city, as did Jews from Afghanistan.[49]

While Mashhadi Jews migrated north, certain Bukharan Jews also migrated south for trading purposes. The community of Jews in the city of Torbat Heydariyeh, 150 km south of Mashhad, told Joseph Wolff: "[w]e were all settled at first in Bokhara, Samarkand, and Balkh, and then we came on here."[50] They also stated that they had received Hebrew books from Orenbourg in Russia, a city which conducted trade with Samarkand and Bukhara. Wolff also passed through Sarrakhs, encountered Jews from the Afghan cities of Herat, Maimana and Andkhoy, as well as

[46] This is partly due to the fact that scholars have taken modern country borders as their departure point for a study, "the Jews of Kyrgyzstan" vs. "the Jews of Iran," when such borders do not matter when discussing the past.
[47] Raphael Patai, *Jadīd Al-Islām: The Jewish "new Muslims" of Meshhed.* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997). Hilda Nissimi, *The Crypto-Jewish Mashhadis: The Shaping of Religious and Communal Identity in Their Journey from Iran to New York.* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007).
[48] Kaganovitch, *The Mashhadi Jews,* 26
[49] Patai, *Jadīd al-Islām*
[50] Wolff, *Travels and adventures,* 306.

from Bukhara, who lived in "cane huts".[51] This indicates a mixed Central Asian Jewish community (of males) in small trading towns of Khorasan, a testimony of the diversity and mobility of Jewish life in Central Asia.

Despite initial Russian benevolence towards native Jews, after the 1881 assassination of Alexander II, this attitude change, as his successor Alexander III enacted anti-Semitic laws across the country.[52] For example, in 1887, Jews in Turkestan were barred from employment in the administration.[53] In 1906 a law declared that "all Central Asian Jews of foreign nationality would be permitted to live and do business only in the specified border towns of Russian Turkestan, [Osh, Katta-Kurgan, Petro-Aleksandrovsk/Turtkul, Samarkand, Kokand, and Margelan], that is, in the pale already established for Russian Jews."[54] Though the law was directed at Ashkenazis (foreign Jews as opposed to the *tuzemnyĭ,* or native Jews), many Bukharan Jews, especially those who had migrated from Bukhara to the Ferghana region, could not prove their long-term residence and were thus expelled. By 1910, many Jews who had migrated from the Bukharan Emirate to the cities of the Syr-Darya *oblast*' (Tashkent, and cities of modern-day Kazakhstan, including Ak-Mechet, Chimkent, Turgay, Turkestan) were evicted and sent back to Bukhara (see the populations in these town drastically decrease after 1910 in Table 1).[55] Herati and Mashhadi Jews also suffered expulsions from the Transcaspian *oblast*' that same year, as they were labelled "foreign Jews" by the Russian administration.[56] Some returned to Iran and Afghanistan, while others migrated eastwards to Samarkand, Tashkent, and Kokand.

[51] Wolff, *Travels and adventures*, 318.
[52] Albert Kaganovitch, *Druzia Ponevole: Rossia i Buxarskie Evrei, 1800—1917.* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2016).
[53] Ibid.
[54] Seymour Becker, *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*. (London: Routledge, 2004), 131-2.
[55] Kupovetskiy, "Buxarskie evrei na territorii Kazaxstana," 212.
[56] M.C. Kupovetskiy, "Evrei iz Mesheda i Gerata v Srednei Azii," *EO* no. 5, 1992, 59.

The influx of Jews in these eastern cities of Central Asia was not met with approval by all. In 1911, the Bukharan Jews of Osh were attacked by Muslim residents at the instigation of a Russian Orthodox Christian, in their neighbourhood of Saray-Kuchin, a blood libel pogrom which killed one and injured fifteen.[57] This was attributed by local authorities to the "practice of usury" by Bukharan Jews; it was more likely due to economic jealousy (Jews, a small minority of Osh's population, owned 550 hectares of land in the district).[58]

	1885	**1895**	**1910**	**1920**	**Features of a Jewish community (1885-1920)**
Ashgabat	1897: 330 Ashkenazis	330 Ashkenazis	505 Ashkenazis	505 Ashkenazis	• Synagogue (1910) • Cemetery (1910)
Andijan	1868: 13	1897: 721	900	1926: 1,833	• Synagogue in the old city 1894, *kanesoi kalon* in the new city 1905 • Cemetery in 1910 • Three ḥeders (by the 1920s) • *Mahalla-i Ozod* (old city, destroyed in 1990s)
Aulie-Ata (Taraz)	"some Jewish families" (Neimark)		4 families		
Ak-Mechet (Kzyl-Orda, Perovsk)	1870s: 83 (mostly men)		80 families	55	• Cemetery • *Ḥeder* • *Mahalla*
Bayram-Ali	Jadīds		240 (Mashhadi, Herati, Bukharan)		
Bishkek	8		1910: 250 1912: 89		
Bukhara	(1810: 1,900) (1834: 2,000 families)	1897: 4,500	1,850		• Ohel Itzhak Synagogue (1862) Mir/Shalom Synagogue (1620; 1901) Synagogue on Abdulla Tukai St. (1906) • Two *ḥeder*s • *Miqveh* • Cemetery • Jewish dyeing workshops • *Mahalla*s
Charjou (Turkmenabad)	1846: Jews encountered there by Joseph Wolff 1897: 3 families		500 Ashkenazis (New Charjou)	500 Bukharans	• Synagogue
Chaacha	Jadīds		37 Jadīd houses		
Chinaz	4 brothers immigrated from Samarkand in 1875		300 families (refugees from Tashkent who		• Cemetery (1880s) • *Mahalla-i Jugut*

[57] Kaganovitch, *Druzia Ponevole*.
[58] Ibid.

			could not prove they were native Jews)		
Chimkent	208	c. 20 families	c. 600 1912: 239	313	• Synagogue (in old city, on Bazarnaya St. until 1935). • Cemetery (1920) • *Ḥeder* • *Mahalla*
Daraghaz	Jadīd families	Jadīd families			• Two Synagogues (1890) • Cemetery • *Ḥeder* • *Miqveh*
Dushanbe	Some Bukharan Jews			1920: 600 Bukharan Jews	• Synagogue • Cemetery • *Ḥeder* • *Miqveh*
Ferghana	1887: 400		1900 Ashkenazis, 400 Bukharans		• Synagogue • Cemetery
Gissar			c. 20 families		
Kagan			c. 20 families		• Synagogue
Kaakhka		Jadīd and Bukharan Jews			
Katta-kurgan		645 Bukharans, 31 Ashkenazis	837	581	• Two synagogues (in 1910) • Cemetery (c. 1800) • *Ḥeder*
Karakol	1 (Ashkenazi)	7 (Ashkenazi)	31 (Ashkenazi)	1913: 45	
Kazalinsk (Kazaly)	260 (89 Bukharan)		25 families	139	• Synagogue (c.1900) • Cemetery • *Ḥeder* • *Mahalla*
Kerki				1921: 1,000	• Two Synagogues • *Ḥeder*
Kermine (Navoi)	Bukharan families with private synagogues	Bukharan families with private synagogues	Bukharan families with private synagogues	1926: 790 Bukharans, 10 Ashkenazis	• Private synagogues • Two public synagogues (1889-survived-, 1910) • Cemetery (c. 1850) • Jewish dyeing workshops
Khatyrchi	c. 25 families			980	• Synagogue • Cemetery (c. 1800)
Khiva	a few families (including *chala*s)			all Jews either emigrated or converted to Islam	
Khujand	c. 5 families	450			• Synagogue (1832) • Cemetery in the south of the town. • Ḥeder (c.1892)
Kokand	1834: 100 (merchants from Bukhara) 1868: 6 1875: 20	1897: 1,029	1,341	1926: 3,551	• Two pre-Russian synagogues in the old city, including the Avromcha synagogue, built by Avromcha Kalontar. Yudoi Moro Synagogue (Marshal Govorov St.; 1904), *kanesoi kalon*, synagogue of Rafael Poteliyakhov (1908),

	1887: 200 families 1888: 1,000				synagogue of Vadyaev brothers ("Vadyaevskii" Synagogue), synagogue of Avraam Makhsumov (in *Besh-aryk*), synagogue of Nathan Davydov. • Cemetery in 1867 (founded by Hamomi Ellokboshi of the Mushebaev family) • Jewish neighbourhoods in old city: *Mahalla-i poyon, Besh-aryk, Kofrovot*
Margilan	1867: 12	1897: 652	1910: 1408 (188 Bukharans)	1926: 939 (462 Bukharans)	• Three synagogues (two in 1900, one in 1910) • *Ḥeder* • Jewish dyeing workshops
Marv	1897: 486 (7.5% of all inhabitants)	46 Jadīd houses 19 Ashkenazi families	1,020 Jews or 332 families (Mashhadi, Herati, and Bukharan)	1920: 750 1926: 904 200 Jadīd families	• Mashhadi Synagogue (*Kenisoi Mashhadi*, c.1871-1910) Herati Synagogue (*Kenisoi Heroti*, c.1900-1910) Bukharan Synagogue (c.1900-1910)[59] A colonial style synagogue was destroyed around the year 2000[60] • Cemetery • Ḥeder • Jewish dyeing workshops • *Mahalla* Koushiut-khana[61] Separate *mahallla* for Mashhadis and Heratis, on Komsomolskaya and Zamanskaya streets
Namangan		76	591 Ashkenazis, 121 Bukharans	491 Ashkenazis, 276 Bukharans, 7 Georgian Jews	• Two synagogues (ca. 1910) • Cemetery • Ḥeder
Osh	Ashkenazi and Bukharans begin to move to Osh in the 1880s		754 Ashkenazis, 46 Bukharans	1910: 27 Bukharans	• Cemetery in Jidalik (c. 1915)[62] • Mahalla Saray-Kuchin
Payshanbe				250 homes	• Three synagogues • Cemetery (c. 1800) • *Miqveh* • *Mahalla*
Samarkand	(1834: 300 families) 1885: c. 2,000	c. 4000	5,000 Bukharans, 5,000 Ashkenazis	1926: 7,740 Bukharans, 1,415 Ashkenazis, 4 Georgian and 3 Karaites	• *Kanesoi kalon* (1861), Moshebaev Synagogue (1890s), *kanesoi eroniho* (1890s), *kanesoi kassobho* (1880s), Gumbaz Synagogue (1891), Pinhas Abramov Synagogue (1900), Mullokandov Synagogue (1906), Talmud Torah Synagogue (1917), Shlomo Sofiev synagogue, Yosef Alishaev Synagogue (1923) • Cemetery near Shah-i Zinda (1839;1878) • *Miqveh* • Two *ḥeder*s • Jewish dyeing workshops

[59] Three are mentioned in Russian statistical report published in 1900; then only two in 1910 (Kaganovitch, *The Mashhadi Jews*).

[60] Arshavsky, "The Influence of the Russian Conquest on the Central Asian Synagogue," in Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Harmen H. Thies (eds.) *Jewish Architecture in Europe*, Berlin: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2010, 225. Arshavsky mentions drawings of the structure by a Turkmenistani architect, which are not available.

[61] Kupovetskiy, "Evrei iz Mesheda i Gerata v Srednei Azii," 57

[62] Aleksandr Pavlovich Yarkov, *Na primere evreiskoi diaspory kyrgyzstana*. (PhD dissertation, Bishkek, 2002), 82.

					• *Mahalla-i yahudiyon* (1843)
Sarrakhs	(1831: a small colony of Jews from Mashhad)	Jadīd families	20 Jadīd houses		• Synagogue (noticed by Neumark in 1886) • *Mahalla*
Shahrisabz	(1834: 300 families, with a Rabbi)			970	
Tashkent	1865: 100 1885: c. 200	1,300 Bukharans,419 Ashkenazi	921 Jewish families in new city 543 families in old city (1,500 Bukharans)	3,340 Jews (total)	• Old city synagogue on Sagban St. (end of 19th century, founded by Avrom Hasid), with *miqveh*. Davidoff Synagogue on Davydovskaya street (1890, Ukchi *mahalla*). New city synagogue on Chimkentskaya St. (1896, designed by Burmeister) New city synagogue (Ashkenazi) on 12 Topolei St. (1896) • Chigotai Cemetery (1822) • *Mahalla-i Ukchi, mahalla-i Sagban*
Takhta-Bazar	a few Jadīd families				• Separate *mahalla* for Mashhadis and Heratis
Tejen	a few Jadīd families		240 (Mashhadi, Herati, Bukharan)		• Synagogue (1910)
Turkestan	183	c. 300 families	800 1912: 145	134	• Five synagogues (closed during 1918 revolution; Rabbi Ilya Shimunov opened a new one in his home in 1918). • Cemetery • *Ḥeder* • *Mahalla*
Turgay			89 Jews (18 families)		
Urgench	(1834: 8)	c. 10 families		all Jews either emigrated or converted to Islam	
Verny		99 (mostly Ashkenazi, some Bukharans)	206 (mostly Ashkenazi, some Bukharans)		• Ashkenazi synagogue (1884) • Ashkenazi cemetery (1890s)
Yolotan	Jadīd families				• Synagogue (made of stone, c. 1900) • Separate *mahalla* for Mashhadis and Heratis

Table 1: Jewish population in Central Asian cities (1885-1920). All numbers refer to Bukharan Jews unless otherwise specified.[63]

In summary, Jews had lived for centuries across the regions of Khurasan, Khwarezm, and Transoxiana, and after the 19th century spread to the Ferghana and Gissar Valleys and parts of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, forming a continuous cultural area. Though Jews from each city

[63] The population estimates and information in this table are gathered from the *Rossiyskaya Evreiskaya Entsiklopediya*, Wolff's *Researches and Missionary Labours* and the articles by Kaganovitch, Pinhasov, and Kupovetskiy (see Bibliography).

differentiated themselves from one another (Mashhadis/Heratis/Kabulis/Bukharans/Samarkandis), there was a high level of trade and migration, which led to the formation of mixed Central Asian Jewish communities in trading emporia towns such as Yolotan, Daraghaz, and Marv.[64] Demographics shifted to a large extent during the 19th century, with the influx of Ashkenazi Jews and a huge expansion of the importance of Samarkand, which became the city with the largest population of Jews in Central Asia (representing 7% of all inhabitants).[65] It should be noted that although Jews had higher absolute numbers in the larger towns of Samarkand and Bukhara, they were in fact proportionally more represented in small trading towns of western Turkestan such as Daraghaz, or in Payshanbe, near Samarkand, where Jews occupied 250 out of the total 600 homes in 1920 (24%).

Having described the economic and demographic situation of Jews in the period and area under study, we shall now contextualise on the history of scholarly interest in Bukharan Jewry. The first to conduct ethnographic studies of Bukharan Jews were Russian scholars, motivated by race theory. The field has since progressed considerably, and is now primarily conducted by Bukharan Jews themselves.

1.2. Ethnography and Bukharan Jews

1.2.1. Imperial Ethnography

The ethnographic study of Bukharan Jews during the Russian imperial period consisted of two types of ethnography: on the one hand, Russian imperialist, which was interested in collecting information for power, and Russian-Jewish, which was specifically curious about Jews throughout the Russian empire for the sake of documenting the diversity of Jewish life. In both instances,

[64] These cities fluctuated under the control of the Emirate of Bukhara and that of Turkmen tribes.
[65] Zeev Levin, *Collectivization and Social Engineering: Soviet Administration and the Jews of Uzbekistan, 1917-1939.* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 11.

ethnographic studied sought to describe the way of life (*byt*), as reflecting the "essence" of a people, a concept highly influenced by Herder's notion of Volk (*narod*). To study a people's *byt* through their material and spiritual culture was to understand them.[66]

Ethnographic study went hand in hand with map-making and census-taking as a tool to dominate a territory. The production of 19th-century ethnographic knowledge was entwined with a broader inquiry into geography, archaeology, linguistics, and physical anthropology, in order to know the lands and peoples of the empire and better control the territory. The Russian Geographical Society's Ethnographic Division (IRGO), held an interest in the newly conquered territories of Turkestan, and set about studying peoples and collecting objects in order to organise ethnographic exhibits in Russia. These early ethnographers were motivated by race theory, which placed Jews as inferior to Russians. Russian Jews frequently assimilated the governing racist ideology and placed themselves on the top of the hierarchy in relation to Asian Jews. The Russian-Jewish physical anthropologist Arkadiy El'kind wrote that Central Asian and Caucasian Jews were "allotypical" (i.e. Semitic), inferior to Europeanised Russian Jews.[67] Bukharan Jews were only mentioned by Russian ethnographers in small observations, usually derogatory. Nikolai Khanykov and Vasilii P'iankov wrote that they lacked of education.[68]

Jews were captured in Russian colonial photography, particularly the Turkestan Album (*Turkestanskii Al'bom,* 1871), which was compiled by Russian Orientalist Alexander L. Kun and commissioned by the governor general of Russian Turkestan, Konstantin Petrovich von

[66] Francine Hirsch, *Empire of nations: Ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 38-39.
[67] Marina Mogilner, "Between Scientific and Political. Jewish Scholars and Russian-Jewish Physical Anthropology in the Fin-De-Siècle Russian Empire," in *Going to the People: Jews and the Ethnographic Impulse,* ed. Jeffrey Veidlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 50.
[68] Nikolai Vladimirovich Khanykov, *Opisanie Bukharskogo Khanstva,* (St. Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1843), 73. Vasilii Grigor'evich P'iankov, *Turkestanskii Kalendar' na 1880 God,* (Tashkent, 1879), 147.

Kaufman.[69] As part of a colonial enterprise, the album sought to define the newly conquered territory through a visual survey of its monuments, peoples, and economic foundations. Jews were portrayed in the album's ethnographic section (*chast' etnograficheskaia*), which presented the musical instruments, crafts, celebrations, and architecture of the region. Part two of the ethnographic section displays the various "ethnographic types" (*tipy narodnostei*), including Uzbeks, gypsies (*dzugi, mazang*), Indians, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, "Sarts," Arabs, Iranians, and of course Jews (*evrei*). All the Jewish men photographed wear the typical, and—until the Russian conquest—obligatory Jewish fur hat, the *tilpak*, and are distinguishable by their sidelocks. The collection also contains photographs of Jewish wedding ceremonies, the bridal party (*shab-e dukhtaran*), the matchmaking process, a funeral, prayer recitation, lessons at the Jewish school, swaddling the cradle (*gavarabendan*), and holiday celebrations (such as *Sukkot*).

Figure 2: "Evrei. Sheivamu (Mulla Suleiman)," Turkestan album, Ethnographic Part, part 2, vol. 1, pl. 29, no. 86. Library of Congress.

[69] See Olga Yastrebova, and Azad Arezou. "Reflections on an orientalist: Alexander Kuhn (1840–88), the man and his legacy." *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 675-694. and Heather S. Sonntag, *Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871-1872: The Role of Russian Military Photography, Mapping, Albums & Exhibitions on Central Asia.* Ph.D. Diss. University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2011.

Another important Russian colonial photographic collection was assembled by Samuel Martynovich Dudin (1863-1929), founder of the Ethnographical Department of the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (now the Russian Ethnographical Museum). He led expeditions to Turkestan in order to collect physical materials for the museum collection, and on the way produced his own material ―photographs and sketches. His collection of 40,000 items mainly represents Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, and Turkmen ―he intentionally did not collect Jewish objects, justifying that "in their everyday life and dress, they do everything as the Sarts... and I cannot duplicate items for a material collection."[70] He did photograph them though, with thirty-one photos depicting Jews in Central Asia from his 1902 expedition. This photographic collection, taken thirty years after the Turkestan Album, shows notable differences in Jewish dress. Whereas in the 1871 Turkestan Album, all male Jews, regardless of age, wear the obligatory and allegedly humiliating *tilpak* (Figure 2), one can observe in Dudin's 1902 photos that younger Jews do not, and instead wear a typical skull-cap (Rs. *tyubeteika,* Figure 3a). This demonstrates a change in dress and status due to the influence of Russian colonisation.

Figure 3: a) Portrait of a young man, wearing a *tyubeteika.* b) Portrait of a man, wearing a *tilpak.* Central Asian Jews, 1902 (S.M. Dudin). Kunstkamera (St. Petersburg), I 582-9 and I 582-11.

[70] Quoted in T.G. Emelyanenko "Pamyatniki traditsionno-bytovoi kultury bukharskikh evreev v muzeinykh sobraniyakh: Osobennosti komplektovaniya," *Etnografi cheskoye obozreniye,* No. 3 (2010): 67.

A few Jewish travellers also made note of Bukharan Jews on their journeys passing through Central Asia. In 1886, Ephraim Neumark (1860–?) travelled from Israel across Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, collecting his observations in his Hebrew account, *Massa' be-Ereẓ ha-Kedem*.[71] The abovementioned Joseph Wolff visited the Jews of Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia in order to attempt to convert them, provides much insight into historical events happening around them in the mid-1800s. Many of these travellers commented on the level of poverty and ignorance of the local Jews; Neumark wrote that Jews did not study Talmud, while journalist Nahum Levi Yitzhak Abrek wrote that the children were poorly educated, as did Shmuel Moshe Rivlin, who appealed to the Jews of Russia for help.[72] However, English explorer Elkan Adler collected a large trove of manuscripts from the local Jews of Bukhara and Samarkand in 1897, which indicates that they were not entirely as ignorant as reported by these foreign travellers. [73]

The Russian Jewish Historical Society (founded in 1908) published the quarterly *Evreiskaia Starina*, which contained many ethnographic studies of Jews throughout the Russian empire. The vast majority of articles pertained to the Jews from the Pale of Settlement, with almost none dedicated to the Jews of Central Asia. Russian-Jewish scholar Vaissenberg complained about this lacuna; he wrote that there was little interest for the study of Jews south of Russia, due to the prejudice of the homogeneity of the Jews (people tend to believe that "the Jews over there are the same as ours"), despite striking differences in reality.[74] Bukharan Jews were also reduced to the opposite stereotype: that they had nothing to distinguish them from the Muslim population. Indeed, Jewish journalist Ilya Lurie wrote disparagingly about Bukharan Jews for living just as the local

[71] Ephraim Neumark, *Massa be-ereẓ ha-kedem*, ed. Avrahma Yaari (Jerusalem, 1947).
[72] Kaganovitch, *Druzia Ponevole: Rossia i Buxarskie Evrei, 1800*
[73] Elkan Nathan Adler, "The Persian Jews: Their Books and Their Ritual," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, July (1898), 584-625.
[74] S. Vaissenberg, "Evrei v Turkestan. (Otchet o Letnei Poezdke 1912 goda)," *Evreiskaya Starina* V (1912) 390-405.

gentiles,[75] and Russian ambassador Burnashev wrote in 1818 that "not in their language, nor in their rites, is anything Jewish discernible in the Bukharans."[76]

1.2.2. Soviet Ethnography

After the 1917 Revolution and the installation of a communist regime across Russia and the former territories of the Russian Empire (which then became the territories of the Soviet Union), the Bolsheviks collaborated with many of the same imperial experts of the tsarist administration.[77] The predominant cultural ideology of the 1920s was *korenizatsiia* —encouragement of local languages and cultures of the Union.[78] Hence, Russian ethnographic interest in Bukharan Jews strengthened after the Soviet revolution, with the increased preoccupation with the "nations" (*narody*) that made up Soviet national identity. Ethnography played the role of cultural technology of rule. Jews were classified as one of the nations of the USSR and separated into categories ("Mountain Jews" of the Caucuses, European Jews of Russia, Central Asian Jews).[79] The Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum in 1924-1927 wondered if each exhibit should show the Jews of each *oblast'*, thus tying ethnic categories to the empire/union's own political borders.[80]

Russian-Jewish anthropologist Isaak Luria, interested in the customs of non-European Jews (he had previously conducted ethnomusicological fieldwork in Palestine) served the interests of the Soviet state when he was sent to Samarkand by a committee of the Jewish Historic-Ethnographic society of St. Petersburg to study Central Asian Jews. In 1922, he established the Native Jewish

[75] Ilya Lurie, "Evrei v Srednej Azii," in *Rassvet*, 22.02.1915. No 8, 25 - 28.
[76] T. Burnashev, *Puteshestvie po Sibirskoi linii do g. Bukhary v 1794 g. i obratno v 1795 g. Sibirskii vestnik* (St. Petersburg: 1818), pt. 2:-65-66.
[77] Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 24
[78] George Liber. "Korenizatsiia: restructuring Soviet nationality policy in the 1920s,"*Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14.1 (1991): 15-23.
[79] Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*
[80] Ibid, 194

Museum of Samarkand in the former house of merchant Ari Fuzailov (which had been seized by the Soviet state) in the old Jewish quarter of Samarkand, exhibiting a total of 869 artefacts. He employed the photographers Kuldashev and Poliakov to document Jewish life in the region (a significant collection of photographs held by the museum today were also taken by V.I. Kotovsky). However, his efforts received vocal criticism from the local community, who resented his scholarly detachment from real Bukharans in favour of their artefacts, and the museum was shut down in the 1930s.[81]

An important scholar to take a specific interest in Bukharan Jews was Zalman Lvovich Amitin-Shapiro (1899-1968), an Ashkenazi Jew who moved to Bukhara in 1918 to work as an instructor for Jewish children at a Soviet school. He studied the social life of Bukharan Jewish women and collected anthropological information which proves illuminating to this day.[82]

Soviet studies of local Jewry, which began to take off in the 1920s, declined in the 1930s due to anti-Semitic Stalinist policies. From then on, Jews were ignored by Soviet scholars, who pursued subjects more aligned with State interests.[83] Hence, there is a gap in the study of Bukharan Jews from the 1930s to the late 1980s.

1.2.3. Post-Soviet Ethnography

The fall of the USSR in 1989 provoked a large-scale migration of the Jews of Central Asia to Israel and the United States. It also allowed Western scholars to enter Central Asian countries, to directly study the Bukharan Jews who remained, as well as to access documents within Uzbek, Tajik, and Russian archives.

---

[81] Levin, *Collectivization and Social Engineering,* 224.
[82] Zalman Amitin-Shapiro, *Jenschina i svadebnye obriady u tuzemnyx ("buxarskix") evreev Turkestana.* (Tashkent: Itogro, vol XVII., 1925): 189-196.
[83] see David E Fishman, "The Rebirth of Jewish Scholarship in Russia," *The American Jewish Year Book* 97 (1997): 391-400.

The migration of many Bukharan Jews to New York City has facilitated their study by American Ashkenazi ethnographers, such as Alanna Cooper, who studied the customs of Bukharan Jews in New York, Uzbekistan, and Israel, and Evan Joseph Rapport, who studied Bukharan Jewish music in New York.[84]

Since the 1990s to the present day, there has been a keen interest in studying Bukharan Jewish history by modern Israeli scholars. A general interest for Oriental Jews in Israel had surfaced in the 19th century due to immigration to Israel, and exposure of Ashkenazi Jews to their exotic-looking brethren. Research on Eastern communities typically began with ethnographies of their emigrant communities in Israel.[85] With many Bukharan Jews having migrated to Israel in the past thirty years, thus improving their socio-economic and educational status, a good number have become historians of late 19th and early 20th century Bukharan Jewry, publishing mainly in Hebrew and Russian, but also in English or French. By far the most prolific historians of Bukharan Jewry, who access Russian, Hebrew, and Judeo-Tajik sources from archives in Israel, Russia, and Uzbekistan, are Albert Kaganovitch, Mikael Zand, and Zeev Levin.[86]

The largest group of people interested in the history of the Bukharan Jews today are the Bukharan Jews themselves, not all of whom are scholars at universities. Based mostly in New York and Israel, they have produced memoires and biographies in English, Russian, Hebrew, and Judeo-

[84] Alanna Cooper. *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2012); Evan Rapport. *Greeted with smiles: Bukharian Jewish music and musicians in New York.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). See also Anna Halberstadt and Adele Nikolsky. "Bukharan Jews and their adaptation to the United States" *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 72.4 (1996): 244-255.

[85] This was prevalent in the 1970s. For example, Patai, who interviewed Mashhadi Jews in Israel; Moshe Shokeid, *The Dual Heritage: Immigrants from the Atlas Mountains in an Israeli Village* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971). Shlomo A. Deshen and Moshe Shokeid, *The Predicament of Homecoming: Cultural and Social Life of North African Immigrants in Israel* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

[86] Kaganovitch "The Jewish Communities of Central Asia." Albert Kaganovitch, "The Bukharan Jewish Diaspora at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *Bukharan Jews in the 20th Century: History, Experience and Narration* (2008): 111-116. Mikhail Zand, "Bukharan Jewish culture under Soviet rule," *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 9.2 (1979): 15-23. Levin, *Collectivization and Social Engineering*. Zeev Levin, "From local to global: transformations of Bukharan Jewish community organization in the twentieth century," *Nationalities Papers* 42.2 (2014): 321-335.

Persian detailing life in the community, as well as accounts of family history and reconstructions of life in the late 19th century.[87] They have created social media groups and continue to publish newspapers in Russian within their diasporic communities (*The Bukharian Times* in Forest Hills, New York and *Lechaim* in Israel). The World Congress on Bukharan Jews, established in 2000, in addition to its philanthropic work, also meets to deliver papers on the history and culture of Bukharan Jews.[88] The Congress publishes its weekly newspaper *Menorah* in Russian, Judeo-Tajik, and Hebrew.

Much of the historiography on Bukharan Jews which is written by Bukharan Jews remains in the realm of "local lore," in Russian *kraevedenia*. This discipline, which gained traction in early Soviet Uzbekistan as a form of consolidating historical consciousness of the Uzbek nation,[89] is well defined by Emily Johnson, who studied it from the perspective of an "identity discipline."

> It is highly unusual for *kraevedy* to write about places to which they have no clear personal connection. As lexicographers struggling to define *kraevedenie* sometimes acknowledge, "for the most part" this form of research represents the work of individuals who could under some rubric be classified as "local inhabitants.[90]

Johnson also notes that "a willingness to allow certain non-academic community members to participate in scholarly forums on a limited basis represents a typical feature of identity

[87] Menachem Eshel, *Galerya: Dmuyot shel Rashei Yahadut Bukhara* [Gallery: Portraits of the Leaders of the Jews of Bukhara] (Tel Aviv: Bet ha-Tarbut li-Yehudei Bukhara be-Yisrael, 1965). Issacharoff Family, *Issacharoff: A Tale of a Family* (Haifa: Issacharoff Family, 1997). Boris Ishakov, *Moshe Kalontar*. (New York, 1991). Svetlana Tolmasova published a memoire of her father, the famous singer Gavriel Mullokandov *Vospominanie ob otse*. (Tel Aviv. 2002). Batchaev has written a memoire as well as a novelisation of an episode of Jewish history in Samarkand Batchaev, Mordekhai, and Catherine Poujol. *La vie de Yaquv Samandar ou les revers du destin*. (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1992).

[88] Levin, "From local to global."

[89] See Ingeborg Baldauf, "*Kraevedenie*" *and Uzbek national consciousness*. Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1992.

[90] Emily D. Johnson, *How St. Petersburg learned to study itself: the Russian idea of kraevedenie*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 3-4.

disciplines."[91] In the study of Bukharan Jews, one can observe that academics frequently cite these non-academic *kraevedy*-scholars, who have access to information of local lore by virtue of the fact that they know their own local legends. Particularly prominent in this regard are historians Robert Pinhasov, a Bukharan Jew who resides in New York City, and Robert Al'meev, who is not Jewish, but a native *kraeved* historian of Bukhara.[92]

Thus, the study of Bukharan Jews has gone from colonialist-imperialist collecting practices and knowledge for the sake of control to genuine ethnographic interest for the sake of augmenting the knowledge of linguistics, folklore, folk traditions across the world, to diaspora studies, situating the group within the dynamics of global Judaism, to community self-study, *kraevedenie*. Having contextualised the history of the Bukharan Jews and the history of the study of the Bukharan Jews, in the next two chapters of this thesis, shall entwine historical knowledge with material culture studies, in order to demonstrate how the social, economic religious, and cultural world of the Bukharan Jews shapes and is shaped through the objects and architecture they produce.

[91] Johnson, *How St. Petersburg learned,* 7
[92] Pinhasov, *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev*; Robert Al'meev, *Legendy drevnej buxary: o postrjke pervoj sinagogi v Buxare*. (Moscow: Obschestvo evrejskoe nasledie. 1995).

CHAPTER 2. ARTEFACTS

Material culture includes virtually all objects and architecture produced and utilised by humans. Objects have a subjective, rather than objective, reality due to their entanglement with human social activity, and play an active role in routine as well as ritual life. There has been extensive work by social scientists, historians (of art), and archaeologists on the relationship between people and things.[93] In this chapter, we shall investigate objects used by Jewish communities of Central Asia throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. This will include textiles, ritual implements for the Torah, amulets, and other objects used for both ritual and daily life.

In addition to their usefulness in shedding light on Bukharan Jewish history and society, many of the objects studied in this section have an undeniably aesthetic quality; hence their appeal to collectors and museums. The Jewish concept of *hiddur mitzvah* ('beautifying the commandment') gives religious sanction to artistically embellishing ritual ornaments[94], and serves as a guiding principle throughout Jewish art history, of which these objects are a part.

2.1. Textiles

Textiles include clothing, but also carpets, blankets, decorative and ritual accessories made out of the same kinds of fibres used to make clothing (linen, cotton, wool, karakul, silk...). Clothing is arguably the item of material culture which most directly mediates the interaction between the individual and society, and can be used to identify their age group, social class, gender, ethnicity, and religion. Anthropological perspectives on dress have shown the significant roles textiles play in culture, through their use in day-to-day life as well as during special events, such as rites of

[93] Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Ian Hodder, *Entangled: An archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*. (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2012). Daniel Miller, *Stuff*. (London: Polity Press, 2010). Elizabeth Hallam and Tim Ingold, eds. *Making and growing: anthropological studies of organisms and artefacts*. (London: Routledge, 2016).
[94] Edward van Voolen, "Judaism—Visual Art and Architecture," *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts*. ed. Frank Burch Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 270.

passage.[95] Jewish dress, in particular, as the clothing of a minority group, possesses the double significance of having to respond to in-group pressures and expectations as well as to those of the majority ethnicity in the territory in which they live.[96] Since there is no clothing requirement specifically prescribed for daily use by the Jewish religion, Jewish communities have generally been very flexible to adapt to the dress code of the majority culture in which they lived.

2.1.1. Economic and Social Aspects of Textiles

Jews played a significant role in the textile trade in Central Asia in the 19th century. Jews were popularly known for their work as dyers, a profession, like others reserved for Jews throughout the Islamic world, considered to be polluting and of low social status.[97] They were particularly known for their work with indigo (Tj. *kabūd*; a dyer is called a *kabūdgar*). As noted by a 19th-century traveller, "you can generally tell a Hebrew from a Sart by the purple stain on his hands"[98]. A colloquial expression known to this day in Uzbekistan is to "go to the Jew," meaning to go to the dyer; Franz von Schwarz observed that "[n]early all the dyers, especially the dyers of silk, are Jews."[99] Bukhara, Samarkand, Margilan, Kermine and Marv all had Jewish dyeing workshops.[100]

---

[95] Dress was first studied anthropologically by Ernest Crawley in his entry "Dress" for the *Encyclopedia of Religion* in 1912. See Annette B. Weiner and Jane Schneider, eds. *Cloth and Human Experience.* (Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989). Joanne B. Eicher, "The anthropology of dress," *Dress* 27.1 (2000): 59-70. Sandra Dudley, "Material visions: dress and textiles," *Made to be seen: Perspectives on the history of visual anthropology*, eds. Marcus Banks and Jay Ruby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011): 45-73. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz, eds. *The fabrics of culture: the anthropology of clothing and adornment*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 201) 1.

[96] See, for example, Daniel Swetschinski, Julie-Marthe Cohen, and Stephen Hartog. *Orphan Objects. Facets of the Textiles Collection of the Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam*. (Amsterdam: Joods Historisch Museum, 1997). For the textiles of Jews in Yemen, A. Klein, "Tablet Weaving by the Jews of San'a (Yemen)," in *The fabrics of culture: the anthropology of clothing and adornment*, Cordwell and Schwartz (eds), (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011): 425-445.

[97] Other polluting professions reserved for Jews were executioner, tanner, coppersmith.

[98] Annette M. B. Meakin, *In Russian Turkestan: A Garden of Asia and its People* (New York: Scribner, 1915), 176.

[99] Adler, Elkan N., Bacher, Wilhelm, Gottheil, Richard, "Bokhara" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906 (accessed online at http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3478-bokhara).

[100] Stuart Thompstone, "Central Asia's Jewish minority and its contribution to Tsarist Russia's economic development," *Culture, Theory and Critique* 38.1 (1995): 66.

According to a local legend, the ruler of the Kokand Khanate had asked the emir of Bukhara to send dyers of silk to the city of Khujand. All the dyers were Jewish, and after their arrival they asked the emir for permission for more Jews to come so they could have enough men to form a *minyan* construct a synagogue.[101] The first Jews who came to the cities of Khanate Andijan, Margilan, and Kokand in the 1840s are said to have been silk dyers from the Bukharan Emirate.[102] Besides silk, Jews also worked and dyed goat down to produce Cashmere shawls. Russian General G. F. Gens recorded that in 1819, a Jew from Ura-Tyube (near Khujand):

> brought a shawl of his own manufacture from Ura-Tyube. It was so beautiful that it interested the emir, who sent a messenger to find out the price of this shawl. It turned out that it was being sold for 50 ducats. The best Cashmere shawls cost 100 ducats in Bukhara. The Khan ordered to bring this master to his place, kindly, presented him and ordered to recruit students to teach his craft[103]

This demonstrates the connection between trade, textiles, and migration of Bukharan Jews throughout the 19th century.

In addition to dyeing silk, Jews were also skilled raw silk producers and weavers of the finished product. In 1885, one third of Jews living in Bukhara worked in silk production, and were known for their high-quality silk shawls (Tj. *kalgai*).[104] Henry Lansdell recorded his experience buying silk from Jews in a Tashkent bazaar:

> We purchased pocket handkerchiefs and skeins of native silk, the latter very glossy, and dyed and sold largely by the Jews, who from the numbers we saw in the bazaar, and their begrimed appearance, gave one the idea that they engage a good deal in handicrafts, especially dyeing.[105]

---

[101] A. Yusupov and H. Sharipov. "Yaxudi v Xudjand" in *Sadriddin Ayni va Yaxudijoni Bukhor,* ed. Mansur Surush (Khojand: Noshir, 2011), 70-74.
[102] Poujol, "Approaches to the history of Bukharan Jews," 552.
[103] Gulsum Mikhaleva, *Uzbekistan v XVII-pervoi polovine XIX veka.* (Tashkent: Fan, 1991,) 29.
[104] Kaganovitch, "The Jewish Communities," 940. Sukhareva, Kvartal'naia obshchina, 76.
[105] Henry Lansdell, *Russian Central Asia, including Kuldja, Bokhara, Khiva and Merv.* (London: Sampson Low and Co., 1885), 459.

The threads of silk purchased by Lansdell are conserved to this day at the British Museum, and are indicative of the high quality and variety of colour of the material, in gleaming bright shades of purple, green, blue, red, and yellow.

Figure 4: Collection of silk purchased from Jews at the bazaar in Tashkent. British Museum, As1883,0132.30.a-g.

Jewish merchants had already been selling textiles to Russia since at least the early 19th century[106], yet in the late 19th, with Russian colonisation and the intensification of trade between Tashkent and Orenbourg this piecemeal trade of exotic valuables grew to an industrial and capitalist level. Jews were given numerous rights and privileges, such as the right to Russian nationality, which facilitated business with Russia. Due to their experience with textiles, many collaborated with new Russian economic operations in the area, especially the budding cotton trade. The largest cotton emporiums were located in the Ferghana Valley, headed by the Bukharan Jewish families Poteliyakhov, Vadyayev, Davidoff, Simkhaev, Yashuev, and Abramov.[107]

[106] Even further back, there is evidence of Jews selling clothing to Turks along the Silk Road in the eighth century, as recorded by a Judeo-Persian letter about a Jewish merchant from Khwarezm selling clothing in Dandan Uiliq, West China (Utas, Bo. "The Jewish-Persian Fragment from Dandān-Uiliq." *Orientalia Suecana* 17 (1968): 123–36).
[107] Thompstone, "Central Asia's Jewish minority," 70-72

In addition to the economic role, the textiles worn by Jews played a social role in their lives. Officially, before the Russian invasion, Jews were subjected to laws forbidding them from wearing high-quality clothing. They were not allowed to wear a belt, but instead a simple cord or rope, and instead of the turban, a fur hat (*tilpak*).[108] Vámbéry noted that the Jews of Marv had "turned themselves into half-Turkmenians, but they have their inevitable small payos [sidelocks] and head-dress," while Alexander Burns observed in Bukhara that they "wear a somewhat different dress, and a conical cap," which was "made of sheepskin."[109] Rules regulating Jewish clothing seem to only have been applied to men, while Jewish women wore the Muslim *paranja* (a burqa with a face-veil made of horse hair) and dressed just like Sart women in public.[110] Thus, on the public street, Jewish men were visually differentiated from Muslims, while Jewish women were not. What they wore in the home would not be a concern to officials.

The different clothing worn by Jews does not necessarily indicate that the population was singled out as a specifically hated ethnic group. Alexander Burnes noted in 1835 how different groups wore different kinds of clothing and could be distinguished by their hat and haircut.[111] Hindus, like Jews, wore rope instead of a belt, showing that the prohibition of the belt was given to all non-Muslims, and not specifically Jews.

After the invasion of Turkestan, Russian ethnographers describe Jews as wearing the same clothing as Sarts, showing that once the prohibition was removed, they chose to dress in the same style as Muslims.[112] Radloff, who was in Samarkand in 1880, described the cord and the hat worn

[108] *Travels into Bokhara*, vol 2, 235.
[109] All these examples are quoted in Kaganovitch, *The Mashhadi Jews*, p. 254
[110] According to Amitin-Shapiro, *Jenschina i svadebnye obriady*, and Emelyanenko, "Pamyatniki traditsionno-bytovoi," in the safety of the Jewish mahalla, the veil was pulled back above the woman's face.
[111] Wolff, *Travels into Bokhara*, vol 2, 235.
[112] Nalivkin, a 19th-century ethnographer, describes "Jewish dyers wearing similar dress [to Sarts] but with long side locks and hands always blue from dye." Vladimir Nalivkin and Maria Nalivkina. *Muslim Women of the Fergana Valley: A 19th-century Ethnography from Central Asia.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 32.

by Jews, but also noted that "now this has changed, and Jews wear the belts and hats trimmed with fur."[113] A French engraving from the late 19th century, furthermore, depicts wealthy Jewish merchants from Tashkent, wearing turbans and a belt, a privilege previously denied to them.

Figure 5: Wealthy Jewish merchants, drawing by E. Ronjat (based. on a photograph). According to Poujol (2003: 263) they are from Tashkent, though this information is not printed on the copy I consulted. MAHJ, Paris.

Russian colonisation brought a second change to Jewish clothing in Central Asia: some Jews began to adopt a European style of dress. As the Jewish bourgeoisie of Central Asia embraced Russian language and lifestyle, they also took on some elements of Russian dress. Bukharan Jewish merchants who frequently travelled to Russia, taking up temporary residence in Moscow, such as Nathan Davidoff (1880-1977), wore European suits. Besides business attire, Russian influence extended into the domestic realm, with elements of Russian clothing being incorporated into Central Asian dress. A photograph of the Davidoff family (Figure 6) shows laces and flounces

[113] Radloff, "Srednaya Zerafshanskaya dolina," 36.

sewn onto *ikat* dresses.[114] When she was slightly older, Deborah Davidoff came to wear fully European fashion, replacing the *tyubeteika* for a wide-brimmed hat and the *ikat* silk for a Western dress.

Figure 6: Davidoff family, Tashkent, early 20th century. (Bar'am-Ben Yossef, "One Woman – Many Transitions).

[114] No'am Bar'am-Ben Yossef, "One Woman – Many Transitions Deborah Davidoff from Tashkent, Uzbekistan as a model of the transformations of Bukharan Jewish women's dress from the early twentieth century to the middle of the twentiehth century." *The Narrative Power of Clothes*: *Proceedings of the ICOM Costume Committee Annual Meeting, London, 25 – 29 June 2017*, http://costume.mini.icom.museum/publications-2/publications/proceedings-of-the-icom-costume-committee-annual-meeting-in-london-2017/

Figure 7: Deborah Davidoff, Tashkent, early 20th century. (Bar'am-Ben Yossef, "One Woman – Many Transitions).

This Russian influence remained mostly confined to the bourgeoisie. Most museum collections of Bukharan Jewish clothing contain Central Asian-styled robes (*khalat*s). The Bukharian Jewish Museum in New York possesses ikats of the *abr*, *adras*, and *bekasab* types from Bukhara, Samarkand, Ferghana, and Khiva from the late 19th century early 20th, with different patterns specific to each area.[115] In the Jewish Museum in New York, there are a number of fine-quality ikats dyed with bright colours dating to the late 19th century. One woman's coat from the Israel Museum with Russian gold brocade on the exterior and *ikat* silk on the interior is of exceptionally high quality.

[115] Rosenfield, Yael. *The Bukharian Jewish Museum: Creation of a Collection Catalog and Implementation of Collection Management Techniques*. Diss. Fashion Institute of Technology. Fashion and Textile Studies, 2006.

Figure 8: Woman's coat (*kaltachak*), Bukhara, Uzbekistan, late 19th century. The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, B64.12.4226.

A *djoma* worn by Rachamim ben Shlomo Aron-Bayor (b. 1887 Samarkand) is made of printed cotton bordered on reused ikat silk from a past garment; clothing was recycled (Figure 8). The robe also follows the typical style of Samarkand with its trapezoid design. Jews thus dressed in accordance with the style of the region in which they lived, rather than to identify their ethnicity. According to Makhkamova, there were at least two "Jewish patterns," that is, *ikat* patterns specific to Jews.[116] These do not appear to have been very prevalent, however, and most of the *ikat* patterns worn by Jews conform to regional styles of the city in which they lived.

Figure 9: *Djoma* from Samarkand. The Jewish Museum (New York), JM 216-68.

[116] S.M. Makhkamova, *Uzbek Ikat Fabric* (Tashkent, 1963), color plate no. 3 and pg. 41, black and white plate XI, no.3. I did not have access to this book and relied on the quotation in Rosenfield, *The Bukharian Jewish Museum*, note 71.

2.1.2. Birth, Marriage, Death

Special textiles are used to mark rites of passage in the life cycle. Like all other societies, Bukharan Jews had specific dresses for specific ceremonies, notably for those surrounding birth, marriage, and death. Jewish communities throughout Asia, Europe and the Americas have all used textiles in ritual contexts, and the principal text of Jewish law, the Torah, contains rules on the religious use of textiles.[117] Textiles are thus extremely important as markers of identity. In the city of Mashhad, for example, while Muslims left the shroud of the deceased unsewn, the Jews sewed it; one Mashhadi legend related a crypto-Jew being discovered because Muslims "observed that no twigs were placed under the deceased's armpits, no soil from the tomb of Imam Reza, and no rosary beads were placed on her chest, and **the shroud was sewn**."[118] Even after death, clothing is a mark of identification.

The first important rite in a Jewish man's life is his circumcision ceremony (Hb. *brit milah*), performed on the seventh day after birth. An interesting pair of objects at the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore are two "birth-dresses," one for the mother, and the other for the newly-born child. Made of local cotton, they are embroidered with auspicious Hebrew lines in gleaming white silk thread.

[117] Bernice Morris and Mary M. Brooks, "Jewish ceremonial textiles and the Torah: Exploring conservation practices in relation to ritual textiles associated with holy texts," in *Textiles and Text: Re-establishing the links between Archival and Object-based Research*, (eds.) Maria Hayward and Elizabeth Kramer (London: Archtype, 2007), 244-248; Virginia Greene, "'Accessories of Holiness': Defining Jewish Sacred Objects., *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 31.1 (1992): 31-39; Julie-Marthe Cohen, "Donation as a social phenomenon: Synagogue textiles of the Ashkenazi Community of Amsterdam in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 32.1 (1998): 24-42. See, for further examples on the ritual use of textiles, Salvatore Gaspa and Matteo Vigo. *Textiles in ritual and cultic practices in the ancient Near East from the third to the first millennium BC: proceedings of an international workshop in Copenhagen (6th to 7th October 2015*). (Berlin: Ugarit-Verlag, 2019).
[118] Patai, *Jadīd*, 184-5, my emphasis.

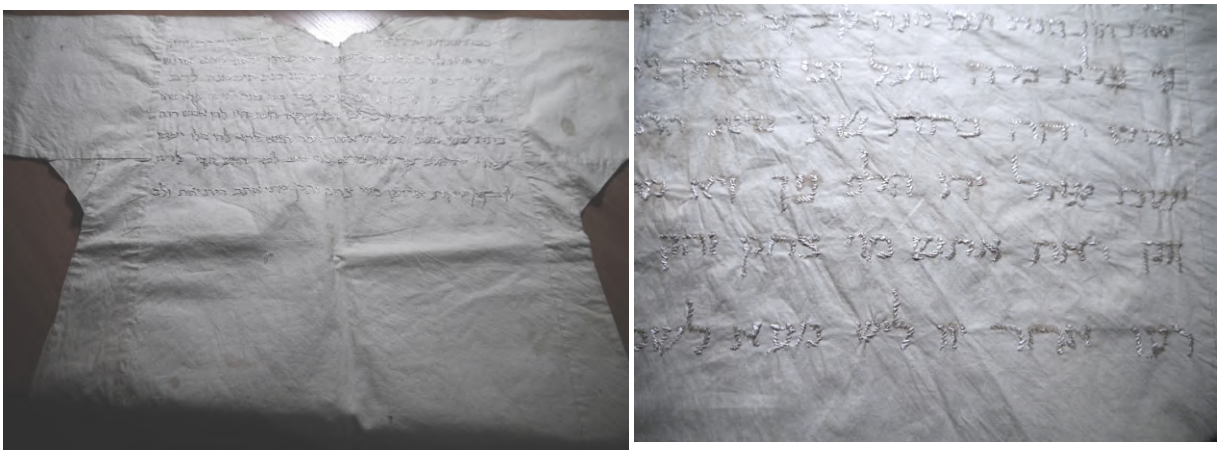


Figure 10: Birth Dress. Samarkand Museum of Local Lore. (Author's photograph).

Special *khalat*s were worn during the *bar mitzvah*, another rite reserved exclusively for boys, who have reached thirteen years of age. The Jewish Museum of London exhibits a bar mitzvah *khalat* brought by Michael Issacharoff when he immigrated to London from Jerusalem in 1938 (his family had originally immigrated to Israel from Central Asia). As we can see in the photo of his *bar mitzvah* (which took place in 1933), the young man is distinguishable in his opulent gown with an elaborate and original design, while the other members of his family wear fancy, yet less ceremonial, clothing. While most of the family dresses in the modern Western garments normal to their newly adopted country, the boy celebrating his bar mitzvah wears a ritual robe which of his original home.

Figure 11: Bar mitzvah robe, Michael Issachoroff, 1933. The Jewish Museum (London), C 2004.4.

Figure 12: Photograph taken on the day of the bar mitzvah of Micheal Issacharoff in the Bukharan quarter in Jerusalem, 1933. The Jewish Museum (London) 1461.5.

Marriage and funerals also call for special garments; in fact, during both occasions, the same dress could be worn. The MAHJ holds a wedding robe, which dates to the turn of the century and which is identical to the type worn by Uzbek women (Figure 12), while the mourning dress in the Israel Museum is made from the same green textile (the mourning dress could also be blue or grey, Figure 13). Ornamental joined sleeves hang from the back of both dresses. This attests to the practice, which also occurred among Sephardic Jewish communities, of wearing the same kind of gown for a wedding as for a funeral.[119] Another garment which served multiple functions was the *ṭallit*, which is worn during prayer service, marriage, and death. During the wedding ceremony, it is used as a *ḥuppa* to cover the married couple.[120]

Figure 13: Female wedding robe. MAHJ (Paris), 94.15.001.

[119] Assaf-Shapria, Efrat. "Clothing that Remembers," Video. https://www.thecjm.org/exhibitions/102.
[120] Amitin-Shapiro, *Jenschina i svadebnye*, 191.

Figure 14: Mourning dress. The Israel Museum (Jerusalem) B64.11.3871.

Figure 15: Ṭallit. Bukhara, late 19th century. The Aliza and Shlomo Musayof collection. From "Threads of Silk - the story of Bukharan Jewry" (https://www.bh.org.il/event/story-bukharan-jewry/)

Another item of clothing that fluctuated between different rites of passage was the wedding shawl, worn at the betrothal ceremony, the wedding, and then by the already married woman on any festive occasion. The sequins (Tj. *pulak*, "fish scales") could subtly identify the bride as Jewish through Hebrew inscriptions (the name of the bride or biblical verses Jeremias 33:11 or Genesis 49:22, associated with fertility), stars of David and the seven-branched menorah.[121] In one early 20th-century shawl from the Israel Museum (Figure 16), the sequins spell out the Hebrew word *mazal* ("fortune") and draw a *khamsa* (the palm). Another sequined shawl from the Jewish Museum

[121] These were also worn by the Jews of Afghanistan and Mashhad. Patai, n
Jadīd Al-Islām, 246.

in London, worn by Yaffa Kalendarova on her wedding day in 1927 in Kokand, is decorated with tree of life motifs, associated with fertility (Figure 17). Her wedding gown (Figure 18) is in creamy white silk rather than the traditional green, attesting to European influence, while maintaining the traditional long sleeves of a Central Asian dress.

Figure 16: Sequined wedding shawl from Bukhara. The Israel Museum (Jerusalem), B66.12.1520.

Figure 17: Wedding shawl with tree of life pattern, influence of floral design as used on *suzani*s. The Jewish Museum (London), 2000.25.2.

Figure 18: Wedding dress. The Jewish Museum (London), 2000.25.1.

2.1.3. *Suzani*s in the Jewish context

Another important type of textile in Central Asia are *suzani*s (the term means an embroidered tapestry, derived from the Tajik word for needle, *suzan*), which were traditionally part of a Central Asian woman's marriage trousseau.[122] One type of *suzani*, the Uzbek *ruidjo* or Tajik *joipushi*, accompanied a woman during her marriage and contained a large central empty space in the form of a *mihrab*, in white cotton, which served to prove the woman's virginity after her wedding night. After the wedding, the *suzani* was then used to decorate the house, hanging over doorways and wall niches. [123] It hung on the wall opposite the entrance to the guest room (*mehmonkhona*), so it could be the first impression of a guest upon entering the house.

Usually a girl's mother would embroider the *suzani* years before the wedding; only extremely rich households could commission a *suzani*. According to Izrailova, Jewish women embroidered *suzani*s for their daughters, but the very wealthy, such as the Kalontarov family, could

[122] Olga Sukhareva, *Suzani. Central Asian decorative embroidery*. Tashkent: International Institute for Central Asian Studies, 2011.
[123] Shannon Ludington. "Embroidering Paradise: Suzanis As a Place of Creative Agency and Acculturation for Uzbek Women in 19th Century Bukhara," *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 2018.

commission them from professional Muslim embroiderers.[124] Each piece took at least 100 hours to complete.

One of the most popular designs were rosettes, depicting tulips (*lola*), stars, and the sky (*palak*). Angela Izrailova documented the *suzani*s brought from Central Asia to New York by Bukharan Jewish immigrants, and came across the following types: large medallion *suzani*s (from the southwest of Uzbekistan), *nīm-suzani*s (half-sized), *bolinpush suzani*s, which covered the bride's head during marriage, *djoinamoz suzani*s (used for prayer), *ruidjo* (used to cover bride's bed), *gabropush* (cradle cover), and *sandalipush* (chair cover).[125] The large variety of *suzani*s Izrailova encountered attests to their widespread use among the Jewish community.

Figure 19: *Suzani* from Bukhara, 18th-19th century. The Jewish Museum (New York), JM 208-68b.

Jews used *suzani*s in a very specifically Jewish setting: in the synagogue, serving as Torah ark curtains (Hb. *parokhet*, a piece of cloth separating the ark from the prayer hall). This is

[124] One example is in Angela Izrailova, "Suzani Vernacular: Technique and Design in the Central Asian Dowry Embroideries," *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 1998
[125] Izrailova, "Suzani Vernacular"

unsurprising, given that the community's most luxurious fabric usually served this function throughout Jewish communities. Despite the fact that reuse of fabrics was not technically allowed in Jewish law, it was prevalent in practice, and some Ashkenazi rabbis struck down the prohibition of transforming used clothing into religious items, provided they were modified in some way (hence the dedicatory inscriptions). In Islamic countries, a piece of fabric specifically associated with women's clothing was typically reused in a religious setting, such as the *izar* in Iraq (a woman's upper veil), the wraparound skirt in India, and ripped and resewn wedding dresses (*bindallı*s) in Turkey.[126] Furthermore, the use of female clothing or textiles associated with women as a Torah ark curtain has a symbolic connotation, given that the evening sabbath service consists of a series of hymns to welcome the sabbath (*kabbalat shabat*), which is metaphorically perceived as a bride, as is the Torah itself (and those who discover its secrets are "bridegrooms").[127] *Suzani*s are all the more fitting for this symbolism, since they were part of a woman's bridal trousseau. While *suzani*s served as Torah ark curtains in Uzbekistan, block-printed cotton with paisley designs were more common in Iran, and Jews in Afghanistan made use of both types of fabric.[128]

[126] Raphael Patai (ed), *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*. (London: Routledge, 2015), 532.
[127] This understanding of the sabbath stems from 16th-century kabbalistic thought (though some Talmudic rabbis already called the sabbath a "bride" and a "queen") and gained widespread currency among Jewish congregations across the world. The sabbath is associated with the seventh sefirah, *malchut* (royalty), which is female and perceived as *shechinah*, the feminine aspect of God. The Torah is called the "bride of Israel." The Zohar explicitly compares the Torah to "a beautiful and stately damsel, who is hidden in a secluded chamber of her palace, and who has a secret love.... When he comes to her, she begins **from behind a curtain** to speak words in keeping with his understanding.... Then **through a light veil** she speaks allegorical words..." Zohar II 09, quoted in Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 55.
[128] Patai, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore*, 532.

Figure 20: *Suzani* Torah ark curtain, The Israel Museum (Jerusalem), B69.0066152/124.

In Figure 20, the mihrab shape, usually left blank for the bride's wedding night in the *suzani* of the *ruidjo* type, is filled with heart-shaped decorations and a Hebrew inscription brocaded at the top, a later addition to the piece (from a different piece of cloth), dedicating it to a deceased loved one.[129]. A *suzani* from a Samarkand (Figure 21) has a Hebrew inscription embroidered on the small portion of cloth not covered by decoration, which is within a miniature mihrab shape: קודש לנ ראובן בן שמואל יקר שנת תרפב ("dedicated to the soul of Ruben son of Samuel Yaqar the year (5)682=1922").

A 1932 photograph shows a piece of *ikat* cloth with the star of David and the two tablets of the ten commandments hanging in the synagogue of Samarkand (Figure 20). These elements

[129] It was also common in Iraq and India to dedicate the item of female clothing (*izar* and the wraparound skirt) to the deceased husband.

appear to have been part of the piece's original design, and thus woven specifically for the Jewish context.

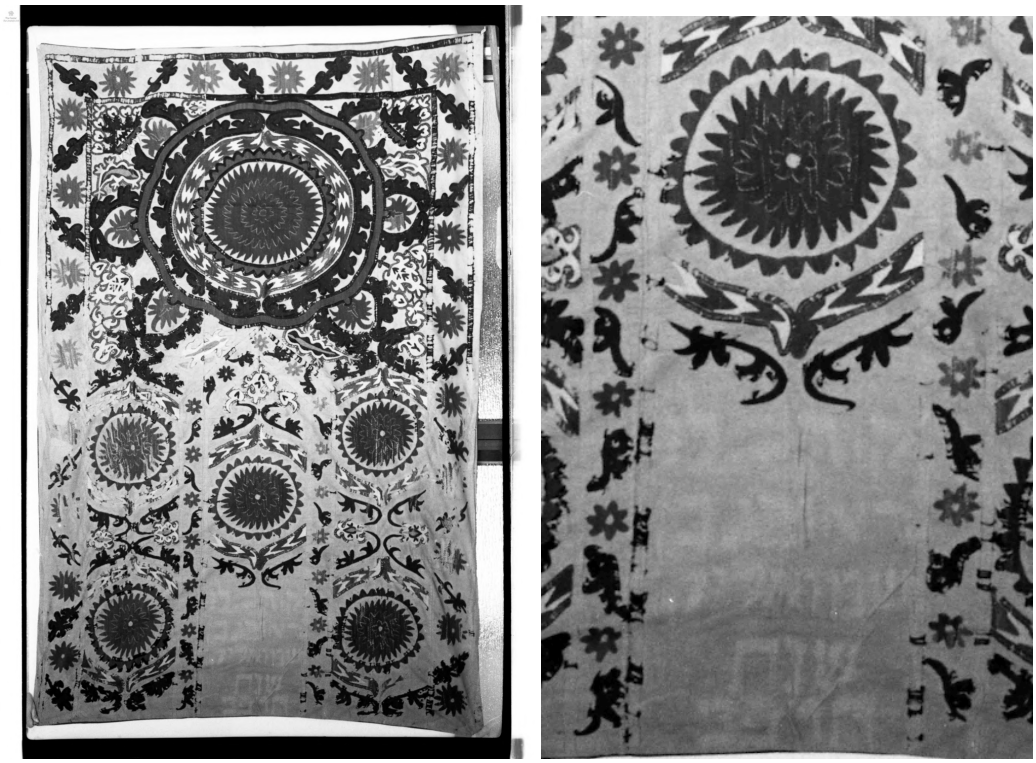


Figure 21: *Suzani* used as *sukkah* cloth, Samarkand, 1922. Bnei Brak (Israel). (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 22: *Suzani*s and *ikat*s hanging in the synagogue, 1932 (Municipal Museum, Samarkand, reproduced in Berg, *Facing West*, 9).

Figure 23: *Ikat* serving as Torah ark curtain, Samarkand, 1919. (The Center for Jewish Art).

*Suzani*s were also used to decorate *sukkot* (Hb. tabernacle or booth, used during the seven-day festival of *Sukkot*). This can be seen on a cabin from the 1860s-70s photographed in the Turkestan Album (Figures 24 and 25). Central Asian-styled *sukkot* are reproduced in both the Israel Museum in Jerusalem and in the Jewish exhibit at the Museum of Local Lore in Samarkand (Figure 26). The reproductions include the typical mixture of melons, grape leaves, pomegranates and herbs hanging from the sukkah ceiling.

Figure 24: Suzani cloth on the top of a *sukkah*, Turkestan Album part 2, volume 1, plate 81, no. 259. Library of Congress.

Figure 25: A *sukkah* in a house in Samarkand, late 19th century. Turkestan Album. Kunstkamera (St. Petersburg), I-1718-209. The holiday of Sukkot is labelled under the Tajik name "bīd bendan".

Figure 26: Bukharan *sukkah*. The Israel Museum collection.

One curious item in the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore is a piece of *ikat* silk with a print of a Hebrew amulet (Figure 27). The object was not on display, but was being as a cloth for other items to lay upon (I had to ask museum staff to remove the objects on top in order to photograph it). It is an elegant artistic fusion of Central Asian and Jewish culture, with an amulet

printed on fabric from Jerusalem (by the Avraham Moshe Lunz printing press[130]), sewed onto local *ikat* cloth. The text relates to Passover and to the Holy Land, and was likely originally intended as a napkin for the Passover *seder* (meal), but may have also served an amuletic function.

Figure 27: a) Passover napkin, Samarkand (Photograph by author). b) Passover napkin, Akhaltsikh (From Berg, *Facing West*, 105).

The object bears striking similarity to a cloth dating to 1914 from Akhaltsikh, Georgia (also printed in Jerusalem, by the Halevi Zukkerman printing press). According to Dmitriev the cloth was known as *mizrah-supra* (*mizrah* meaning ornament for the wall facing Jerusalem, *supra* meaning tablecloth).[131] This term indicates that the cloth was placed on the wall. It is interesting to observe the same practice of sewing a cloth print from Jerusalem onto local textile design, in Samarkand and Akhaltsikh.

In the above section, we discussed the importance of textiles in Jewish life. Textiles were also used to embellish Torah cases, which will be examined in the following section.

[130] A quasi-identical napkin, without the Central Asian cloth, is sold by Kedem auctions. https://www.kedem-auctions.com/product/printed-cloth-napkin-for-passover-%E2%80%93-rachel-mizrachi-%E2%80%93-printed-by-avraham-moshe-lunz-%E2%80%93-late-19th-%E2%80%93-early-20th-century/

[131] Vladimir Dmitriev, in Berg, *Facing West*, 105.

2.2. Torah ornaments

2.2.1. Torah Cases

There is a variety of ways to store the Torah scrolls in a synagogue. While European communities usually kept them wrapped directly in a piece of cloth, Jews from North Africa, the Levant, Iraq and Iran placed them in a prismatic or cylindrical wooden case.[132] According to Bracha Yaniv:

> The ornamentation of the Torah cases...was always dictated by the local Jews' professions and economic situation and by local decorative traditions. In the Iraqi city of Mosul, where Jews were leather merchants, the cases were sheathed in leather, while in Baghdad, a center of Jewish textile commerce and the silversmith's art, they were coated with velvet or silver.[133]

In Central Asia, the wooden Torah cases are coated with velvet or ikat silk, since Jews were local textile merchants. The wooden cases are akin to the Babylonian type used in Iraq, Iran, and the Levant.[134] Some cases are topped with a globular crown (as in the usual Babylonian type), through influence from Jews coming from Iran and Afghanistan, but most are not, and have a flat, circular top. Wooden mounts (upon which finials are placed) are directly fixed onto the top of the case, while cases with globular crowns have them fastened at a diagonal angle on the sides of the crown (see Figures 28, 31). Cases with crowns had the dedicatory inscription placed inside the crown (called *keter,* which split in two halves when opened, Figure 30), while crownless cases had

[132] Yaniv, "From Spain to the Balkans," 410, has deduced that the firm wooden case evolved in communities whihch kept the Torah in an open niche, whereas in Europe the wrapping cloth evolved since the Torah was safely stored within a large wooden cabinet with closing doors (effectively fulfilling the role of the wooden case).
[133] Bracha Yaniv, "Regional Variations of Torah Cases from the Islamic World," in J. Gutmann (ed.) *For Every Thing a Season, Proceedings of the Symposium on Jewish Ritual A*rt. Cleveland: Cleveland State University, 2002, 46.
[134] Yaniv, "Regional Variations." This is one of three types of Eastern Torah cases described by Yaniv, the others being the Yemenite type (the decorations are directly painted on the wood, which was wrapped with a piece of cloth, no crown), and the Mediterranean type (with a coronet).

the inscription nailed onto the exterior of the case (Figure 31). The practice of placing dedicatory inscriptions on Torah cases became very popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[135]

The wood was covered with a piece of cloth (usually velvet[136]) which was attached to it by means of dome-headed copper nails along its border. The tops of the cases had their own circular coverings, called a *malbush* (Hb. for garment). An additional cloth was served as a mantle for the case (Hb. *miṭpaḥat*), whereas for Ashkenazis the *miṭpaḥat* directly wrapped the scroll itself.

Figure 28: Torah case with circular cover and *rimmonim*, Tashkent. (The Center for Jewish Art).

[135] Bracha Yaniv. "The Mystery of the Flat Torah Finials from East Persia," in *Padyavand, Judeo-Iranian and Jewish Studies Series*, ed. Amnon Netzer, (Los Angeles, 1996), 63-74.
[136] Velvet was also used in Sephardic Torah mantles of the Ottoman empire.

Figure 29: Photo with men holding the Torah case in Tashkent. Photograph by Georgiya Pinkhasova.

Figure 30: Central Asian-styled Torah case, Jerusalem, 1911. (The Center for Jewish Art).

While most of the cases are surrounded with red or burgundy velvet, with no decoration, there are a few examples from Bukhara which use the fine and expensive *kundal* technique of embossing with gold or silver thread for a brocaded (usually flower or plant) design (Figure 31). Furthermore, a variety of cloths could be mixed, velvet, *ikat* silk, *adras*, and of course the gold thread, creating unique pieces. decorate their cases using cloth already found in the home, such as by reusing old dresses. One Torah case from Samarkand uses *ikat* cloth as a wrapping (Figure 34),

which makes it unique and quintessentially Central Asian. Another, used by Bukharan Jews in Israel, contains *ikat* in the internal decoration, while externally it is plain (Figure 30).

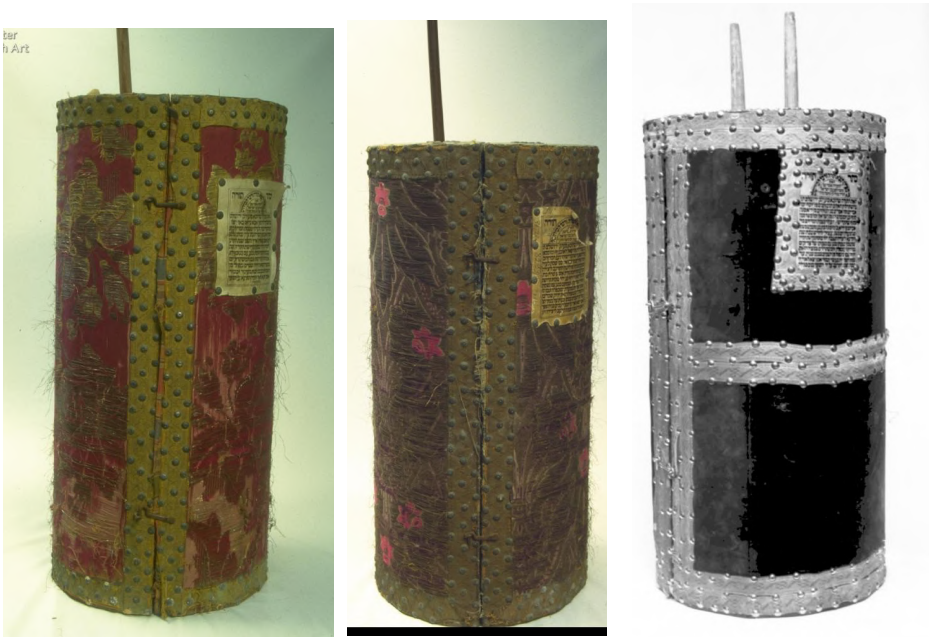


Figure 31: a) Torah case, Bukhara, early 20th century. b) Torah case, Bukhara, early 20th century. c) To (The Center for Jewish Art). The two the left are made from handwoven gold brocade (note the dedicatory plaques attached to both) on the right, industrial.

Figure 32: a) Bukhara, Itskhakov family, late 19th century. Museum of Jewish History in Russia. b) Bukhara, 1900 (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 33: Torah cases, a) Samarkand, 1914. b) Samarkand State United Historical-Architectural and Art Museum c) Or Avner Synagogue (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 34: Torah case wrapped in *ikat* silk. Samarkand State Historical, Architectural and Art Museum (The Center for Jewish Art).

The Bukharan Jewish synagogue in Margilan conserves three "generations" of Torah cases; one yellow velvet with elaborate floral brocade, one the typical red velvet, hammered with round nails, and a late 20th-century, machine-woven, mass-produced example (Figure 35). Rather than a dedicatory inscription, it is decorated with symbols derived from Ashkenazi Judaism, two tablets with the ten commandments, two lions and a crown. It has a Babylonian-type globular crown with

two rods attached diagonally (for the finials). It is hence an Eastern shape with Western decorations, reflecting the multi-culturalism of Bukharan Jews.

Figure 35: Torah cases, Margilan. (The Center for Jewish Art).

2.2.2. Torah Finials

Torah finials are silver ornaments mounted on top of the wooden rods of a Torah case. They are known as *rimmonim* (Hb. pomegranates) for their distinctive shape.[137] The Torah finials of Central Asia adhere to the same pear-shaped form used in Persian communities, though not the flat Torah finials found in eastern Iran and Afghanistan.[138]

According to William Gross, most Torah finials in Bukhara were imported from Afghanistan, and only a few were made locally.[139] Many of the Torah finials photographed by the

[137] Patai, *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore*, 539
[138] Yaniv, "The mystery of the flat Torah finials"
[139] https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=37145

Center for Jewish Art combine an Eastern shape with Western decoration. One example from Bukhara, made in 1896, is topped by the double-headed eagle, an Ashkenazi symbol (Figure 36).

Figure 36: Torah finial from Bukhara (The Center for Jewish Art).

Another finial from Bukhara, made of silver and of exceptionally fine craftsmanship, is topped with a Russian imperial crown (*shapka Monomakha*), etched with stars of David and elegant art-nouveau floral designs. It contains four bells in its center, and dedicated by the brothers Shemuel and Reuven in 1909 for their father Yosef Amramov.[140]

[140] https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=37145

.
Figure 36: Torah finial from Bukhara (The Center for Jewish Art).

2.3. Amulets

A large quantity of Hebrew paper and metal amulets dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries are preserved in the Samarkand State Museum. Amulets served the purpose of protecting the wearer against evil forces, and derive from folk beliefs (there is a continuity in the history of amulet production from pharaonic Egypt to the Islamic period to modern times). Their application was chiefly medical: for curing illnesses and alleviating the pain of childbirth, for these afflictions were caused by demons.[141] Jews theologically justified the making of amulets as an expression of practical Kabbalah, for it contributed to the good in the world.[142] Amulets include objects made

[141] Eli Davis, "The Psalms in Hebrew medical amulets," *Vetus Testamentum* 42.2 (1992): 173-178; H. Matras, "Jewish Folk Medicine in the 19th and 20th Centuries," in *Jews and Medicine: Religion, Culture and Science.* (Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 113-135; Shalom Sabar, "Jewish Amulets from the Beginning of the Modern Age until the Twentieth Century," in *Angels and Demons: Jewish Magic through the Ages – Exhibition Catalog,* ed. Filip Vukosavovic (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2010), 24-27; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish magic and superstition: A study in folk religion.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).
[142] Yuval Harari, "Practical Kabbalah" and the Jewish Tradition of Magic," *Aries* 19.1 (2019): 38-82.

from metal, more common in Islamic regions, as well as from paper, more common among Ashkenazi communities, and both types are found throughout all regions. Jews developed a good reputation for their amulets and magic in Central Asia; one excerpt from Joseph Wolff's account cited above mentioned how Turkmen would go to Jews to purchase "charms, in order that they may be kept safe in battle."[143] Vámbéry also mentions a "Jew, an accomplished magician, who for the moment was staying in Karatepe, had promised to prepare an efficacious nuskha (talisman)" for a Turkmen seeking to win over the affections of a girl.[144]

Metal amulets could take many forms, such as a hand, squares, teardrops, while paper amulets were generally rectangular. The hand-shaped amulet (Figure 37), known as a *khamsa* (derived from the word for "five"), is a direct borrowing from Islamic amulets, and is used by Jews across the Islamic world. As an amulet, it functions as a literal raising of the hand to block the evil eye. The figure of Joseph is associated with power over the evil eye in rabbinical writings, and biblical verses alluding to him are frequently invoked.[145] In this example from Samarkand, one side is inscribed with *Ben porat Yosef - Ben porat Yosef aley-ayin* (Joseph is a fruitful vine), from Genesis 49:22, and the other with *Shadai Yerushalayim* (God [looking over] Jerusalem).

[143] Wolff, *Travels and adventures,* 306.
[144] Vámbéry,. *Travels in Central Asia,* 36.
[145] Ibid, 22.

Figure 37: Amulet, Samarkand State Museum. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Other amulets, such as Figure 38, contained grids with magical letters, each of which was assigned a Kabbalistic number. These were very difficult for the layman to understand and required a ritual specialist, and could only be decoded by reading extremely complex Kabbalistic treatises. There were also simpler, and more ubiquitous, Kabbalistic letters, such as the names of God, שדי (*shaddai*) and ה (*he*), which are engraved within the star of David on the amulet in Figure 39.

Figure 38: Amulet, Samarkand State Museum. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 39: Kabbalistic names of God, שדי and ה engraved within star of David, on an amulet in the shape of a droplet. Samarkand State Museum. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Amulets in the Samarkand State Museum are a testimony to the cultural interactions between the Central Asian city and Israel. One paper amulet is almost identical to a piece in the Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life at the University of California, Berkeley (2010.0.31), which was printed by the Frumkin and Friends Printing Press in Jerusalem in 1874. It very well may have been purchased in Jerusalem then brought to Samarkand. It provides protection against fire and against Lilith during childbirth, depicting the three protective angels Sanoi, Sansanoi and Samangal based on their illustration in *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* (an important work of Jewish magic). According to the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, Lilith promised these angels that if their name was written in the delivery room she would not harm the baby. These three angels were very popular on amulets from Iran, India, and Israel[146]; they most likely spread to Central Asia through travellers to Israel.

[146] Sabar, "Jewish Amulets"

Figure 40: Paper amulet, Samarkand State Museum. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Printed *shiviti* plaques are found on the walls of all Central Asian synagogues and private Jewish homes, most of them now imported from Israel. A *shiviti* consists of a sheet of paper with Psalm 67, written in the shape of a menorah, as well as the *shiviti* verse, Psalm 16:8 ("I have placed the Lord always before me").[147] The practice of creating these plaques dates to the 15th century, and they could be made out of metal or paper, and those from Bukhara and Samarkand are predominantly made from paper. They appear to have mostly been printed in Israel, since they all bear the same style as early 20th-century prints made in Jerusalem or Safed. They were most likely brought by those returning from a pilgrimage to Israel.

[147] Patai, *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore*, 491.

Figure 41: *Shiviti*, painted in Safed (1900), in a synagogue in Samarkand (The Center for Jewish Art).

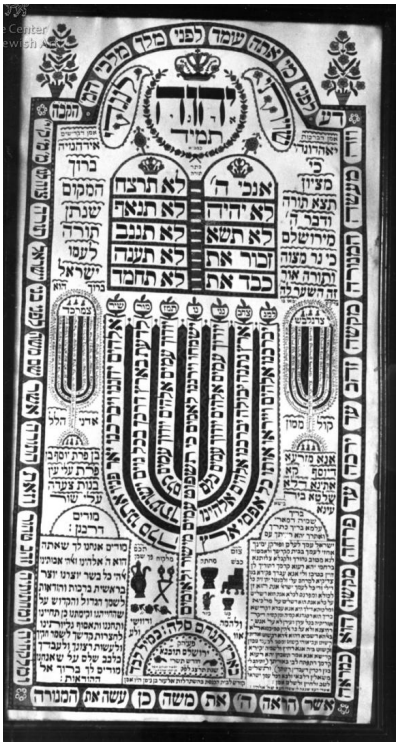


Figure 42: Printed paper *shiviti*, originally from Israel (1933). Samarkand State Museum. (The Center for Jewish Art).

The amulets of the Bukharan Jews analysed above show the community's originality and their ties to Israel during the early 20th century. They used both metal and paper amulets, respectively of local and of Israeli origin, creating a unique synthesis of different Jewish magical traditions. The use of these Israeli amulets was most likely confined to the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent, while Jews living in more rural areas probably only used the traditional metal amulets.

2.4. Other objects

Material culture plays an important in lifecycle rituals. Henry Lansdell's description of a circumcision ceremony in Bukhara gives us an idea of the many objects used to conduct it (highlighted in bold):

> On the next morning at sunrise I was taken again to the synagogue to witness a circumcision. Many men were assembled wearing **phylacteries and prayer shawls or scarves**, called locally ***sisid***, but in Hebrew *talithy* some of which were **ornamented with strips of silver and gold**. The congregation sat on the ground, but sprang to their feet at the repetition of the Kodesh or "Holy, Holy, Holy! " and from time to time they turned towards Jerusalem. After the usual daily morning prayers, which last for about three-quarters of an hour, **two chairs** were brought into the midst of the congregation near a **stone lectern**, said to be 400 years old, and **covered with cloths of silk**. The officiating rabbi... then took in his hand **a silver rod**, called **the rod of Elijah,** and the child was brought in by the father amid shouting and recitation of prayers by the congregation.[148]

In the tradition of Jewish communities in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, and the Caucuses, the prophet Elijah is materially made present at a boy's circumcision ceremony through his chair (Hb. *kisse shel Eliyahu,* this appears among European Jewry as well)[149] and rod (Hb. *mateh Eliyahu,* particular to this group of Jews). Though the association between Elijah and the circumcision is universal to all Jewish groups, the use of a silver rod is unique to this part of the world. The chair and the rod were also placed by a new-born child's bedside.

[148] Lansdell, *Chinese Central Asia*, 68.
[149] The second chair was used for the child's godfather.

Another object used during the *brit* is the circumcision shield, which could be have Hebrew inscriptions or floral decorations. Circumcision shields across the Jewish world generally take the same fishtail form. The example from the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore is different from any other model I have seen, with its anthropomorphic addition to the traditional form (see Figure 43 a and b).

Figure 43: a) Circumcision shield, Samarkand. b) Circumcision shield, in the usual fishtail shape, Afghanistan (The Center for Jewish Art).

Despite certain differences in material culture, Central Asian Jews were still influenced by global Jewry. A kosher stamp (used to mark meat as suitable for consumption by Jews) in the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore is indicative of this. On it is engraved in Hebrew: וזבחת כאשר צויתיך - סמרקנד "You sacrificed just as I commanded you - Samarkand." This formula does not appear on any other kosher stamp I have seen; European kosher stamps from 19th century Europe usually merely have the word "kosher" (כשר). What is similar to European stamps, on the other hand, is the placing of the Hebrew inscription within a star of David, a symbol which only came to be associated with Judaism in the late 19th century by Zionists (see Chapter 3).

Figure 45: Kosher stamp, 19th-century Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Another metal object, which was produced in the late 19th century judging from its style, is a double-sided vessel with the engraving of a 16th century Kabbalistic Hebrew poem about wine (Figure 46). This same poem is found in manuscripts held at the St. Petersburg Hebrew University (from Bukhara) and at the Jewish Theological Seminary (from Iran).[150] This is further evidence that Bukharan Jews were learned and were conscious of their own literature, despite statements to their ignorance made by 19th-century travellers.[151]

[150] Mikhail Nosonovski, "Buxarsko-evrejskaya Pesnia o Vine na Ivrite," *Evrei v Sredneĭ Azii: Proshloe i nastoyaschee*. (Eds. I. Dvorkin and T. Vyshenskaya, St. Petersburg, 1995), 177-186. The manuscript at the Jewish Theological Seminary (MS 1438) is a collection of Judeo-Persian and Hebrew poetry. The poem was popular throughout the East, as it was also published in a collections of liturgical poetry in Calcutta in 1856 and in Baghdad in 1906..

[151] If, indeed, it is authentic, which is difficult to prove due to the lack of similar objects for comparison.

Figure 46: Vessel in the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore. (Photograph by author).

In addition to religious paraphernalia, metal objects were used for daily life: cooking pots, lamps, water basins. Unfortunately, few of these survive in public collections, for they were in large part auctioned off following the collapse of the Soviet Union. One example located in the Archaeological Museum of the Kala of Bukhara, a copper lamp produced in early 19th century Iran and with Arabic inscriptions, contains a later engraving of a Jewish name in Hebrew (Figure 47).[152] The practice of engraving one's name on metal vessels was reportedly common in Kalat (where the Mashhadi Jews came from), among the Jews and the native population.[153] This practice was also common among Bukharan Jews, as *kraeved* Michael Shterenshis noted:

> [T]here were specific places for ritual washing (*tushnuk* or *tashnav*) in the houses of the Jews. This place could be outside in the courtyard or inside the house, in a corridor. Copper jugs (*oftoba*) and copper washbasins (*tashtak*) were used for this procedure. The earliest Jewish *oftoba* and *tashtaks* that survived were made in the seventeenth century. The Jews'

[152] I thank Behruz Kurbanov for pointing this example out to me.
[153] Aqa Farajullah Nasrulayoff, cited in Patai, *Jadīd Al-Islām*, 173.

habit was to sign their utensils in black Indian ink and archaeologists have been able to identify several kitchen utensils as Jewish from these inscriptions. [154]

Figure 47: Lamp, Archaeological Museum of the Kala of Bukhara. (Photograph by author).

Now that we have examined diversity of Jewish portable material culture ―textiles, Torah cases and finials, and amulets― we shall now turn to the particularities of Jewish architecture in Central Asia. We will investigate both domestic and religious architecture, and show how the two types of buildings overlap in their design as well as their use.

[154] Shterenshis, *Tamerlane and the Jews*, 86.

CHAPTER 3. ARCHITECTURE

The home is the family's most private space while simultaneously functioning as a social space to receive for guests from outside. Much of residential architecture is organised around how to manage these two opposite functions of the home. The largest and richest houses of the Bukharan Jews contained a guest room, called a *mehmonkhona*, which was also used as a prayer hall for the family and close friends and neighbours, a practice which historically is not uncommon for Jews not only in Central Asia, but also across the Middle East and Europe.[155] Indeed, unlike churches or mosques, synagogues do not have formal consecration; what matters more for the practice of Judaism is the act of the congregation of a *minyan* (at least ten Jewish men above the age of thirteen) for the prayer service, rather than the building in which that takes place. Rooms in private houses served as synagogues for small Jewish communities that wished to avoid attention throughout the medieval period. One reason for the lack of importance conceded to the synagogue building was the prohibition, throughout the Islamic world, of building any *dhimmī* structure higher than Muslim constructions. In medieval Europe, Jews wished to remain discrete to avoid vandalism from the masses, even if they were under the political protection of a benevolent ruler. Therefore, the lavish exterior architectural decoration historically used in churches in Europe and mosques under Islam, was not generally not replicated in synagogue design, which was strongly influenced by the design of Jewish homes.[156] Thus, for much of Jewish history, homes frequently became makeshift synagogues, and synagogues were also architecturally similar to homes.

[155] For example, a medieval Jewish townhouse in Sermoneta contains a room that has been interpreted as both a reception room and a synagogue. Samuel D. Gruber, "Medieval Synagogues of the Mediterranean Region," in Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Harmen H. Thies (eds.) *Jewish Architecture in Europe*, Berlin: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2010, 62.

[156] Barry L. Stiefel, *Jews and the Renaissance of Synagogue Architecture*, 1450–1730. (London: Routledge, 2015), 33.

There is a debate throughout the study of Jewish architecture in the Islamic world as to whether Jewish houses were just the same as the houses of their Muslim neighbours. House design is shaped by the culture of the homeowner.[157] In Yemen, Rathjens and Muchawsky-Schnapper have argued that Jews in the 17th century had a different kind of house from locals, with a courtyard (not in local Yemeni houses), more akin to Mediterranean layouts —this is rejected by Lewcock and Serjeant.[158] There is no single immutable situation, since house style changes in accordance to political and social circumstances: Jews lived inside the city of Sana'a, in high brick tower houses until they were expelled in the 17th century, when they were forced to live in a separate quarter outside the city walls, in low houses made of mudbrick and rubble. As Nancy Um has written, "the relationship between spatial segregation and identity hierarchy is better seen as a result of a complex, evolving process of urbanisation rather than as a standard, fixed mode."[159] We should therefore not view the differences presented here between Jewish and Muslim houses as static, but rather see them as emblematic of a fixed period of time, the result of changes in society and politics. In order to study Jewish houses, we shall first contextualise them into the dynamics of the neighbourhoods in which they were situated, which were divided between different Jewish groups along lines of ethnicity, religious affiliations, and class.

3.1. Jewish houses

3.1.1. Jewish Neighbourhoods

During the period under study, Jews generally lived in their own separate neighbourhoods in Central Asian cities, usually within the city's centre and with proximity to the city's bazaar.

[157] Sanjoy Mazumdar and Shampa Mazumdar. "Religious traditions and domestic architecture: A comparative analysis of Zoroastrian and Islamic houses in Iran," *Journal of architectural and Planning Research* (1997): 181-208.
[158] Carl Rathjens, *Jewish Domestic Architecture in San'a, Yemen*. (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1957); Ester Muchawsky-Schnapper, *The Yemenites: two thousand years of Jewish culture*. (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2000); R. B. Serjeant and Lewcock Ronald. *San'ā. An Arabian Islamic City.* (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983).
[159] Nancy Um, *The merchant houses of Mocha: trade and architecture in an Indian Ocean Port.* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 171.

These were called *mahalla*s, a term which in Tajik denotes a neighbourhood that is slightly cut-off from the rest of the city (the usual word for neighbourhood is *guzar*). The dynamics of Jewish *mahalla*s were very different from European *ghetto*s, but do bear similarities to North African and Levantine *mellah*s, in that they had a strong level of interaction with Muslim neighbourhoods.[160] Furthermore, though Bukhara is a possible exception, most Jewish *mahalla*s in Central Asia were only established in the 19th century, at the request of Jews (for example, the emir of Bukhara granted land to the Jews of Samarkand in 1843 due to petitioning by community leader Moshe Kalontar). The confinement of all the Jews of a city to their own specific ethnic neighbourhoods was not viewed as a restriction, but rather, a right. Jewish neighbourhoods were separated along ethnic, religious, and class lines. *Chala* Jews lived in separate neighbourhoods, and while other Jews could pray in the public synagogue, *chala*s had secret ones, with no windows or decoration. Mashhadis and Heratis sometimes lived in separate neighbourhoods. Furthermore, wealthy bourgeois Jews usually moved to the Russian part of town, or separated themselves within the *mahalla* (creating a "low" and a "high" *mahalla*).

The city of Bukhara had three Jewish neighbourhoods with eight synagogues. These were well documented by the important Russian scholar of Uzbekistan, Olga Sukhareva.[161] According to legend, the *mahalla-i kuhna* (Tj. "old *mahalla*") was constructed in the 14th century under emir Tīmur, who brought nine Jewish families to Bukhara from Shiraz. It had 250 houses and two synagogues, and was inhabited by weavers known for their *kalgai* shawls, cobblers, brick-layers, and silk dyers.[162] The *mahalla-i amirobad*, built in the 18th century with around 80 houses and one

[160] See Susan Gilson Miller, Attilio Petruccioli, and Mauro Bertagnin. "Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City: The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438-1912)," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60.3 (2001): 310-327; Emily Gottreich, *The mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim space in Morocco's red city.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 2007.
[161] Olga Sukhareva. *Kvartal'naya obshchina pozdnefeodal'nogo goroda Bukhary*, Moscow: Nauka, 1976. 75-77, 93.
[162] Ibid, 76.

synagogue, and the *mahalla-i nau,* constructed in the 19th century further from the city centre, with 200 houses and five synagogues, were built on swamp-land, and the Jews there suffered from malaria.[163] *Chala*s lived across five neighbourhoods, termed collectively *mahalla-i challaho.*

In Marv, Yolotan, and Takhta-Bazar, Mashhadi and Herati Jews lived in a different *mahalla* from Bukharan Jews, though in other cities they lived in the same *mahalla.*[164] Throughout the 20th century, the Mashhadis/Heratis assimilated and intermarried Bukharan Jews, and only in Yolotan did a separate quarter, reflecting a separate identity, remain.[165]

The most important Bukharan Jewish centre in the country which is now Tajikistan was Khujand. The Jews clustered in the neighbourhoods Dugchi, Chakari Kurpa, Kushmasjid, Bozori Guza, Nizdegcha, Guzari Oxund, adjoining the craftwork-commercial centre of the city, Pandshanbe. *Chala*s, who had migrated from Bukhara, Shahrisabz, and Samarkand, lived in a different part of town, in Tagi Savr, west of the Pandshanbe bazaar.[166]

Tashkent had two waves of Jewish immigration, one in the 1820s, which settled in the neighbourhood of Sabgan, and another in the 1880s, in Ukchi. Ukchi destroyed in the 1966 earthquake and can only be known through information in the Tashkent archives. At its height, it had eleven large houses with interior courts, which belonged to the wealthy Davidoff, Abramoff, and Kimiyagaroff families, and a synagogue and Jewish school.[167] The Russian section of Tashkent also had a synagogue for Bukharan Jews.

The story of the Jewish neighbourhoods of Samarkand demonstrates their dynamic nature. In the beginning of the century, Jews did not have their own neighbourhood, and lived spread out

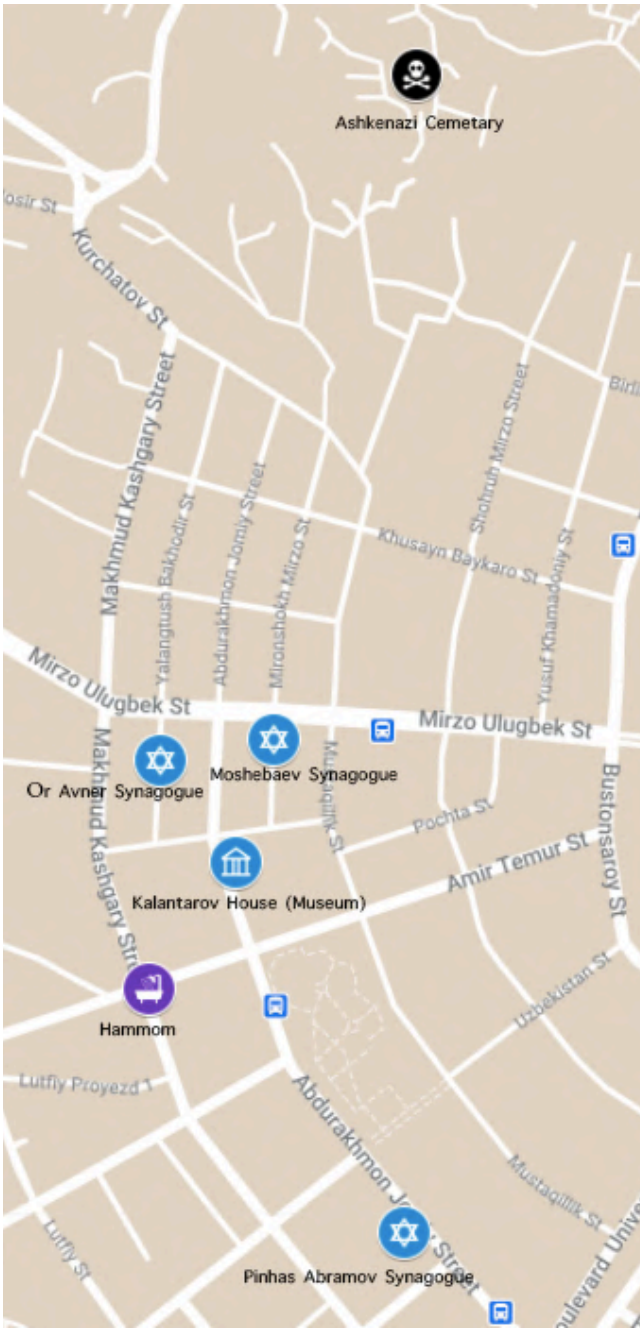
[163] Sukhareva, *Kvartal'naya obshchina,* 93
[164] Kupovetskiy, "Evrei iz Mesheda i Gerata v Srednei Azii," 60.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Yusupov & Sharipov, "Yaxudi v Xudjand"
[167] Nathan, Davidoff. *Journal de Nathan Davidoff,* 190

in the Muslim *mahalla*s of Shoh-kash, Charraga, Novadon, and Kosh-hauz. The richest lived in Kosh-hauz; one house on 11 Kosh-hauz St. contains the remains of a private synagogue, with a *mehmonkhona* and *bibichakhona*.[168] With the influx of Jewish migrants from Mashhad, Marv, Afghanistan, and Shahrisabz in the 1830s and 40s, the Jewish population of the city grew. Community leader Moshe Kalontar petitioned the emir of Bukhara to allow the Jews to buy land on which to build their own *mahalla*, and the deed was signed in 1843. The plot of land, located at the time on the eastern outskirts of the city, near the Siyah Bazaar and the cemetery, came to be known as *mahalla-i yahudion* (also called *vostok*). Like the *mahalla-i amirobad* in Bukhara, what was once an isolated settlement on the outskirts of the city was soon joined by neighbouring Tajik, Uzbek, and Gypsy *guzar*s. After the Russian conquest of Samarkand in 1868, and the economic prosperity it brought to some Jews, the *mahalla-i yahudion* was further divided into two sections, the poorer *mahalla-i poyon*, on the lower northern side of the *mahalla*, and the other on the top, the *mahalla-i bolo*. It is in the latter that we find the houses built by the wealthy merchants Rafael Abramov, Isaak Leviev, Yosef Alishaev, Ari Fuzailov, Yakob and Murad Kalontarov, Efraim and Yunatan Mulokandov, and Abo Zavulunov, as well as most public synagogues.

Meanwhile, the Russians began building their own neighbourhood in the western side of the city after 1868. “Russian Samarkand” (as it was called in official documents from the time), now known as the “new city”, was built according to a plan, along broad avenues with parks, large official governmental buildings, and European houses, with a completely different feel from the mudbrick houses on crowded windy short streets of the *mahalla*. It was populated by Russian officials, soldiers, shopkeepers, Tatars, Armenians, and Ashkenazis. it has a completely different

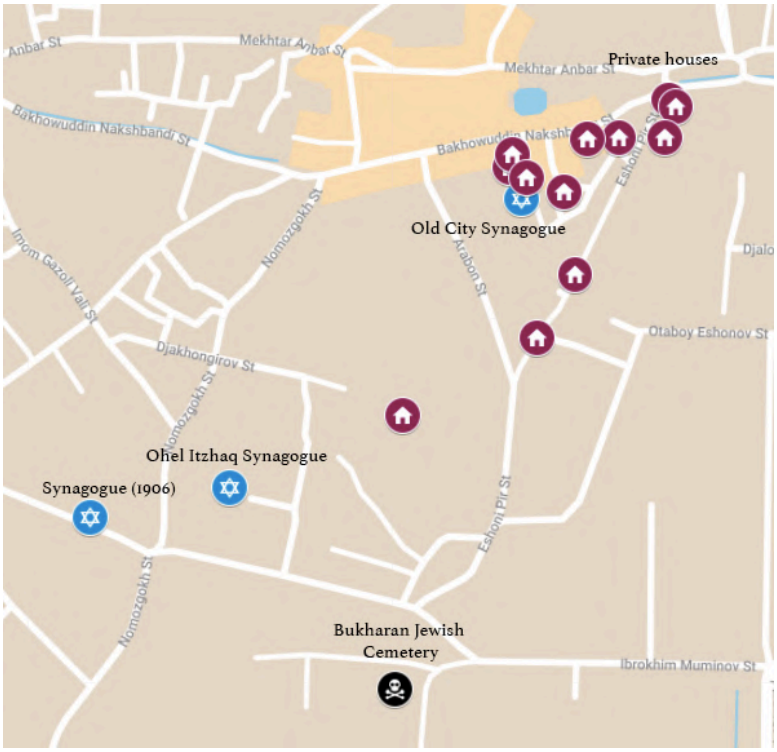
[168] Fazylov (ed.) *Gody, ljudi, fakty*, 28. The Center for Jewish Art documented this house (https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=26760). It may be the oldest preserved Jewish house in Central Asia, as it dates to before 1843.

feel from the Jewish houses and synagogues that were built on the Russian side of town in the early 20th century, along its broad avenues (see maps 4 and 5). Many wealthy Bukharan Jews (such as Abram Kalontarov) built Russian-styled houses in the new city (and were buried back in the Bukharan Jewish cemetery).



Map 5: Jewish architectural features in the Russian neighbourhood of Samarkand.

Map 6: Jewish architectural features in the Jewish neighbourhood of Samarkand



Map 7: Jewish architectural features in Bukhara.

The city of Osh, like Kokand and Samarkand, was also divided between an "old city" and a "new city", in which Russians, Tatars, and Ashkenazis lived, with most Bukharan Jews living in the "old city" (even though Bukharan Jews had migrated to Osh in the 1880s, during the same that the Ashkenazi first lived there). Yet some Bukharan Jews lived in the new city, as is indicated by the fact that E. Balkhiev (a Bukharan Jewish surname, related to the city of Balkh), owned a plot of land there in 1912.[169] In the old city, Bukharan Jews inhabited the *mahalla-i saray-kucha*, which also housed many Uzbek and Tajik merchants.

3.1.2. House architecture

From an architectural point of view, there is no distinction between Muslim and Jewish houses in Central Asia. "Jewish houses are just like Mahomettan houses, and most of them are built by Mahomettan workers," wrote Russian traveller Radloff in 1889.[170] Bukharan Jewish houses, like the houses of their Muslim neighbours, were built around courtyards, which were connected to the main house through a wooden columned portico (*aivan*). The houses were usually two-stories high, and contained a basement. Due to an influx in wealth in the 19th century, Jews were able to construct homes equipped with a large reception room (*mehmonkhona*) which also could serve as a private synagogue. This was the most important room of the house, both in terms of size and ceremonial value. On the first floor were also located the kitchen (*oshkhona*), a study, and potentially a servant's room. In the traditional *birūn* (inside) / *anderūn* (outside) division within Persian and Tajik houses, which also exists in Uzbek homes (*tashqari/ichkari*), the top floor was designated as the house's most private section, the female area of the house, with sleeping areas, while the courtyard and *mehmonkhona* were public and male areas. This division does not exist in

[169] Aleksandr Pavlovich Yarkov, *Na primere evreiskoi diaspory kyrgyzstana*. (PhD dissertation, Bishkek, 2002), 80. He cites a plan of the city provided by Zakharova.
[170] Radloff, "Srednaya Zerafshanskaya dolina," 36. Also in medieval Europe, "there is no formal distinction between a house used by a Christian and one used by a Jew." Gruber, "Medieval Synagogues," 62.

smaller, poorer homes. Tall walls were built in front of the courtyard in order to protect the privacy of the *birūn* area, which also included a kitchen, a barn (*hazinakhona*), a granary (*molkhona)*, and latrines (*badraf*). The rooms of the *ichkari* did not generally have windows. Local informants in Bukhara told me that Jewish houses did not have the female-male division, which is how they distinguished themselves from Muslim house; however, upon examination of the original house plans, some houses clearly did (for example, the Zavulunov house in Samarkand). The division between male and female spaces appears to have been more flexible in Jewish houses.

Figure 48: *Aivan*, Rafael Abramov house (1901), Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

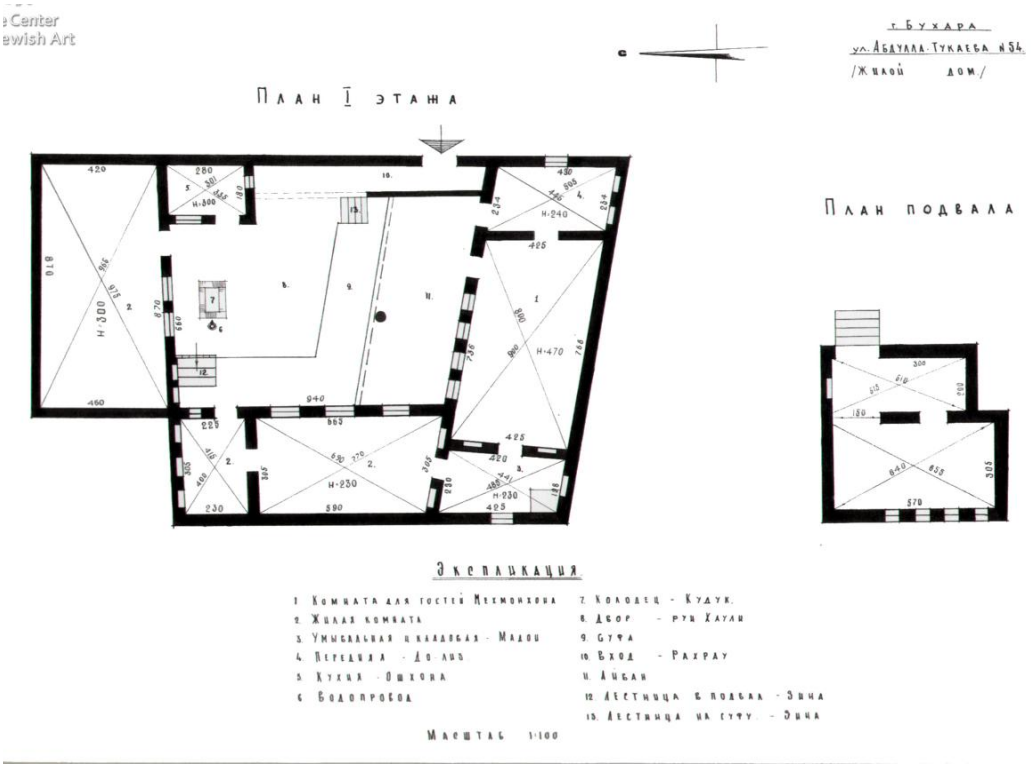


Figure 49: Soviet plan of Rubinov house (Bukhara), from the 1970s. 1-*Mehmonkhona*, 2-Living Room, 5-kitchen, 7-Well, 8-Courtyard, 9-, 10-Entrance, 11-*Aivan*, 12-Staircase to basement, 13-Staircase to *sufa* (The Center for Jewish Art).

***Mehmonkhona*s**

The *mehmonkhona* in the Jewish home, which also served as a synagogue, was designed along an East-West access (with the direction of prayer being towards Jerusalem, to the West), with large niches that kept the Torah on the Western wall. The south side was decorated with painted carved stucco (*ganch*) decoration within panelled pointed arch reliefs shapes, while the north was decorated with two tiers of windows. The first story of windows was very tall, (sometimes the same size as the doors) in order for their bottom to be close to the floor (for light to pour in for those sitting on the floor). This was especially practical for its use as a synagogue, which needed to be well-lit to enable Torah reading. The second story of windows were decorated with carved lattices made of wood or *ganch* (called Tj. *panjara,* Figure 51).

One frequent design of the *ganch* decoration was of a larger-than-life flower emerging from a vase, branching out into a multitude of new flowers, a tree of life (Hebrew *etz ha-hayyim*). Some flowers were painted directly onto the wall (without plaster relief), in a more realistic style. We can observe how the same flower, the purple iris (which blossoms in Uzbekistan in April), was painted in very different ways in each house, each attempting to be realistic, a break from the stylistic-geometric tradition.

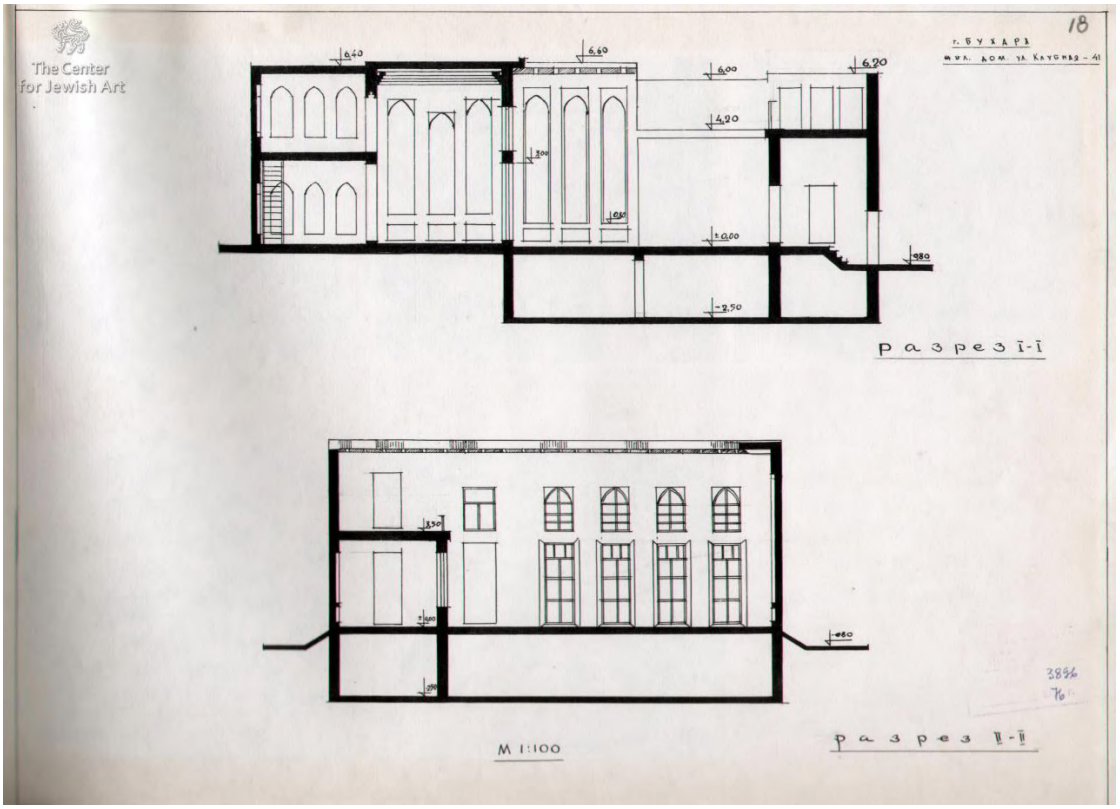


Figure 50: *Mehmonkhona,* Aranov house, Bukhara. The building is oriented East-West. The southern wall (top) is decorated panels of pointed arch reliefs. The northern wall has five sets of two-tier windows. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 51: Lattice from the *mehmonkhona* in the Abram Kalontarov house. Note the coloured stain-glass behind the Bukharan-style lattice (*panjara*). (Photo by author).

Figure 52: *Ganch* panel with tree of life representation, Abram Kalontarov house. (Photo by author).

Figure 53: Painting of the purple iris in *mehmonkhona* a) Rubinov house, Bukhara.
b) Zavulunov house, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

The women's section

The Hebrew term *ezrot nashim* refers to the outer forecourt of the Temple in Jerusalem in which women were permitted to enter. Women's sections could be divided by a wooden *mechitzah* (partition); in medieval synagogues of Venice, women could watch the service from high balconies.[171] In the Ottoman Empire, the *ezrot nashim* could either be in the vestibule or in the second-story gallery.[172] Sometimes women sat in the courtyard adjacent to the synagogue. Some Mizrahi synagogues even contained a second *tebah* (elevated platform) in the women's gallery (ex: Etz Hayyim synagogue in Bursa, various synagogues in Kerala).[173] Afghan Jewish women did not enter the synagogue, but rather stayed in the courtyard.[174] Sometimes, synagogues suffered asymmetrical modifications (such as an extra adjoined room added years after initial construction) in order to make space for female prayer.

[171] Stiefel, *Jews and the Renaissance,* 105. Other solutions were possible. In southern France, for example, women sat in a basement.
[172] Shaw *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, 69.
[173] Stiefel, *Jews and the Renaissance*
[174] Erich Brauer, "The Jews of Afghanistan: An Anthropological Report," *Jewish Social Studies* (1942): 132.

In the *mehmonkhona*s (as well as in the public synagogues) of Central Asia, the room reserved for women was called a *bibichakhona.* It was located on the mezzanine (*shakhnishin*), with three arches overlooking the main hall of the *mehmonkhona*. This can be seen in the Abram Kalontarov house (Figure 60) and the Pinhas Abramov Synagogue in Samarkand; in other houses, such as the Zavulunov and Rafael Abramov, instead of arches there have three rectangular windows, in a more European style (Figures 61, 62).

Figure 54: View of the women's section, Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

Figure 55: View of the women's section, Zavulunov house, Samarkand.

Figure 56: Women's section, above main door, Rafael Abramov house, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

These *shakhnishins* adapted as the female space in the synagogue are actually originally a traditional feature of homes in Bukhara, and were traditionally a space for guests and newly-wed

couples to spend the night[175]. The Jewish home divided the *shakhsnishin* into two parts: one for the women to sit and watch prayer (the *bibichakhona*), and the other, divided by a door, could still be used as a guest room.

The use of a triple opening for the women's section of the synagogue appears to have been entrenched within Central Asian synagogue architecture, and then used in within the home. This known use of the triple arc platform in early 20th century Samarkand and Bukhara may provide an explanation for a unique architectural piece of a synagogue wall from 16th-century Isfahan (Figure 57). Its three openings had stumped scholars who had studied it, and they could provide no explanation for it.[176]

Figure 57: Portion of a Synagogue Wall from Isfahan, Persia, 16th century. Faience tile mosaic. The Jewish Museum (New York), Ps. 5:8, Ps. 118:20

The three openings of the *bibichakhona* are located directly above the reception hall, and are parallel to the main door and its two symmetrical flanking elements (usually shelves). It thus provided an additional symmetrical element to the composition of the room's entrance wall. In

[175] Fazylov (ed.) *Gody, ljudi, fakty*, 34.

[176] Freudenheim (1968:51) writes that "[s]uch arched openings are very common in countless buildings of the area, as windows, and it is not the shape that is remarkable. But it is difficult to find a decoratively unified whole with only three such openings." Tom Freudenheim, "A Persian Faience Mosaic Wall in the Jewish Museum, New York," *Kunst des Orients* 5.H. 2 (1968): 39-67.

Iohiel Ishakov's house (Samarkand), a reminder of these three elements are painted above the door, showing how homes with more limited economic circumstances displayed the idea of a luxurious home without needing to construct it materially.

Figure 58: Iohiel Ishakov house, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

This same principle, of replacing an expensive architectural decoration by simply painting it, is also found in the substitution of *mihrab-bori*s (carvings in the shape of a *mihrab*), which are found in on the sides of the door to the *mehmonkhona.* The less wealthy houses which could not afford master carvers still retained the principle of symmetry by painting simple decoration on both sides of the door (compare Figures 59 and 60).

Figure 59: *Mehmonkhona* of 2 Ishoni Pir, Bukhara. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 60: *Mehmonkhona* of 12-14 Shalom Alehem, Bukhara. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Painted decorations

Most of the houses do not present obvious signs of Judaism ―about half do not have any Hebrew inscriptions. They are modelled on the houses of wealthy Muslim Uzbeks, built, carved, and painted by Muslim craftsmen. In some houses, however, there are occasional, mostly discrete, reminders of the religion of the occupants of the houses.

Hebrew phrases of benediction are common in Jewish synagogues and houses, especially over doors, windows, and Torah arks; they are also found in Jewish houses in the *mellah* of Fez.[177] Various Biblical quotations are painted on friezes located on the top of walls of the *mehmonkhona*, in the same place where in Tajik homes in Bukhara one would find quotations of Persian poetry in *nastaliq* script (Figure 72). The most common are: Psalm 137:5-6 "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth"), the phrase "Joseph is a fruitful vine", a popular Kabbalistic blessing also found on Central Asian amulets (as seen in Chapter 2), the blessing from Deuteronomy 28:6, "Blessed are you when you come and blessed are you when you go," commonly found in lintels above doors in Jewish homes and synagogues since late Antiquity.[178] Interestingly, the phrase *Ma tovu ohalekha Ya'akov, mishk'notekha Yisra'el* (Numbers 24:5) is painted in the *mehmonkhona* of the Rubinov house, and is the beginning of a prayer which is specifically associated to the synagogue space. This demonstrates the extent to which the space of the *mehmonkhona* was invested with the sacrality of the synagogue.

Other than phrases of benediction, it was also common to write a phrase in Hebrew commemorating of the owner of the house and the date of its construction in the Hebrew calendar.

Figure 61: *Ben Porat Yosef*, inscribed on a kabbalistic amulet in the Samarkand State Museum, and on a painting in the house of 46 Ishoni Pir in Bukhara (The Center for Jewish Art). Not the *khamsa* associated with this phrase in both instances.

[177] Susan Gilson Miller, Attilio Petruccioli, and Mauro Bertagnin. "Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City: The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438-1912)," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60.3 (2001): 310-327.
[178] Steven Fine, *Art, History and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity*. (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 127. It is also found in the Cairo Genizah.

The star of David is originally a symbol from the Islamic world used on Islamic magic amulets since the 8th century AD, and later came to appear on Jewish amulets from the same region. It was only in the 19th century that it came to be called the "shield of David" (*magen David*), due to its association with magic performed by the prophet David.[179] It was then painted on synagogue walls and came to be identified as a symbol of Judaism itself (it was most famously adopted by 19th century Zionists, which led the originally Islamic symbol to be used on the flag of the state of Israel). Its use in Bukharan Jewish houses of the early 20th century may be due to Zionist influence, since many of these Jews made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem then returned to Bukhara. In Mirzo Daud's house, a frieze with two stars of David (with the phrase *magen David* written in Hebrew within the central hexagon of each star and magic letters written within each triangle) flank the central inscription *Ben porat Yosef*. The frieze is placed above the main door, and may have had apotropaic qualities, as well as being associated with the name of the owner of the house (Daud).

Figure 62: Wall painting from main hall, Mirzo Daud house, Bukhara. (The Center for Jewish Art).

[179] Gershom Scholem, "The Curious History of the Six-Pointed Star," *Commentary* 8 (1949): 243-251.

Figure 63: Wall painting from main hall 10 Sportivnaya St., Bukhara. (The Center for Jewish Art).

The star of David appears in the women's section of Abram Kalontarov's private synagogue in two instances. Firstly, it is placed in the centre of a crowned double-headed eagle surrounded by arabesque flowers (Figure 70). This painted *ganch* eagle is portrayed twice, on both sides of the main entrance to the room. This decoration is usually interpreted as a sign of reverence to Imperial Russia.[180] Indeed, it is said that Abram Kalontarov's house was constructed in order to hold a reception for the emperor Nicholas I[181], and we can see that the double-headed eagle is wearing the red Russian imperial crown (*shapka Monomakha*). Furthermore, the double-headed eagle has been portrayed in Ashkenazi synagogues in Eastern Europe[182], and has Kabbalistic associations, and may thus represent artistic exchange between Ashkenazi and Bukharan Jews within Samarkand.

[180] Zeev Levin, "Reportage: The Bukharan-Jewish Museum in Samarkand: memory preservation of a rapidly-diminishing community," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 45 (2015): 308.
[181] According to the Museum website and David Arshavskay's report on cja.huji.ac.il
[182] Ilia Rodov. "The eagle, its twin heads and many faces: Synagogue chandeliers surmounted by double-headed eagles," *Studia Rosenthaliana* 37 (2004): 77-129; Ida Huberman, "The Double-Headed Eagle," *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986).

Figure 64: Painted *ganch* with double eagle in the women's section, Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

The second instance of use of the star of David is within an arabesque *ganch* decoration on the left wall to the main entrance. The star sprouts out of a crescent like a flower bud, drawn on a stem with leaves. It is possible that in this case the star did not have a particular association with Judaism —in a Muslim house in Bukhara, we also see the crescent with a six-pointed star. However, since the star in the crescent has the same colours as the star in the double-eagle (central red hexagon with red triangles and white lines highlighting each form), this six-pointed star was likely intended as a *magen David.*

Figure 65: Painted *ganch* in the women's section, Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

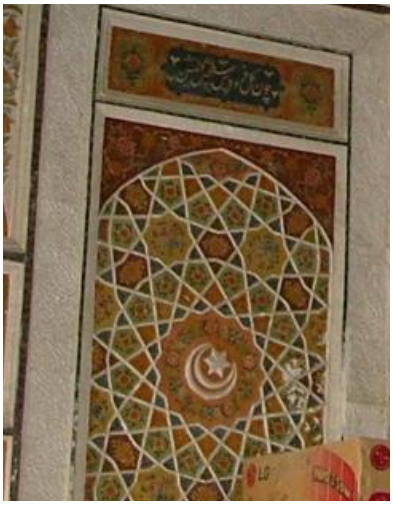


Figure 66: Detail of *ganch* decoration with crescent and star, main hall, Abdukayumbay house, Bukhara. (The Center for Jewish Art). Note the frieze with Persian poetry.

In addition to the *magen David,* the *khamsa* was also used to decorate friezes in the *mehmonkhona*. The word *khamsa* literally means "five" (in allusion to the hand's five fingers), and is thus associated to the letter ה *he,* the numerical value of which is five. *He* is one of the names of the Hebrew God (it appears in the spelling of his names יהוהand הי). The association between the palm and *he* can be seen in wall painting in the main hall of the Rubinov house, where the letter is drawn inside the palm (Figure 74).

Figure 67: Wall painting in *mehmonkhona,* Rubinov house, Bukhara. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Some houses also contain paintings evoking places outside of Central Asia, rendered in European painting style. Rafael Abramov's house contains many paintings of land of Israel, in friezes on the wall of the *mehmonkhona*: Zion, Jerusalem, Tiberias, the river Jordan, Safed,

Mountain of Olives, with Hebrew writing identifying each painting to a site (Figure 74). According to Zoya Arshavsky's report, the paintings were executed by Ashkenazi artists, though she also suggests elsewhere they may have been copied from postcards.[183] The paintings are small and discreetly located and are not immediately noticeable when one enters the room containing so much Central Asian-styled arabesque decoration on its walls.

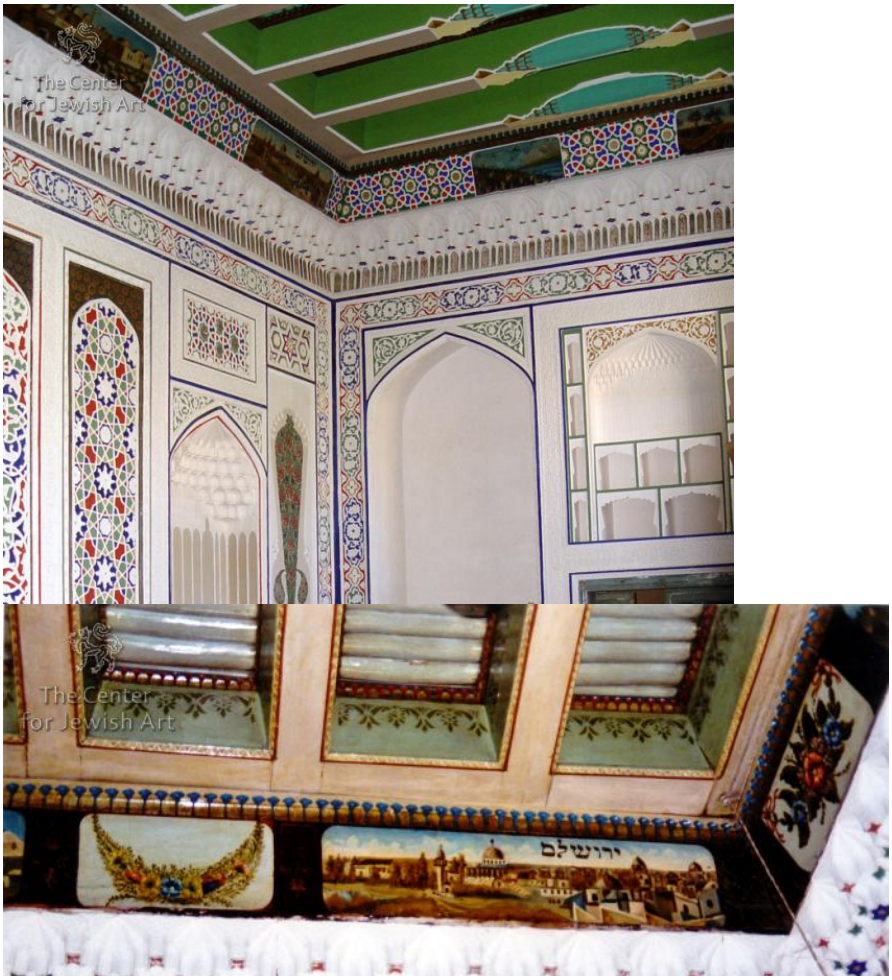


Figure 68: Painting of Jerusalem showing Temple Mount dome in the *mehmonkhona* of Rafael Abramov house, Samarkand (The Center for Jewish Art).

The Kusaev house has no depictions of Israel, but instead a painting of the choral synagogue of Samara (southern Russia, near Orenburg), built in 1903-1908 (Figure 75a). This attests to

[183] Report on cja.huji.ac.il. Arshavsky, The influence of the Russian conquest," 222.

influence from Ashkenazi Jews, or perhaps the owner had visited Samara, since many Bukharan Jews were conducting trade with southern Russia at the time. The *mehmonkhona* also contains non-religious paintings of landscapes, ships, and early 20th century airplanes. The paintings are located on the ceiling of the house and executed in slightly amateurish style. In one painting a figure waves a tricolour flag, which is either the French flag or an incorrectly coloured Russian flag. All these paintings could have conceivably been copied from postcards.

Figure 69: Depiction of the Choral Synagogue in Samara (*beit knesset Samar*) and of idyllic scenes. Kusaev house, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Abram Kalontarov's house contained a second synagogue, built in 1916, which is poorly preserved today. When it was restored in 1968, wall paintings were discovered beneath a layer of

paint (these were not conserved, but photos are available from the Center for Jewish Art archive (Figure 76). It depicts the wailing wall, with a minaret, the dome on the rock, and cypresses. There were also floral paintings, in a more European style than the preserved *mehmonkhona* in the other wing of the house. The temple in Jerusalem is also portrayed in the *aivan* of the Mullokandov synagogue, also with cypresses on its sides, and the word *tsion* (Zion).

Figure 70: Wall paintings (now destroyed) from the second synagogue in Abram Kalontarov's house, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Figure 71: Wall painting on former *aivan*, western wall of Mullokandov synagogue, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

3.1.3. Colonialism and Class

The above section has concentrated on the wealthiest Jewish houses of Samarkand and Bukhara. It must be noted that vast majority of Jewish houses were much smaller and much less decorated than the examples above. The poorest houses of the 19th century have often been remodelled, destroyed, and have very little characteristics that are specifically. History and archaeology often are disproportionately biased towards the heritage of the wealthiest.

Another important difference between the Jewish houses is whether they were constructed in Russian or local Central Asian style. Those constructed in the Russian style tended to belong to the wealthiest of all Jews, and were typically built in the colonial Russian quarters of cities, such as Samarkand, Kagan, and Kokand. One example of such a house is Abram Kalontarov's residence, which now houses Samarkand's Jewish museum. Built by Austrian-Russian architect Evgenii O. Nelle from 1902 to 1916, it uses the *kirpichnyĭ stil'* ("brick" or "colonial" style) typical of 19th

century Russian constructions in Central Asia. However, despite his moving to the European quarter of the city, using a Russian-style façade for the house and using European objects and decoration within the house, but still had typical Bukharan style of decoration, with *ganch* carvings and floral paintings.

Enormous Russian-style houses were also built within traditional Jewish quarters that mainly house mudbrick Central Asian-style houses. For example, Pagiel Leviyev's house in the *mahalla-i yahudiyon* in Samarkand, on 32 Tolmasova Street, is large and imposing in relation to the other houses in the traditional *mahalla*, and is also in the Russian *kirpichnyĭ stil'* (Figure 71).[184]

Figure 71: Monumental entrance, Pagiel Leviyev house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

In the Russian section of Samarkand is the magnificent house of Abram Kalontarov (it today houses the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore). It displays an eclectic mixture of native Bukharan and Russian architectural features. The house's *mehmonkhona* is decorated in local style, with a ceiling made up of *vassa*s, beams, and stalactites (*muqarna*s), and walls with *mihrab-bori*s and

[184] Alanna E. Cooper, "A Dying House in Samarkand's Jewish Neighborhood," *MAVCOR Journal* 4: 1 (2020).

ganch carvings. The other rooms of the house, in contrast, are covered in art-nouveau-style wallpaper from Riga and ceramic heaters from Germany. Filling one's house with European objects was not only an influence from Russian colonialism, but also a means of displaying one's wealth and these objects were considered exotic to the local community. The *mehmonkhona* contains a Venetian stain-glass mythological depiction on the inner door and Russian papier-mâché casings for the mirrors in the main hall. The metal gate of the house was constructed by artisans from the Urals.

Figure 72: Papier-mâché (made in Russia), Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

Figure 73: Stain-glass from Venice on door leading to *mehmonkhona*, Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

Figure 74: Room on the first floor with Baltic art-nouveau wallpaper and German-manufactured tile heater. Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

On the ceiling of the woman's bedroom on the second floor, there are paintings of *putti* as well as European-styled depictions of women, including a semi-nude woman lying on her divan, gazing at herself in the mirror. Western-styled paintings of Western or Orientalist women began to appear first in Qajar palaces in Iran then in private upper-class Persian houses of the late 19th early 20th century, usually through the technique of oleograph (that is, coloured lithographs pressed onto the wall and varnished). In Iran, these images were displayed on the ceilings of the *panjdarī* or reception room of the house.[185] Thus, here we have the same motif, used in a very different space of the house. While in Iran these images were meant to be exhibited to visitors, here they are hidden in the bedroom upstairs.

[185] Pamela Karimi, *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: interior revolutions of the modern era.* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Figure 75: Ceiling, private room on second floor, Abram Kalontarov house, Samarkand. (Photograph by author).

The richest Jews of Kokand also built enormous modernist houses in the central Russian quarter of the city. The community, which had been in the region since the 1840s,[186] was home to a number of industrial entrepreneurs, notably the Vadyaev, the Simkhaev and the Poteliyakhov families. The Vadyaevs controlled sixty percent of cotton export to Russia and owned thirty factories.[187] They also contributed to state politics; Rafael Poteliyakhov, who also owned ten factories and a banking house, was minister of foodstuffs while Yakub Vadyaev was minister of finance. Their banks were present in all major cities, owned rail lines, they thus had close ties to the Russian government. They supported Jewish communities with philanthropy, financially supported synagogue construction.

Yakub Vadyaev's neo-classical Russian-style palace was built in 1905 by the architect G. M. Svarichevsky. With four domes, it stood on a square as though it were a public building (which it has since become), and became a literal post-card attraction of Kokand (Figure 80). The palace

[186] Report by Rydzeev he asked Muslim elite, dignitaries, scientists, madrasa teachers when the first Jews arrived in their towns: they answered that they appeared in the khanate around 1840.
[187] Poujol, "Approaches to the history of Bukharan Jews"

also contains traces of Art Deco architecture, with a series of oval doorways aligned under each dome.

Figure 76: a) Postcard featuring the Vadyaev house, Kokand. b) Entrance of house. (The Center for Jewish Art).

The home of Abo Simkhaev, built in the 1910s and designed by I. A. Markevich, is strictly neo-classical, with its use of columns, faux columns, and central cupula, with Russian features such as the triangular façade. The Simkhaev and Vadyaev families were not only neighbours, but also

intermarried (Haim Vadyaev's daughter Bitti Vadyaev to Abo Simkhaev). The Simkhaevs also owned a country estate in Asaka (also in the Ferghana valley).[188]

Figure 77: Abo Simkhaev house, Kokand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

On the corner of Istambul/Istiklol streets stood Rafael Poteliyakhov's house. It is in eclectic *kirpichnyĭ* style built on a L-plan, built by thee cotton tycoon in the centre of the Russian quarter of Kokand. Despite its Russian architectural façade, like Bukharan houses, it contained the hallmarks of a Central Asian home, including a *mehmonkhona* with two stories of windows and *ganch* decoration, and a central courtyard.

[188] Bukharan Jewish Congress "Na Styke Vekov," Accessed 21 January. http://www.bukharianjewishcongress.org/new-history/991-at-the-turn-of-the-century.

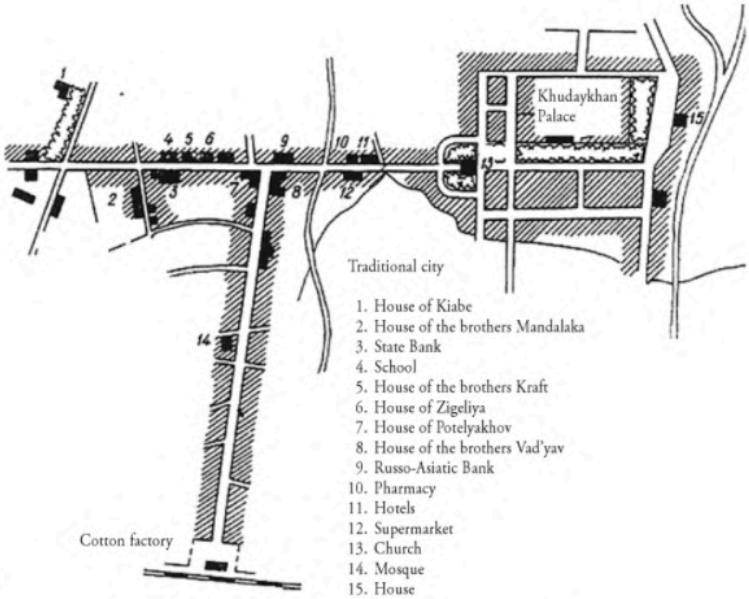


FIG. 2. Kokand. Schematic plan of the Russian part.
(*Source*: Archive, Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan.)

Map 8: A Kokand's Russian section, indicating the locations of the most prestigious houses, including the Vadyaev and Poteliyakhov houses (from Azzout, M. "Architecture and urban planning in northern Central Asia from the Russian conquest to the Soviet period (1865–1990)," in Dani, Ahmed (ed.) *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Towards the contemporary period: from the mid-nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century*. (UNESCO, 2005), 801.

These three houses in Kokand show much more Russifying influence than any Jewish house constructed in Samarkand or Bukhara. The Russian character is mostly exterior, however, for the inside of the houses contained elements which resembled traditional Central Asian houses. These enormous Russian-style façades were only restricted to the Russian part of town ―in the old city, poorer Jewish families lived in mudbrick houses just like everyone else. M. A. Yusupova has determined that one can divide the Jewish homes of this period into three categories: large bay-houses, middle-class homes, and the houses of the poor: "basically [the houses] had a similar volumetric spatial composition and layout, differing from each other only in scale, monumentality, number of rooms and richness of decor." [189] The wealth of décor in the houses of affluent families attests to their bourgeoisification, a form of Europeanization (in this case, Russification) which is

[189] M. A. Yusupova, "Dva Etioda Po Istorii Arxitekturi Uzbekistana," in *Evrei v Sredneĭ Azii: Voprosy istorii i kul'tury*, (Tashkent: FAN Akademii nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan, 2004),187.

economic in origin, and socio-cultural in its effects.[190] A good example of a middle-class home is that of Yitzhak Rafaelov, in Shahrisabz. Built in 1886, it contains none of the extravagant opulence of Abram Kalontarov's house, no *muqarna*s or imported stain-glass, but is still decorated with modest niches and a painted *vassa* and beam ceiling, which includes two painted Hebrew lines giving the date of the house's construction.[191]

Postcolonial theory is not frequently applied to the Russia imperial project, despite their past and current practice of settler colonialism; therefore, here I use many concepts developed in studies of French and British colonial architecture.[192] As a settler colony, a number of Russian colonial administrators and professionals came to live in Central Asia; in doing so, they preferred to live in houses which agreed with their own style of decoration, exterior and interior. They separated themselves from the local population in their own neighbourhoods at a large physical distance from the old city (Russian Kagan was thirteen kilometres from the old city of Bukhara), built in Russian style city-planning (large boulevards, squares, a grid street layout), and with Russian amenities (libraries, cafés, European music society, bars serving alcohol).[193] While the vast majority of the local population simply could not afford to leave their residences in traditional quarters (nor did they want to), it appears to have been a desire of certain members of the Jewish elite to move into the new colonial neighbourhoods and to live in colonial-styled houses, albeit while maintaining traditional interiors. They used amenities such as electricity and imported tiled Europeans heaters which would not have been found in their original neighbourhoods.

---

[190] As Walter Benjamin wrote, "the bourgeois has shown a tendency to compensate for the absence of any trace of private life in the big city. He tries to do this within the four walls of his apartment. " Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 20.
[191] https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=970
[192] Many Western scholars are adverse to comparisons between the Russian colonial empire and other European colonial empires, since they are so intent on seeing European exceptionalism in the evil of imperialism. See for example, Willard Sunderland, "Empire without Imperialism?: Ambiguities of Colonization in Tsarist Russia," *Ab imperio* 2 (2003): 101-114.
[193] Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand,* 28.

The imperial policy of *obrusenie* (Russification), which was applied in colonies such as in Eastern Europe and Siberia, was not enforced in Turkestan, since Russians were well aware that the cultural gap between them and the Sarts was too large to bridge.[194] Muslim inhabitants of the region were more resistant to Russian rule, prone to uprising, less willing to assimilate.[195] They were also generally treated very poorly by Russians, who had extremely racist conceptions of the Sarts, which would explain why they would not want to live in the same neighbourhood as the colonisers.[196] Even before Soviet times, Russians converted mosques into storehouses.[197] For Jews, on the other hand, assimilation represented a form of liberation, a way of gaining cultural and social capital in a society in which they were generally excluded. It is, of course, important to note that "[r]arely, even in a single colonial territory, did all Jews' legal and social position fit a single category."[198] The way one was treated in colonial society depended on other social criteria in addition to ethno-religious category such as age, gender, and economic position (in other words, rich Jews were treated like Europeans, poor Jews were treated as Sarts).

In this way, Russian Turkestan resembles French Algeria, a comparison which has already been made[199], in that a European power settled in a predominantly Muslim area and was mostly segregated from the locals. In both cases, Jews were able to secure a position of much more assimilation to the coloniser than the local Muslims, despite prevalent anti-Semitism among the colonising European. Jews in Algeria received French nationality, and adopted French language and culture much faster than most Muslims did. The wealthy Jews of Samarkand and Kokand

[194] Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand*, 35.
[195] see B. F. Manz, "Central Asian uprisings in the nineteenth century: Ferghana under the Russians," *The Russian Review*, 46:3 (1987), 267-281.
[196] Jeff Sahadeo, *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent: 1865-1923* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007)
[197] N. Maev, "Dzhizak i Samarkand. Putevyya Zametki" (1873) quoted Alexander Morrison. *Russian rule in Samarkand 1868-1910: A comparison with British India.* (Oxford: Oxford university press, 2008), 25.
[198] Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, Maud S. Mandel (eds.). *Colonialism and the Jews.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2017), 11.
[199] Morrison, *Russian rule in Samarkand*, 2.

became fluent in Russian and were also given Russian nationality, a privilege not accorded to Muslims. In both cases, Jews aligned themselves to a government which provided them the rights accorded by citizenship, full equality before the law, as a way of surviving in the intensely anti-Semitic environments in which they lived.[200] Being part of the Russian multi-ethnic policy of citizenship (*grazhdanstvennost'*) was better than *dhimmi* status, especially since Jews were treated as "preferential subjects" by Russians, and a series of laws allowed them to have a greater participation in economic life: in 1833 Jews were allowed to integrate into commercial guilds they had previously been barred from, in 1842 they were allowed to trade directly with Russian cities on the Orenbourg line.[201] This allowed for the creation of a Jewish entrepreneurial class, most emblematically demonstrated by the successes of the Vadyaev, Simkhaev, Poteliyakhov, and Davidoff families.[202]

Jews by and large supported the Russian invasion while Muslims fought against it (for example, when the Russian army took refuge in the citadel of Samarkand, they were reportedly together with "Jews and Iranians," who must have been fleeing the angry mob).[203] The Russians repaid the favour by according economic privileges to important Jewish families.[204] Minorities had little choice but to support the colonists; they would be scapegoated and face violence either way. Indeed, the three economically significant minorities —Iranians, Russians, and Jews were grouped together by local Sunnis: in 1910, when Sunnis of Bukhara set out to massacre Shi'ite Iranians,

[200] Sophie Roberts, *Jews, Citizenship, and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1943*. Diss. 2012.
[201] Cathrerine Poujol. "Jews and Muslims in Central Asia," In Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (eds.), A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 262.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Sami, *Ta'rikh-i Salatin-i Manghitiya* trans. 85 (cited in Morrison. *Russian rule in Samarkand*, 22).
[204] Davidoff wrote: "my grandfather [Yusuf Davidoff] had supported the Russian army commanded by General Chernaev, during the conquest of Turkestan.... This is why we were the first Jews to obtain Russian civic rights, which meant, among other things, the right to reside and conduct trade in St. Petersburg and Moscow." Nathan Davidoff. *Journal de Nathan Davidoff: le Juif qui voulait sauver le Tsar*, trans. Benjamin Ben David and Yankel Mandel. (Paris: Ginkgo, 2002).

they reportedly looked for Iranians specifically in the houses of Jews and Russian officials.[205] The native Jews of Bukhara had such fear that the violence against Shi'ites would turn into violence against them that they contacted an Ashkenazi rabbi in Tashkent (A. L. Kirsner) to petition the Russian authorities for help. They also relied on a Russian general to move their valuables from the old city of Bukhara to Russian Kagan for protection.[206] Jews occupied a medial position, not quite identifiable with the Christian Russian colonisers nor with the majority Muslim colonised, and this ambiguous social position is in part due to their role as economic middle-men.

Wealthy Jews' assimilation to the Russian style of life led them to build Russian-styled houses in the Russian quarters of town. Their increased prosperity and safety also allowed them to invest in the construction of public synagogues, for the entire community. Thus, the Russian imperial economy had an influence on the spiritual lives of Jews. Living in the Russian quarter not only represented status, but also physical safety for themselves and their property. It is well-known that the assimilation of elites is a useful colonial imperialist strategy,[207] and here is more nuanced, for it concerns the creation of a new elite class due to the process of assimilation.

3.2. Public Synagogues

3.2.1. Synagogues of Central Asia

The architecture of Central Asian synagogues bears a large resemblance to the design of private houses. They are built around a large interior courtyard, and contain inner patios. They do not resemble the 19th century Central Asian mosque, the entrance of which is preceded by an outer *aivan*. Thus, to the passer-by on the street, they were not marked as religious buildings, and would not be targeted for violence by the Muslim population. One would have to be inside the building

[205] Valery A. Germanov, "Shiite-Sunnite conflict of 1910 in the Bukhara Khanate," *Oriente moderno* 87.1 (2007): 117-140.
[206] Ibid, 133.
[207] See Berny Sèbe, "Assimilation and Empire," in John Mackenzie (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Empire* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 1-6.

to know it was a synagogue. In Mashhad, the synagogues of the city functioned within someone's cellar, because no building could function as a separate synagogue.[208] Radloff describes a *chala* synagogue he encountered as "a small house without windows... inside it there were no decorations whatsoever."[209]

A synagogue had many more functions than a private house's *mehmonkhona*. It served the entire community, rather than elite families and their circles. For one, officials were needed: *gisbarim* or administrators, including the rabbi (*mullah*), the cantor (*hazzan*), the scribe (*sofer*), the beadle/sexton (*shamash*) who guarded the temple. The synagogue also carried out educational role, with a room or building for a school (*ḥeder* for children, *yeshiva* for adults) located beside it. Synagogues were often located near Friday mosques and bazaars (for example, the Gumbaz synagogue in Samarkand). This ensured their protection ―we also find synagogues in these areas in Iran,[210] as well as near main cathedrals in Europe.[211] The leader of the community, the *kalontar,* was responsible for ensuring the protection of the community, and also helped raise funds and obtain State permission for the construction of the synagogue.

The public synagogues of Central Asia were less ornate than private home synagogues. They served a functional purpose rather than showing off the owner's wealth (conspicuous consumption). Furthermore, the fact that they were built for the purpose of being a synagogue (and not just a room in a house) allowed their architecture to be more flexible. Whereas private synagogues in *mehmonkhona*s were rectangular, public synagogues could take a round shape, allowing for a more inclusive space in the great prayer hall (the Gumbaz Synagogue in Samarkand).

---

[208] Kaganovitch, *The Mashhadi Jews,* 89.
[209] Radloff, "Srednyaya zerafshanskaya dolina," 38.
[210] Mohammad Gharipour, "Synagogues in the Islamic World. Part 12. Iran" in: N.A. Stillman, P.I. Ackerman-Lieberman, Y. Ayalon, A. Levy, V.B. Moreen, M. Polliack, A. Saénz- Badillos and D. Schroeter (eds), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* 4. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 430.
[211] See Carol Herselle Krinsky. *Synagogues of Europe: architecture, history, meaning*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).

With Russian colonisation, the synagogues were built in very different types of urban landscapes, even within the same city. In Samarkand, the synagogues built within the Jewish quarter were located side-by-side the houses Jews had been living in for already a generation; they thus functioned as neighbourhood synagogues, and contributed to giving the *mahalla* a more general Jewish feel. In the Russian section of town, the synagogues functioned as one of many public religious buildings, showcasing the Russian government's tolerance for other different sects. The Pinhas Abramov synagogue was built a couple blocks away from the large Orthodox cathedral and about a kilometre from a Catholic church; an Armenian church is also in the vicinity; all built in the early 1900s. All these religious buildings, especially the one-story synagogue, shrink in comparison to the Orthodox cathedral which rules the skyline, thus indicating dominance despite supposed religious tolerance.

The period between 1860 and 1917 could be termed the great era of public synagogue construction in Uzbekistan (it would be followed in the 1920s-30s by large-scale synagogue closure). As noted by Zoya Arshavsky, "this period provides the only clue to what well may have been a long legacy of Central Asian synagogues."[212]

The only known synagogue in Central Asia known to date before this period is the synagogue of Bukhara built near the Lyabi-Hauz ensemble (an architectural ensemble of Islamic buildings around a public pond). According to a legend collected by Soviet ethnographer Amitin-Shapiro, and well-known in Bukhara to this day, in the early 17th century an elderly Jewish woman lived right on the spot where the vizier of Bukhara wished to construct the pond. In exchange for the land, he allowed the Jews to build a synagogue, which stands to this day.[213]

[212] Arshavsky, "The Influence of the Russian Conquest," 227.
[213] Zalman Amitin-Shapiro, "Predenie o postrojke pervoj sinagogi v Buxare," *Sbornik Naucnogo Kruzka Vostfaka*, Tashkent, 1928. Al'meev, *Legendy drevnej buxary.*.

There were surely other synagogues in Central Asia before the Russian conquest, but we simply have no other evidence of them. When travelling in the city of Bukhara in 1834, Wolff noted that there were four synagogues, "in a deplorable state: small, ruined, and only one of them fit for a place of worship."[214] These very well may be the locations upon which the synagogues of the Russian period were built. Until the Russian conquest, however, the Jews of Bukhara were not allowed to rebuild their synagogues, which explains their state. In 1874, Jews of Bukhara told Russian merchants surprised at the state of their dilapidated synagogue (by this time, and by Wolff's second visit to Bukhara in 1843, only one, and not four, synagogue is mentioned) that they could not build new one and "they hope that Russians will soon build them a nice edifice."[215]

Due to Russian imperial governance, Jews were at liberty to build more public synagogues, and the law allowed them to build one synagogue for every eighty residences.[216] The synagogues were generally constructed by Uzbek craftsmen. In Samarkand, at least ten were built, four in the Russian section and six in the original Jewish quarter. In Bukhara, the Ohel Itzhak (1862) and Abdulla Tukai St. (1906) synagogues date to this period, while the Shalom synagogue (the synagogue near Lyabi-Hauz, constructed in 1620), was rebuilt in 1901. In Kokand, where Jews from Samarkand and Bukhara migrated during the 1880s, six synagogues were constructed. In Tashkent, Jews were given building permits for five synagogues in Tashkent (one of which was designed for Ashkenazis). There were different uses for different types of synagogues. The synagogue on Abdulla Tukai St. in Bukhara, for example, was used by inhabitants of the entire district of Bukhara (including those outside the city) for the High Holidays.[217]

---

[214] *Researches and Missionary Labours Among the Jews, Mohammedans, and Other Sects,* 194.
[215] Ibid, 226. (originally in L. O. Kostenko, *Puteshestvie v Bukharu russkoi missii v 1873 godu*)
[216] Arshavsky, "The Influence of the Russian Conquest," 220.
[217] Arshavsky, "The Influence of the Russian Conquest," 227.

The situation of 19th-century Central Asia is not unlike that of the medieval Mediterranean, which is described by Gruber:

> Many medieval synagogues were richly decorated, but many probably were not. There were community synagogues, private synagogues, and synagogues organized by charitable societies. We can generalize that the locations of synagogues were well known, but the entrance to most synagogues were often protected by exterior courtyards, rather than face directly onto the public street. Synagogues were usually imbedded into the physical as well as the social fabric of their surrounding (Jewish) communities, and prayer halls were often part of larger complexes which included spaces for other religious and communal functions.[218]

The synagogues, which are highly influenced by domestic architecture, all contain courtyards, which is also an obligatory element of the Central Asian home. Courtyards were a feature of synagogues across North Africa, the Levant, and Central Asia. This is in large extent due to the influence of mosque and vernacular architecture of Islam, but also represents a continuity of synagogue design since Antiquity, as the temple in Jerusalem is believed to have had a courtyard, as verily did Jewish temples in Hellenistic and Roman Israel. It thus may be a case of mutual influence between Islam and Judaism, with Jewish architecture having influenced Islam in its early stages, and Islamic architecture providing a reinforcement of the original synagogue courtyard. In the courtyard one could find a well, a *sufa* (a platform used for sitting, traditionally made from clay, now from wood) and an *aivan* (arched portico), a *hovuz/hauz* (artificial pond or fountain), an *ariq* (canal), and a large mulberry tree.

It is known that in the Ottoman Empire these courtyards served as places of prayer, equipped with a central reading podium (for instance, in the Great Synagogue of Aleppo, the Central Synagogue of Benghazi, and many synagogues in Baghdad). In Bukhara during a hot summer day, I witnessed the Jewish congregation celebrating Shabbat service in the courtyard, though they usually used the interior of the synagogue. A photograph taken by F. Orden in the late

[218] Gruber, "Medieval Synagogues"

19th century shows a gather of two dozen men, wearing *ṭallit*s, sitting around the Torah case topped with *rimmonim.* They are sitting in the courtyard's large *aivan,* which has been adapted as a place of prayer by the installation of chandeliers. The Zavulunov house in Samarkand still retains four hooks for chandeliers in the ceiling of its *aivan*.

Figure 78: Jewish synagogue in Bukhara, F. Orden (late 19th century). Kunstkamera (St. Petersburg), 255-176.

3.2.2. Samarkand

The first synagogue in Samarkand built originally with the intention of being a public synagogue for the people was the *kanesoi kalon*, built in the 1860s on Tolmasov St. in the Jewish *mahalla*.[219] According to Menashe Abramov, it was built with funding from various rich men of

[219] Fatakhov and Fazylov both give this date, stating it was the first synagogue, even though in *Gody, Liodi, Fakty*, 35 Fazylov contradicts himself, affirming that it was only built in the early 20th century after the Gumbaz synagogue. Solomon Fatakhov, "Some Facts About Samarkand Synagogues" https://bukhariancommunity.com/some-facts-about-samarkand-synagogues/, Markiel' Fazylov, "Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi obschiny v tsentral'noi azii," Accessed at https://www.asia-israel.co.il/ Синагоги-бухарской-общины-в-средне-азии.html.

the *mahalla*, Zavulun Mosheboy, Rafael Kalontar, the brothers Abram and Yakub Kalontarov, Menachem Kusaev, and Rafael Fuzailov.[220] It contained six different halls which served as separate synagogues, all organised around a central courtyard. Right next to the *kanesoi kalon*, destined to the general public, was built the *kanesoi kassobho,* destined specifically for butchers of kosher meat.

Figure 79: Women's section on southern wall, *kanesoi kalon,* Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

While the *kanesoi kalon* was a large communal project, the Gumbaz ("dome") Synagogue in Samarkand was funded entirely by Rafael Kalontar, the son of Moshe Kalontar and the Jewish community's *kalontar*. The inscription in Hebrew at the entrance reads: "the synagogue was erected at will and at the expense of Rabbi Rafael bin Moshe Nosi Kalontar in memory of his wife Tsipora. The construction was supervised by *usto* David Abramov, son of Avrom Hamomi. Year 5651 (1891)." It is much smaller than the *kanesoi kalon,* yet its exceptional circular form makes it stand out as a synagogue. The current building's interior appears modern or at least has undergone extensive renovation. There used to be a mezzanine women's section, but it was knocked down during the renovation in the 1990s, according to current caretaker of the synagogue.

[220] Cited in Fatakhov, "Some Facts About Samarkand Synagogues"

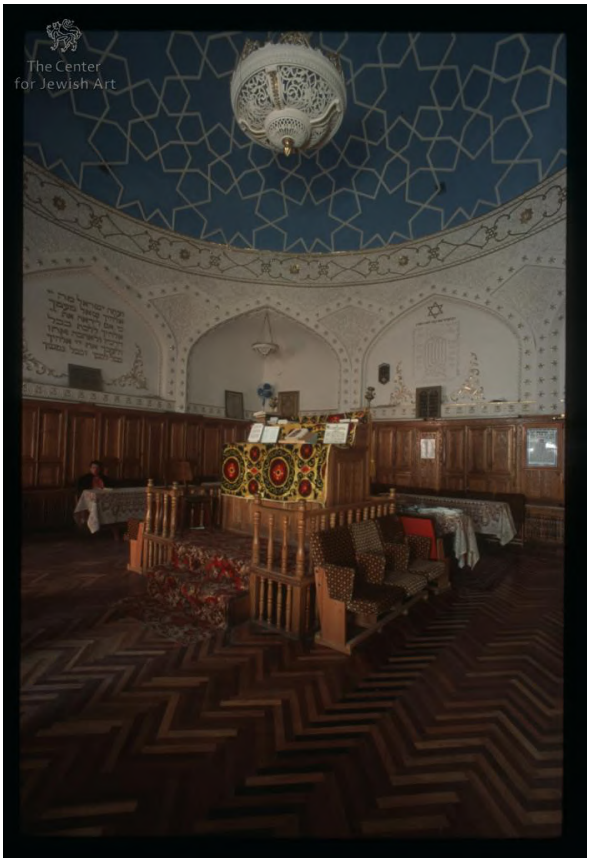


Figure 80: Gumbaz Synagogue, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art). Blue is a typical colour for synagogue ceilings.

Other public synagogues in the Jewish quarter were originally private home synagogues, for example, the *kanesoi Mullokandovkha* (1906), originally owned by the Mullokandov family (on Mullokandov Street). On this same street was located the *kanesoi eroniho,* a synagogue built for Jews from Herat and Mashhad in the late 19th century, financed by the Abramov family, which had immigrated from Kabul to Samarkand.[221] While Jews from Iran and Afghanistan followed the Persian, Bukharan Jews followed Sephardic liturgy.[222] The Okilov family maintained their own private synagogue on the second story of the building of the *kanesoi eroniho*.[223]

[221] Markiel' Fazylov, "Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi obschiny v tsentral'noi azii," Accessed at https://www.asia-israel.co.il/ Синагоги-бухарской-общины-в-средне-азии.html.
[222] Bukharan Jews were converted to a Sephardic form of Judaism in the 18th century by a rabbi from Morocco, Yosef Maman. Nowadays, however, they practically all follow Lubavitch teachings.
[223] Markiel' Fazylov, "Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi obschiny v tsentral'noi azii," Accessed at https://www.asia-israel.co.il/ Синагоги-бухарской-общины-в-средне-азии.html.

The synagogues built in the Russian part of town conform to Russian architectural style. One example is the Shlomo Sofiev synagogue, with its Russian brick decoration and rows of large vaulted windows. Another synagogue in the Russian section is a modest 20th century building, the *kanesoi mosheboi* (Moshebaev Synagogue). According to Fazylov, it was constructed by the wealthy merchant Zavulun Mosheev (nicknamed "Mosheboy") in the 1890s.[224]

Figure 81: Shlomo Sofiev synagogue, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Some public synagogues were originally private homes. The Yosef Alishaev synagogue was originally built Yosef ben Abo Mamon (the son of Yosef ben Mamon, who converted the Bukharan Jews to the Sephardic rite); his son Yosef Alishaev donated the building to the community when he left for Israel in 1923.[225] Today known as the Or-Avner synagogue, it is the only fully functioning synagogue of Samarkand and is used by both Ashkenazi and Bukharan Jews who live in this part of the city. They keep the Torah scrolls in Central Asian-style Torah cases, within an Ashkenazi-style Torah ark.

[224] Fazylov, "Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi obschiny"

[225] Fazylov, "Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi." In Palestine Avrom Kalontar also financed the construction of a synagogue in Petah Tikva in the 1930s, on Rothschild Street.

Figure 82: Ark, Or Avner synagogue, Samarkand. (The Center for Jewish Art).

3.2.3. Kokand

Jews first began to inhabit Kokand at first in the 1820s, then in greater number in the 1880s, mostly migrating from Bukhara.[226] As seen above, the city was divided between the Russian section and the poorer *mahalla-i poyon* (lower mahalla).[227] Two synagogues were built in the *mahalla-i poyon* for the general community, under the patronage by Abram Kalontar.[228] Five synagogues were built in the Russian section of the city, for the more affluent Jews. The synagogues in the Russian neighbourhood were each linked to the wealthiest households of Kokand: one was owned by the Vadyaev brothers, another by the Poteliyakovs, another by the Simkhaevs, another by Nathan Davidoff (for public use), and another, also for public use, owned by Abram Makhsumov,

[226] Poujol, "Approaches to the history of Bukharan Jews"
[227] The lower mahalla, known as *Kofrovot*, has since been demolished.
[228] Fazylov, "Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi" alludes to a document in the Ferghana regional government archives, "On the Legalization of Jewish Prayer Houses" (February, 1914), which I could not access.

Rakhmin Yagudaev and Sion Mordukhaev, as well as a one synagogue jointly owned by the Vadyaevs, Simkhaevs, and Poteliyakovs.[229]

Figure 83: Great synagogue, Kokand. *Kirpichnyĭ* style. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Jaffa Vadyaev wrote in her memoires:

> My maternal grandfather Barukh Vadyaev was the owner of large cotton fields and had many factories and mills scattered across southern Russia. They produced soap, oilseeds and other cotton products. He was very wealthy and made large donations for the construction of synagogues, which were called "Vadiaevsky synagogues."[230]

The memoires of Nathan Davidoff provide interesting information about the social life of the affluent Jews of Kokand. Throughout the work, he describes his very European lifestyle, going to the theatre in the evening, receiving guests from Tashkent, Margilan, and Andijan to his dacha, three kilometres from Kokand, where they watched performances in his "winter garden" (a glass veranda). He also alludes to the clash in worldviews which occurred due to the societal

[229] Poujol, "Approaches to the history of Bukharan Jews" counted four synagogues. Fazilov estimates seven, including the two pre-Russian synagogues.
[230] Pinhasov, *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev,* 32.

transformations brought by the Russians: his soirées were met with disapproval by "the elders," and Europeanised Nathan could not relate to his traditionalist wife:

> She was riddled with Asiatic culture, while our circle was mostly European; to cope with the problem, I hired a Russian teacher, who taught her the language and a governess who taught her the European ways and customs, Western fashion, and how to organise a reception.[231]

3.2.4. Tashkent

Before the Russian conquest of Tashkent in 1865, a hundred or so Bukharan Jews had settled in Tashkent. Under Russian rule, the community grew to 1,300, inhabiting the *mahallas* of Sagban, where gypsies also lived, and Ukchi, both located in the "old city". The first synagogues of Tashkent were built there: in the 1870s, religious leader Avrom Hasid founded a synagogue on Sagban St. (in Sagban). It contained a *musofirkhona* ("room for travellers") and a *khonai notavonon* ("room for infirm") to help shelter newcomers to the city and the poor. [232] This synagogue on Sagban St. was refurbished, and eventually became the largest synagogue of Bukharan Jews, until the 1980s. Since then, it has been demolished due to reconstruction work in the neighbourhood. In the Ukchi *mahalla*, the Yusuf Davidoff synagogue was built in 1890 on Davydovskaya St. under the patronage of wealthy business owner Yusuf Davidoff. A Jewish school operated in the adjacent building. Davidoff was an elected community leader, and also supported the construction of the Jewish cemetery in the old city, in the neighbourhood of Chigotai.[233]

[231] Davidoff, *Journal de Nathan Davidoff* 49-50; 65-66.
[232] Pinhasov, *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev*, 203.
[233] Jewish Virtual Library "Yosef Davydov," https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/yosef-davydov

Figure 84: Yusuf Davidoff synagogue, destroyed in 1966 (*Journal de Nathan Davidoff*, 217, photograph by A. Klevan, 1964).

By the 1890s, Ashkenazi Jews and some Bukharans had moved to western side of the Ankhor canal (which divided the Russian from the "Asian" section of town). A Moorish style synagogue for Bukharan Jews of Tashkent was built on Chimkentskaya St. in 1896, by the architect A. Burmeister (who also designed churches in Tashkent and Chimkent). The Orientalist "Moorish style" of late 19th-century Ashkenazi synagogue architecture, which was often combined with Romanesque, Byzantine, and Gothic revival elements, was in fact initiated by gentile architects, who judged the style to fit the so-called "Oriental origin" of their Jewish clientele.[234] It consisted of horseshoe windows and doors, crenelated parapets, minaret-like structure, which had first been revived in Orientalist European pleasure residences. Though at first the object of controversy, this style of synagogue came to be whole-heartedly embraced by liberal Ashkenazis in Europe and the United States in the 1870s-90s (while most Orthodox Jews, and less economically privileged thus

[234] Kalmar, "Moorish style," 77. As Ludwig Förster, the designer of the Vienna-Leopoldstadt synagogue wrote, "In my humble opinion, the right way, given the circumstances, is to choose, when building an Israelite Temple, those architectural forms that have been used by Oriental ethnic groups that are related to the Israelite people, and in particular the Arabs."

less enthusiastic about romanticism of self-Orientalisation, did not generally adopt the style). This style was used in Russia for example in St. Petersburg in 1893.[235]

Thus, it is most conceivable that this synagogue did not reflect Bukharan Jewish architectural desires, but rather the coloniser's pre-conceived notion of what was Oriental and what was Jewish, without paying attention to the actual style of architecture used by the local Jewish population.

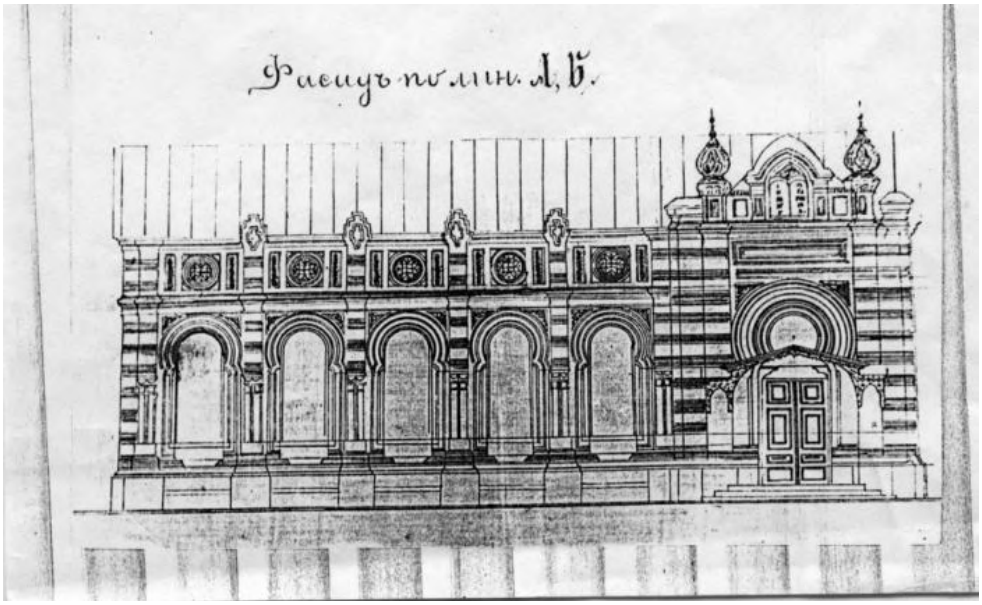


Figure 85: Burmeister's plans for a Bukharan Jewish synagogue in Tashkent (The Center for Jewish Art).

The Ashkenazi synagogue in the new city, also designed by Burmeister, and constructed on 12 Topolei St. in 1896, is in contrast much less Orientalist in style. While the synagogue designed for Bukharan Jews adopted a style alien to the community, the Ashkenazi synagogue used the Eastern European nine-bay synagogue plan (extant in Poland, Galicia, Belorussia, the Pale of Settlement), with a dome over the central bay directly above the central *bimah* (Hb. podium) surrounded by four pillars. To have followed the Eastern European synagogue model so closely, the military state architect must have been in dialogue with the Ashkenazi community in Tashkent

[235] Kalmar, "Moorish style," 89.

and known their needs and desires. Furthermore, the Ashkenazis collected 25,000 rubbles for the construction of their synagogues, while the Bukharans spent only 16,000 on theirs.[236]

Figure 86: Drawing (a) and photograph (b) of the Ashkenazi synagogue in Tashkent. (The Center for Jewish Art).

[236] A. I. Dobrosmyslov, *Tashkent v proshlom i nastoiashchem*, Tashkent: Tipolitografiia A. O. Portseva, 1912321.

Figure 89: Torah ark, Ashkenazi synagogue in Tashkent. (The Center for Jewish Art).

Burmeister also designed a Russian Jewish Society House in Tashkent on 19 Topolei St. (the building was destroyed in the 1966 earthquake). This construction is neither Moorish revival, nor Ashkenazic, but rather Russian in style. Also with nine bays, the arcade of windows is similar to other 19th century Russian buildings.

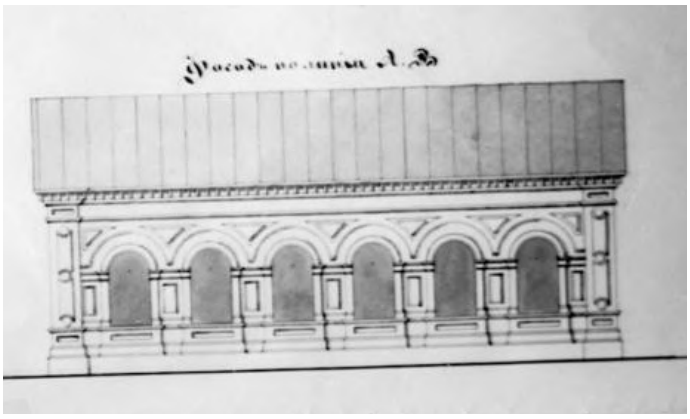
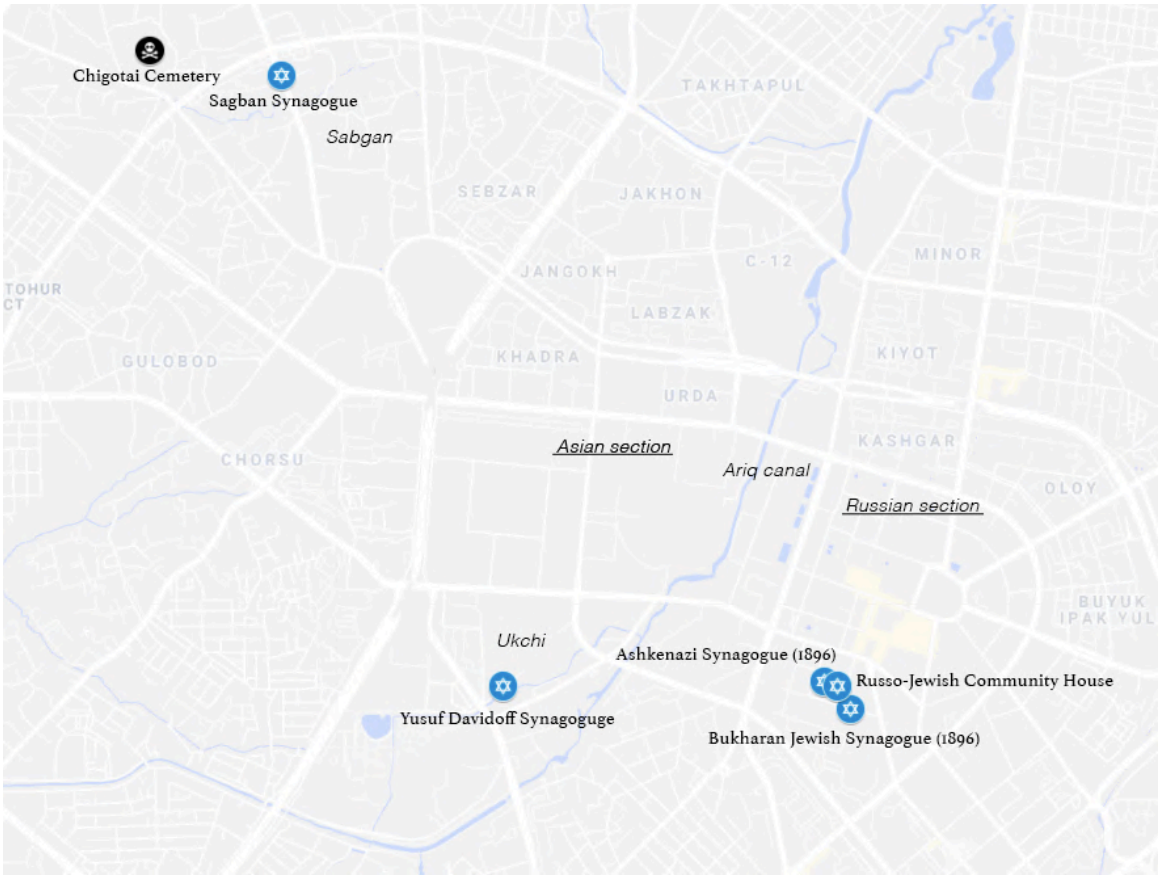


Figure 90: Drawings of the Russian Jewish Society House in Tashkent (The Center for Jewish Art).



Map 9: Jewish architectural features of Tashkent c. 1900.

3.2.5. The fate of the synagogues

Most synagogues were closed by Soviet authorities in the 1930s, and their buildings used for a variety of secular public functions. This occurred throughout all Soviet cities: the Margilan *kanesoi kalon* became a Russian secondary school, the main synagogue of Ferghana at first became a Bukharan Jewish club, and then a regional archive. In Samarkand, *kanesoi eroniho* became a house for the disabled, *kanesoi Mullokandovkho* was turned into a secondary school, while *kanesoi Pinhas Abramov* became a chess club. Before its ultimate destruction during the Tashkent earthquake of 1966, the Yusuf Davidoff synagogue was transformed into a printing press, then a factory. In total, 257 (57%) synagogues closed in Uzbekistan during the Soviet period.[237] In

[237] Pinhasov, *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev*, 77.

Turkmenabad (old Charjou, where Joseph Wolff had encountered Bukharan Jews in 1846), the only official Bukharan synagogue of Turkmenistan was converted into a gymnasium by the Soviets. While the Soviet government's anti-religious and anti-Semitic policy led to the deactivation of the buildings' religious use, and, in many cases, to their abandonment and dilapidation, today what most threatens synagogue buildings in Central Asia is the emigration of the Jewish community. The synagogues of Kermine, Katta-kurgan, Shahrisabz, and Namangan have all closed due to lack of a congregation.

3.3. Other Jewish sites

There are few other sites of Jewish architecture in Central Asia apart from private homes and synagogues. The remainder include cemeteries and *miqvehs*, which are extremely important for a Jewish community. Indeed, along with synagogues, they are the necessary features which allow a Jewish community to flourish within a city. The process of making a city more suitable to be inhabited by Jews is well described by Aqa Nasrulayoff, who immigrated from Mashhad to Daraghaz in 1891:

> In the morning and the evening, **we arranged a place for a synagogue** and we were praying **—**until that time, if somebody died, they either buried him in the Muslim cemetery or sent his body to Meshhed. I then decided **to find a plot of land to serve as cemetery for the Jews**. Two or three of the Jews objected strongly, but still we purchased a piece of land next to the Muslim cemetery and set it up as the Jewish cemetery. Eventually, we brought **two Torah scrolls, and set up two synagogues,** morning and evening all of us went to pray in the synagogues.[238]

3.3.1. Jewish Cemeteries

The Jewish cemeteries of Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand, and Margilan contain tombstones that date to the late 19th century at the earliest (though locals claim that they are two-thousand years old) are still well-maintained, supported by donations (mainly from Jewish tourists from

[238] Patai *Jadīd al-Islām,* 136, my emphasis.

Israel and the United States). The community of Bukhara is still large enough that members of the community continue to use the cemetery, which is regularly visited by mourning widows. Each cemetery contains a chapel for funerary services.

In Samarkand, the Jewish cemetery is located on the hillsides of Afrasiyab, separated by a mud-brick wall from the centuries-old Muslim necropolis (which adjoins the Shah-i Zinda funerary complex). It is therefore built in an area of the city which has a continuous association with death. The plot for the Jewish cemetery was purchased in 1878 by Moshe Kalontarov, who was given permission to construct the site there by the Russian government. After he passed away that same year, his son Rafael completed the construction of the cemetery wall. Before the Russian occupation, it is said that Jews had no cemetery because they were not allowed to build one by their Muslim rulers.[239] Despite this prohibition, and the lack of an *official* cemetery, Jews must have buried their dead anyways, since the oldest grave of the site, of a woman named Leo (nicknamed "Buz") dates to 1832. According to Menashe Abramov, before the 1830s Jews buried their dead in different locations on the outskirts of Samarkand, at Khazrati Khizr/Kadamjoi Eliahu Khanovi Hoja Daniel (on the slopes of Afrasiyab), Hoja Abdi Darin, Hoja Abdi Berun (in the suburb of Dagbid).[240] Oral history records that in Tashkent, Avrom Hasid (who founded the Sagban Synagogue) also bought the plot for the Bukharan Jewish cemetery in 1822, and that later, in the 1880s, Yusuf Davidoff erected the wall around it. The building of the wall, in both the cases of the Samarkand and the Tashkent cemeteries, is recorded in books about Bukharan Jewish history written by Bukharan Jews, and judged as just as important as the original establishment of the cemeteries.

[239] Fazylov, *Godi,Liodi, Fakty*, 37.
[240] Menashe Abramov, *Istoria buxarskix evreev Samarkanda s 1843 po 1917 god.* (New York, 2014, 142).

There are different types of graves in these cemeteries, and they can generally be divided into two categories: those installed before the Soviet period, and those afterwards. Soviet tombstones follow the Russian style of tombstone decoration —Russian writing in Cyrillic, and an image of the deceased inspired from a photograph. A Tajik poem may be written in Cyrillic, as is the practice for Muslim Tajik tombstones. Many of these Soviet Jewish tombstones also carry a Hebrew inscription (in Hebrew script), including the formulaic line פה נטמן איש צדיק "here lies the honest man". In contrast, older tombstones only have Hebrew writing. They are mostly not in good condition, and difficult to read. Some graves, of yellowish-brown adobe, are completely worn away, but have been positioned on top of concrete platforms, as a sign of respect to the ancient graves, as well as a form of demonstrating the antiquity of the site (Figure 90).

Figure 90: Headstones, Jewish cemetery, Bukhara. (Photograph by author).

3.3.2. *Miqveh*s

In addition to gravestones, the Jewish cemetery of Bukhara contains a water reservoir (Tj. *sardoba*). Local Jewish lore tells that two-thousand years ago it was a *miqveh* (a ritual bath for Jewish women), though currently it is not used for this purpose. According to a local, the site of the cemetery had originally been a spring on the edge of the city, which was known for its power to heal infertile women of their barrenness. Since Jews first lived in this area on the edge of the city, it was mostly they who used the spring. It later became a *miqveh,* then, when the city grew, the site was chosen for a cemetery, and another *miqveh* was constructed near the synagogue. As with other *miqveh*s, the so-called water reservoir in the cemetery contains a staircase leading to a deeper level and an upper-shaft to let in light and rain water. *Miqveh* structures were constructed in Jewish tombs of third-fourth century Israel, most likely used by mourners who wanted to be purified after near contact with a corpse.[241] The presence of a *miqveh* in a cemetery is much more usual in late Antiquity, it is therefore very interesting to find such a structure still standing in a cemetery which contains graves from the 19th-20th centuries, and is an indication of the old age of the site.

[241] Yonatan Adler, "Ritual Baths Adjacent to Tombs: An Analysis of the Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (2009), 55-73.

Figure 91: Former *miqveh,* Jewish cemetery, Bukhara. (Photograph by author).

A *miqveh* is used by Jewish women to become pure for conjugal relations, after menstruation or childbirth. In Central Asia and Iran, it was also used by the bride on the day before and on the day of the wedding, while the groom would also go to the male hammam or this occasion.[242] One of the rules listed in the "pact of Omar" was that Jews could not use the same bathhouse as Muslims due to ritual impurity. Jews were thus obliged to clean themselves in their own homes rather than frequent public baths. According to Ruben Nazarian, the Jews of Bukhara were only allowed to visit three of the eighteen hammams of the city (Gaziyon, Bozori Hoja, and Poi Ostona).[243]

A Jewish hammam (called *hammom-i yahudiyon*) is said to have been constructed in the *mahalla-i yahudiyon* of Samarkand in the early 1800s by a *chala* Jewish woman called Inoyat (which would make the hammam older than the Jewish quarter itself).[244] This is none other than

[242] Patai, *Jadīd Al-Islām*
[243] Fazylov, *Gody, ljudi, fakty*, 56.
[244] Fazylov, *Gody, ljudi, fakty.*

what is known today as the Hammomi Dovidi, named after Inoyat's grandson who later came to own the property. It is located across the street from the Gumbaz synagogue. In 1901-1903, wealthy patron Yosef ben Abo Mamon built a large bathhouse (*Banya no. 1* on Abdurrahman Jami St.) in *kirpichnyĭ* stil' with arched doorways and windows, in the Russian section of the city, across from Abram Kalontarov's house and in the vicinity of two public synagogues.

Rather than be divided into two sections, the *hammom-i yahudiyon* was used by men in the morning and women in the afternoon. *Miqveh*s were also located within synagogues, built in the courtyards of *kanesoi khurd* in Tashkent and the *kanesoi kalon* of Andijan.[245]

Farajullah Nasrullayoff's memoires relate the story of the construction of the *miqveh* of Mashhad, originally bought by the local Jews from Zoroastrians who had left the city due to Muslim persecution:

> They saw that the Jews had no place for [ritual] immersion. There was a network of cisterns under several houses of the Jews, called *khāriz*. Several owners of those houses arranged for themselves a *fayub*, like a *miqveh*, not deep, and the women used to immerse themselves there. In those days the Gebers (the Persians who prayed to fire) suffered very much from the Muslims who caused them great sufferings, so that many of them fled abroad from Meshhed, and only a few families remained in the streets of the *edgah*[246]. They had a bathhouse which they wanted to sell before they left.... At that time, Bemoni, mother of Simha, gathered the whole congregation of the Jews and told them that 'the bathhouse is needed for the Jews. if we buy it, there will be a place for the whole community to bathe, both women and men, and also a place for submersion for the women.... in the mornings the men, during the day the women would bathe. For the submersion of the women, the *miqveh* was open every day. [247]

This interesting story shows how Jews made do with the cisterns located underneath their houses, until they were able to purchase a facility due to the immigration of another persecuted religious community.

[245] Pinhasov, *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev*, 203.
[246] The Jewish quarter of Mashhad.
[247] Patai, *Jadīd al-Islām*, 118.

In addition to synagogues, cemeteries, and *miqveh*s, another locus of Jewishness would be the sacred site, or pilgrimage site. Jews of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa all perform pilgrimages to graves of holy men and prophets buried in their region.[248] This practice, however, for some reason did not develop among Jews in Central Asia. The only pilgrimage they are known to have practiced is to Jerusalem, since at least the early 19th century.[249] They do not appear to have had any interest in creating pilgrimage sites, even though at least two locations were potential sites. The *miqveh* of the cemetery of Bukhara is said to have been a pilgrimage site for barren women in the distant past, but this has not been practiced for a long time. The tomb of the prophet Daniel in Samarkand also contains a spring which was believed to have healing power to help women conceive, a practice which also has been discontinued.

The tomb of Daniel had high potential to be a site of pilgrimage, for it is a burial site of an important Jewish prophet, yet the irreverence of its history leads to it being ignored by most pious Jews. Tradition has it that Tīmur lifted the remains of the prophet from his tomb in Susa (in Iran), and brought it to Samarkand. The local Jews whom I met told me that the act was irreverent, for the dead are not to be disturbed in Judaism, and that therefore they did not make pilgrimage to the tomb. However, Adler noted that "the local Jews do not believe the story, nor do they quite disbelieve it, for I went with two who prayed there at the grave of the righteous."[250]

[248] See Allen Kerkeslager, "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt," *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt.* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 99-225; Josef Meri. *The cult of saints among Muslims and Jews in medieval Syria.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Dionigi Albera and Maria Couroucli, eds. *Sharing sacred spaces in the Mediterranean: Christians, Muslims, and Jews at shrines and sanctuaries*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012); Oren Kosansky, *All dear unto God: Saints, pilgrimage and textual practice in Jewish Morocco*. Diss. 2003.
[249] Ishakov, *Moshe Kalontar*.
[250] Elkan Adler, *Jews in many Lands*. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1905), 124.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have analysed the historical artefacts and architecture of the Jews from Central Asia, which constitute the Jewish heritage of Central Asia. Jews were not an invisible assimilated community within the larger fabric of society, as is frequently assumed, but rather had their own distinctive cultural production, in which Jewish identity was expressed. We have seen how Judaism was manifested through textiles used during the life-cycle, with visible elements of the religion (the star of David, the palm, Hebrew letters), stitched onto clothing or *suzani*s. *Suzani*s embroidered with Hebrew blessings were hung on the walls of the synagogue, bringing the domestic into the spiritual. Furthermore, we have seen how the very architecture of the Central Asian synagogue resembles a local house. Jewish houses in the region were also built in the local architectural style. The main halls of wealthy houses functioned as private synagogues, and were lavishly decorated —more so than the actual public synagogues.

Class differences were pervasive in the small community, exacerbated by Russian colonisation and the economic opportunities it brought. The rise in wealth of certain members of the community helped uplift the general education and well-being of the entire community. It was through the funding of a few extremely wealthy families that public synagogues and Jewish schools were constructed.[251]

Objects also face different destinies in these contexts of war, displacement, and poverty. In Bukhara, Jews reported to me that most of their objects of historical value had been sold for dirt-cheap prices at the fall of the Soviet Union.[252] This is not very different from the situation in 1886,

[251] Virtually all synagogues constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were supported by a wealthy patron. Vadyayev opened a Jewish private school in Kokand in 1888, as did Poteliyakhov in 1905 and Nathan Davidoff in 1908. Davidoff, *Journal de Nathan Davidoff,* 195

[252] For example, Aron Aronov, who established the collection of the Bukharian Jewish Museum in New York reportedly "used his vacations to return to Uzbekistan and go from house to house to gather items abandoned by the exodus of Jews to Israel and America," quoted in Daniel Belasco. "A Museum Grows in Queens," March 1, 2002.

when Adler bought up Judeo-Tajik manuscripts from the inhabitants of Bukhara and dug up holes in its Jewish cemetery searching for treasures. Many of the ceremonial objects from the Jews of Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are now in synagogues in the Bukharan neighbourhood of Jerusalem, other synagogue collections across Israel, and in the private collections of American tourists, who may not even know that the souvenir they bought from a local dealer in Bukhara belongs in a museum.

Local inhabitants of Bukhara have expressed their desire for a museum to celebrate the city's Jewish heritage, and to bring awareness to it. Their efforts have been frustrated.[253] The bureaucracy to carry the project through proved insurmountable, however, and though UNESCO had bought an old Jewish house for the project, the organisation is currently (June 2020) leasing the building to a restaurant. Absurdly, a plaque stands at the doorway, announcing the UNESCO "Museum of Bukharian Jewish History", a "project realized by UNESCO thanks to the financial support of the National Commission of Israel for UNESCO, World Bank Trust Fund, and private international donors," yet upon entrance into this 'museum,' one is greeted by the waiter of the "Old House Restaurant" who kindly explains that no museum is there. One wonders: where did the money from the National Commission of Israel for UNESCO, World Bank Trust Fund, and private international donors go? Indeed, although the historic centre of Bukhara is on UNESCO's world heritage list, UNESCO has not been provided financial assistance for the restoration and

https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/a-museum-grows-in-queens/ https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/a-museum-grows-in-queens/.

[253] Al'meev says that he "worked out the whole concept for the museum. We chose a site, the home of a wealthy Jewish trader that lived there a century earlier. We worked out everything down to the details – the layout, the exhibits. Everything was ready. And then, I don't know why, the whole thing came to a halt." Eurasianet. "When will Bukhara's Jews get their own museum?" https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-when-will-bukharas-jews-get-their-own-museum.
In Samarkand, Fazylov has written an article calling for the preservation of the old houses, and suggests that the house in the *mahalla-i yahudiyon* should serve a museum for Bukharan Jews. (Currently, the Samarkand Museum of Local Lore, located in the new city, houses a Jewish exhibition). Markiel' Fazylov, *Gody, liodi, fakty*. vol 3, (Samarkand: Sugdian 2003), 78-79.

conservation of its historic houses.[254] While walking through Bukhara, one sees many houses falling apart. A local Bukharan took to me to a house to see its Hebrew inscriptions on the walls, yet when I arrived, I found the wall had collapsed due to heavy rains just a week ago, and the paintings were ruined (Figure 95a). The owner told me that he had known that the place needed renovations, but simply could not afford them.

Figure 92: Ruined architecture in Bukhara (Photos by author).

Very few buildings are maintained through the patronage of wealthy Bukharan Jews living in Israel or the United States (for example, Bukharan-Israeli Lev Avnerovich Leviev purchased the building of the Yosef Alishaev Synagogue and renamed it after his father, Or Avner). Yet while *ad hoc* charity can save one building, it cannot save the general character of the neighbourhood. When

[254] UNESCO has funded the restoration of two monuments in Bukhara, both being Islamic madrasas. UNESCO. "Historic Centre of Bukhara" https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/602/assistance/

a building is not supported by an Israeli or American charity, it is simply left to chance, which leans towards its demolition for the construction of a hotel. The synagogue of Dushanbe, built in the 1940s, was demolished in 2006, along with other Tajik homes, to construct a presidential palace. It was the only remaining synagogue of Tajikistan. While the Jewish quarters of Samarkand and Bukhara are slightly preserved due to touristic interest, those in lesser-known cities of Uzbekistan have practically no stewardship. A pogrom in 1990 burned down many of the houses in the Jewish quarter of Andijan.[255]

This thesis has shown that the heritage of the Jews of Central Asia contains a vast of material culture, which reflect the diversity of the people. Objects and architecture reflect the webs of relations between people and places, the social dynamics of gender, age groups, and classes as well as ethnicity and religion. The preservation of the Jewish houses in Central Asia is thus of utmost historical importance, for they do not only tell us about 19th century architecture, but they also preserve the stories of those who lived there, about their social, cultural, and religious life. Artefacts and architecture together help us piece a more intricate vision of history, one which allow us to imagine how people lived, their *habitus* and values, manifesting the local and the international dimensions of being Jewish in this period. They are testimony to a unique period in Jewish, and human, history.

[255] Wagner, Zeev (ed.) "Andijan," *Rossiyskaya Evreiskaya Entsiklopediya.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abramov, Menashe. *Istoria buxarskix evreev Samarkanda s 1843 po 1917 god.* New York, 2014.

Ackerman-Lieberman, Phillip I. *The Business of Identity: Jews, Muslims, and Economic Life in Medieval Egypt*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Adler, Nathan Elkan. "The Persian Jews: Their Books and Their Ritual," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, vol. 10, no. 4, July (1898), pp. 584-625.

————————. *Jews in many Lands*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1905.

Adler, Nathan Elkan, Bacher, Wilhelm, Gottheil, Richard, "Bokhara" in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1906 (accessed online at http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3478-bokhara).

Adler, Marcus Nathan. *The itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: critical text, translation and commentary*. Translated by Henry Frowde, 1907 (accessed at https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/tudela.html).

Adler, Yonatan. "Ritual Baths Adjacent to Tombs: An Analysis of the Archaeological Evidence in Light of the Halakhic Sources." *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 40 (2009), 55-73.

Albera, Dionigi, and Maria Couroucli, eds. *Sharing sacred spaces in the Mediterranean: Christians, Muslims, and Jews at shrines and sanctuaries*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

Al'meev, Robert. *Legendy drevnej buxary: o postrjke pervoj sinagogi v Buxare.* Moscow: Obschestvo evrejskoe nasledie. 1995.

Amitin-Shapiro, Zalman. *Jenschina i svadebnye obriady u tuzemnyx ("buxarskix") evreev Turkestana.* Tashkent: Itorgo. XVII, 1925: 189-196.
————————."Predenie o postrojke pervoj sinagogi v Buxare," *Sbornik Naucnogo Kruzka Vostfaka*, Tashkent, 1928.
————————. *Ocherk pravovogo byta sredniaziatiskix evreev.* Tashkent, 1931.

Arshavsky, Zoya. "The Influence of the Russian Conquest on the Central Asian Synagogue," in Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Harmen H. Thies (eds.) *Jewish Architecture in Europe,* Berlin: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2010, 219-228.

Assaf-Shapria, Efrat. "Clothing that Remembers," Video. https://www.thecjm.org/exhibitions/102.

Azzout, M. "Architecture and urban planning in northern Central Asia from the Russian conquest to the Soviet period (1865–1990)," in Dani, Ahmed (ed.) *History of Civilizations of Central Asia: Towards the contemporary period: from the mid-nineteenth to the end of the twentieth century*. UNESCO, 2005.

Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 1988.
Bacher, Wilhelm. *Ein hebräisch-persisches Wörterbuch aus dem vierzehnten Jahrhundert*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1900.

Baldauf, Ingeborg. *"Kraevedenie" and Uzbek national consciousness*. Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1992.

Baker, Colin F. "Islamic and Jewish medicine in the medieval Mediterranean world: the Genizah evidence." *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 89.10 (1996): 577-580.

Bar'am-Ben Yossef, No'am. "One Woman – Many Transitions Deborah Davidoff from Tashkent, Uzbekistan as a model of the transformations of Bukharan Jewish women's dress from the early twentieth century to the middle of the twentieth century." *The Narrative Power of Clothes*: *Proceedings of the ICOM Costume Committee Annual Meeting, London, 25 – 29 June 2017,* http://costume.mini.icom.museum/publications-2/publications/proceedings-of-the-icom-costume-committee-annual-meeting-in-london-2017/

Batchaev, Mordekhai, and Catherine Poujol. *La vie de Yaquv Samandar ou les revers du destin*. Indiana University, 1992.

Berg, Hetty, ed. *Facing West: Oriental Jews of Central Asia and the Caucasus*. Zwolle: Waanders, 1997.

Becker, Seymour. *Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Belasco, Daniel. "A Museum Grows in Queens," March 1, 2002. https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/a-museum-grows-in-queens/

Benjamin, Walter. *The arcades project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Brauer, Erich. "The Jews of Afghanistan: An Anthropological Report," *Jewish Social Studies* (1942): 121-138.

Brinner, William M. "Popular Literature in Medieval Jewish Arabic." *Judaeo Arabic Studies*, ed. Norman Golb (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 1997), 75-88.

Brumfield, William Craft. *The origins of modernism in Russian architecture*. University of California Press, 1991.

Burnashev, T. *Puteshestvie po Sibirskoi linii do g. Bukhary v 1794 g. i obratno v 1795 g. Sibirskii vestnik* (St. Petersburg: 1818).

Burnes, Alexander. *Travels into Bokhara, Being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary and Persia.* London: John Murray, 1834.

Bukharan Jewish Congress “Na Styke Vekov,” Accessed 21 January. http://www.bukharianjewishcongress.org/new-history/991-at-the-turn-of-the-century.

Cassuto, David “Jewish and Muslim Houses of prayer: mutual influences,” in *Jews and Muslims in the Islamic World*, ed. Bernard Dov Kupperman and Zvi Zohar. Maryland: University Press of Maryland, 2013, 119–143.

Cohen, Mark R. *Under crescent and cross: the Jews in the Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.

————. “Correspondence and social control in the Jewish communities of the Islamic world: A letter of the nagid Joshua Maimonides.” *Historiya yehudit= Jewish history* 1.2 (1986): 39-48.

Cohen, Julie-Marthe. “Donation as a social phenomenon: Synagogue textiles of the Ashkenazi Community of Amsterdam in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries.” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 32.1 (1998): 24-42.

Cooper, Alanna E. “A Dying House in Samarkand’s Jewish Neighborhood.” *MAVCOR Journa*l 4, no. 1 (2020).

————. *Bukharan Jews and the Dynamics of Global Judaism.* Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2012.

Cordwell, Justine M., and Ronald A. Schwarz, eds. *The fabrics of culture: the anthropology of clothing and adornment*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011.

Davidoff, Nathan. *Journal de Nathan Davidoff: le Juif qui voulait sauver le Tsar*. Translated by Benjamin Ben David and Yankel Mandel. Paris: Ginkgo, 2002.

Dobrosmyslov, A. I. *Tashkent v proshlom i nastoiashchem: Istoricheskii ocherk’*. Tashkent: Tipolitografiia A. O. Portseva, 1912.

Drory, Rina. “Literary Contacts and Where to Find Them: On Arabic Literary Models in Medieval Jewish Literature.” *Poetics Today* (1993): 277-302.

Dudley, Sandra. “Material visions: dress and textiles.” *Made to be seen: Perspectives on the history of visual anthropology*, eds. Marcus Banks and Jay Ruby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011, 45-73.

Emelyanenko T.G. “Pamyatniki traditsionno-bytovoi kultury bukharskikh evreev v muzeinykh sobraniyakh: Osobennosti komplektovaniya.” *Etnografi cheskoye obozreniye*, No. 3 (2010): 66-76.

Eshel, Menachem. *Galerya: Dmuyot shel Rashei Yahadut Bukhara* [Gallery: Portraits of the Leaders of the Jews of Bukhara] (Tel Aviv: Bet ha-Tarbut li-Yehudei Bukhara be-Yisrael, 1965).

Eurasianet. “When will Bukhara’s Jews get their own museum?” https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-when-will-bukharas-jews-get-their-own-museum

Fatakhov, Solomon. “Some Facts About Samarkand Synagogues” https://bukhariancommunity.com/some-facts-about-samarkand-synagogues/

Fazylov, Markiel’. *Sinagogi burxarsko-evreiskoi obschiny v tsentral’noi azii.* Accessed at https://www.asia-israel.co.il/ Синагоги-бухарской-общины-в-средне-азии.html.

————————. *Gody, ljudi, fakty...: Sbornik statej i ocherkov o buharskih evrejah Samarkanda (1918–1993 gg.)*. Samarkand: Sugdian, 1992.
————————. *Gody, liodi, fakty....* vol. 3. Samarkand: Sugdian 2003.

Fine, Steven. *Art, History and the Historiography of Judaism in Roman Antiquity*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Fischel, Walter. “Yahudi, Yusuf.” in *Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 4* ed. Fred Skolnik. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007, 262-263.
————————. “Hakham, Simon” in *Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 4* ed. Fred Skolnik. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2007, 262-263.

Fishman, David E. “The Rebirth of Jewish Scholarship in Russia.” *The American Jewish Year Book* 97 (1997): 391-400.

Frank, Daniel, and Oliver Leaman, eds. *The Cambridge companion to medieval Jewish philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Freudenheim, Tom “A Persian Faience Mosaic Wall in the Jewish Museum, New York.” *Kunst des Orients* 5.H. 2 (1968): 39-67.

Gafni, Reuven. “Jewish Sacred Architecture in the Ottoman Empire.” *Jewish Religious Architecture. in Jewish Religious Architecture*. Leiden: Brill, 2019. 238-257.

Gharipour, Mohammad, and Rafael Sedighpour. “Synagogues of Isfahan: The Architecture of Resignation and Integration.” in Gharipour (ed.) *Sacred Precincts, The Religious Architecture of Non-Muslim Communities Across the Islamic World.* Leiden: Brill, 2015. 178-202.

Gharipour, Mohammad. “Synagogues in the Islamic World. Part 12. Iran” in: N.A. Stillman, P.I. Ackerman-Lieberman, Y. Ayalon, A. Levy, V.B. Moreen, M. Polliack, A. Saénz- Badillos and D. Schroeter (eds), *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World 4*. Leiden: Brill, 2009, 429-32.

Glazenap, Grigorii. *Vneschnyaya politika Rossii XIX u nachala XX veka. Dokumenty Rossiiskogo Ministerstva inostrannyx del.* Series 1. T. VI. Politizdat, 1962, 160.

Gruber, Samuel D. “Medieval Synagogues of the Mediterranean Region,” in Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Harmen H. Thies (eds.) *Jewish Architecture in Europe*, Berlin: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2010, 53-56.

Germanov, Valery A. “Shiite-Sunnite conflict of 1910 in the Bukhara Khanate.” *Oriente moderno* 87.1 (2007): 117-140.

Gibb, H.A.R. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, AD 1325-1354*, Volume 3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971.

Gil, Moshe. “The Jewish Quarters of Jerusalem (AD 638-1099) According to Cairo Geniza Documents and Other Sources,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41.41982): 261-278.

Gintsburg, I. I. *Catalog of Jewish Manuscripts in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science*s. New York and Paris: Memorial Edition, 2002.

Guangdan, Pan. “Jews in Ancient China-A Historical Survey,” in S. Shapiro, *Jews in Old China*, New York: Hippocrene Books, 1983.

Goitein, Shlomo Dov. *A Mediterranean society: the Jewish communities of the Arab world as portrayed in the documents of the Cairo Geniza, vol. I: Economic foundations.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Gottreich, Emily. *The mellah of Marrakesh: Jewish and Muslim space in Morocco’s red city*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Greene, Virginia. “‘Accessories of Holiness’: Defining Jewish Sacred Objects.” *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 31.1 (1992): 31-39.

Halberstadt, Anna and Adele Nikolsky. “Bukharan Jews and their adaptation to the United States.” *Journal of Jewish Communal Service* 72.4 (1996): 244-255.

Hallam, Elizabeth, and Tim Ingold, eds. *Making and growing: anthropological studies of organisms and artefacts*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Harari, Yuval. “Practical Kabbalah and the Jewish Tradition of Magic.” *Aries* 19.1 (2019): 38-82.

Hanegbi, Zohar, and Bracha Yaniv. *Afghanistan: the synagogue and the Jewish home*. Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, 1991.

Hyman, Arthur. “Jewish philosophy in the Islamic world.” *History of Islamic Philosophy* 1 (1996).

Hirsch, Francine. *Empire of nations: Ethnographic knowledge and the making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

Hodder, Ian. *Entangled: An archaeology of the relationships between humans and things*. John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

Huberman, Ida. “The Double-Headed Eagle.” *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies,* Jerusalem, August 4-12, 1985.

Ido, Shinji, “A late 19th-century Uzbek text in Hebrew script.” *Turkic Languages* 20: 2 (2016), 216-233.

Izrailova, Angela. “Suzani Vernacular: Technique and Design in the Central Asian Dowry Embroideries.” *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 1998.

Ishakov, Boris, *Moshe Kalontar*. New York, 1991.

Issacharoff Family, *Issacharoff: A Tale of a Family* (Haifa: Issacharoff Family, 1997).

Jewish Virtual Library “Yosef Davydov,” https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/yosef-davydov

Johnson, Emily. *How St. Petersburg learned to study itself: the Russian idea of kraevedenie.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.

Juhasz, Esther. *Sephardi Jews in The Ottoman Empire. Aspects of Material Culture*. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 1989.
————————. (ed.) *The Jewish Wardrobe: From the Collection of the Israel Museum* Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2016.

Kaganovitch, Albert. “The Jewish Communities of Central Asia in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods.” *Iranian Studies* 52.5-6 (2019): 923-946.
————————. *The Mashhadi Jews (Djedids) in Central Asia*. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2019.
————————. “The Muslim Jews-Chalah in Central Asia 1865-1917,” in Chana Tholmas (ed.) *Bukharan Jews: History, Language, Literature, Culture.* Israel, 2006. 111-141
————————. “L’acculturation de la communauté juive boukhariote et l’émancipation féminine,” in Michel Espagne (ed.) *Asie centrale - Transferts culturels le long de la Route de la soie*. Paris: Vendémiaire, 2016, 589-602
————————. “The Bukharan Jewish Diaspora at the Beginning of the 21st Century.” *Bukharan Jews in the 20th Century: History, Experience and Narration* (2008): 111-116.
————————. *Druzia Ponevole: Rossia i Buxarskie Evrei, 1800—1917*. Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2016.

Kalmar, Ivan Davidson. “Moorish style: Orientalism, the Jews, and synagogue architecture.” *Jewish Social Studies* 7.3 (2001): 68-100.

Sergei Kan, “‘To study our past, make sense of our present and develop our national consciousness’:Lev Shternberg’s Comprehensive Program for Jewish Ethnography in the USSR,” in *Going to the People: Jewish Ethnographic Impulse,* (ed.) J. Veidlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 64-84.

Karimi, Pamela. *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: interior revolutions of the modern era*. London: Routledge, 2013.

Katz, Ethan B., Lisa Moses Leff, Maud S. Mandel (eds.). *Colonialism and the Jews*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2017.

Kerkeslager, Allen. "Jewish Pilgrimage and Jewish Identity in Hellenistic and Early Roman Egypt." *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1999, pp. 99-225.

Khanykov, Nikolay Vladimirovich. *Opisanie Bukharskogo Khanstva,* St Petersburg: Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1843

Klein, A. "Tablet Weaving by the Jews of San'a (Yemen)," in *The fabrics of culture: the anthropology of clothing and adornment*, Cordwell and Schwartz (eds) Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011: 425-445.

Koplik, S. (2003). "The demise of Afghanistan's Jewish community and the soviet refugee crisis (1932–1936). *Iranian Studies*, 36(3), 353–379.

Kosansky, Oren. *All dear unto God: Saints, pilgrimage and textual practice in Jewish Morocco*. Diss. 2003.

Krinsky, Carol Herselle. *Synagogues of Europe: architecture, history, meaning*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

Kupovetskiy, M.C. "Buxarskie evrei na territorii Kazaxstana v XIX-nachala XX vv.: rasselenie i chislennost'." in *Istoria, Pamiat', Liodi. Materiali VVI mejdunarodnoj nauchno-prakticheskoj konferentsii. 18 oktiabria 2012.* Almaty: 2013, 208-214.

————————. "Evrei iz Mesheda i Gerata v Srednei Azii," *EO* no. 5, 1992, 54-64.

Lansdell, Henry. *Russian Central Asia, including Kuldja, Bokhara, Khiva and Merv*. London: Sampson Low and Co., 1885.

————————. *Chinese Central Asia: A Ride to Little Tibet.* London: Low, Marston & Company, Ltd, vol 1. 1893.

Lewis, Bernard. *The Jews of Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.

Levi, Scott C. *The Bukharan Crisis: A Connected History of 18th Century Central Asia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020.
————————. *The Rise and Fall of Khoqand, 1709-1876.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017.

Levin, Zeev. "Reportage: The Bukharan-Jewish Museum in Samarkand: memory preservation of a rapidly-diminishing community," *East European Jewish Affairs*, 45 (2015): 305-311.
————————. *Collectivization and Social Engineering: Soviet Administration and the Jews of Uzbekistan, 1917-1939.* Leiden: Brill, 2015.

———————. “From local to global: transformations of Bukharan Jewish community organization in the twentieth century,” *Nationalities Papers* 42.2 (2014): 321-335.

Levine, Lee. *The ancient synagogue: The first thousand years*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Levy, Lisa Lital. *Jewish writers in the Arab East: Literature, history, and the politics of enlightenment, 1863–1914*. University of California, Berkeley, 2007.

Livshits, V. A., and Z. I. Osmanova. “New Parthian Inscriptions from Old Merv.” In *Irano-Judaica III*, ed. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer, 99–105. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994.

Liber, George. “Korenizatsiia: restructuring Soviet nationality policy in the 1920s.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14, no. 1 (1991): 15-23.

Lowenthal, Rudolf . *The Judeo-Muslim Marranos of Bukhara: Two Russian Articles,* Central Asian Collectanea, No. 1. Washington D.C.

Loy, Thomas. “Rise and fall: Bukharan Jewish literature of the 1920s and 1930s.” *Iranian languages and literatures of Central Asia: From the eighteenth century to the present. Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes* (2015): 307-336.

Ludington, Shannon. “Embroidering Paradise: Suzanis As a Place of Creative Agency and Acculturation for Uzbek Women in 19th Century Bukhara.” *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*, 2018.

Lurie, Ilya. “Evrei v Srednej Azii,” in *Rassvet* 22.02.1915. No 8, 25 - 28.

Makhkamova, S.M. *Uzbek Ikat Fabric*. Tashkent, 1963.

Matras, H. “Jewish Folk Medicine in the 19th and 20th Centuries.” *Jews and Medicine: Religion, Culture and Science*. Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society, 1995: 113-135.

Mazumdar, Sanjoy, and Shampa Mazumdar. “Religious traditions and domestic architecture: A comparative analysis of Zoroastrian and Islamic houses in Iran.” *Journal of architectural and Planning Research* (1997): 181-208.

Meakin, Annette M. B. *In Russian Turkestan: A Garden of Asia and its People.* New York: Scribner, 1915.

Meddeb, Abdelwahab, and Benjamin Stora, eds. *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations: From the origins to the present day.* Princeton University Press, 2013.

Meri, Josef. *The cult of saints among Muslims and Jews in medieval Syria.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Mikhaleva, Gulsum. *Uzbekistan v XVII-pervoi polovine XIX veka.* Tashkent: Fan, 1991.

Miller, Daniel. *Stuff*. London: Polity Press, 2010

Miller, Susan Gilson, Attilio Petruccioli, and Mauro Bertagnin. "Inscribing Minority Space in the Islamic City: The Jewish Quarter of Fez (1438-1912)." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 60.3 (2001): 310-327.

Margoliouth, D.S. "Judaeo-Persian Document from Dandan-Uiliq." In M. Aurel Stein, *Ancient Khotan: Detailed Report of Archaeological Explorations in Chinese Turkestan*, vol. 1, 570–4. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907.

Mogilner, Marina, "Between Scientific and Political. Jewish Scholars and Russian-Jewish Physical Anthropology in the Fin-De-Siècle Russian Empire." in *Going to the People: Jews and the Ethnographic Impulse*, ed. Jeffrey Veidlinger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 45-63.

Moreen, Vera. *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism: A Study on Bābāī ibn Luṭf's Chronicle (1617–1662)*. New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987.

————. *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion: The Kitāb-i Sar Guzasht-i Kāshān of Bābāī b. Farhād.* Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990.

Morris, Bernice and Mary M. Brooks, "Jewish ceremonial textiles and the Torah: Exploring conservation practices in relation to ritual textiles associated with holy texts," in *Textiles and Text: Re-establishing the links between Archival and Object-based Research*, (eds.) Maria Hayward and Elizabeth Kramer (London: Archtype, 2007), 244-248.

Morrison, Alexander. *Russian rule in Samarkand 1868-1910: A comparison with British India*. Oxford: Oxford university press, 2008.

Müller-Lancet A. *Garments with a Message. Ethnography of Jewish Wear in Islamic Lands*. Jerusalem, 2010.

Muchawsky-Schnapper, Ester. *The Yemenites: two thousand years of Jewish culture*. Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2000.

Neumark, Ephraim . *Massa be-ereẓ ha-kedem*, ed. Avrahma Yaari, Jerusalem, 1947.

Netzer, Amnon, "Judeo-Persian Communities IX. Judeo-Persian Literature," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, XV/2, 139-156, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/judeo-persian-ix-judeo-persian-literature

Nosonovski, Mikhail. "Buxarsko-evrejskaya Pesnia o Vine na Ivrite," *Evrei v Sredneĭ Azii: Proshloe i nastoyaschee*. Eds. I. Dvorkin and T. Vyshenskaya, St. Petersburg, 1995, pp 177-186.

Nissimi, Hilda. *The Crypto-Jewish Mashhadis: The Shaping of Religious and Communal Identity in Their Journey from Iran to New York*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007.f

Oicherman, Katya. “Binding Autobiographies. A Jewishing Cloth.” In *The Handbook of Textile Culture*. Janis Jefferies, Diana Wood Conroy, Hazel Clark (eds.). London: Bloomsbury, 2015, 107-120.

Patai, Raphael. *Jadīd Al-Islām: The Jewish “new Muslims” of Meshhed*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997.

————————. *Encyclopedia of Jewish Folklore and Traditions*. London: Routledge, 2015.

P’iankov, V. *Turkestanskii Kalendar’ na 1880 God*, Tashkent, 1879.

Pickett, James. *Polymaths of Islam: Power and Networks of Knowledge in Central Asia*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2020.

Pinhasov, Robert A. *Istoriya Buxarskix Evreev*. New York: Klub “Roshnoi-Light”, 2005.

Poujol, Catherine. “Approaches to the history of Bukharan Jews’ settlement in the Fergana Valley, 1867–1917,” *Central Asian Survey* 12.4 (1993): 549-556.
————————. “Jews and Muslims in Central Asia,” In Abdelwahab Meddeb and Benjamin Stora (eds*.), A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations from the Origins to the Present Day*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013.

Poujol, Catherine and Elyor Karimov. “Les juifs de Boukhara ou la fin d’un espace-temps doublement minoritaire (1897-1918),” *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 107-110 (2005): 351-374.

Pourshariati, Parvaneh “Patterns of Jewish Settlement in Iran,” in Houman M., ed. *The Jews of Iran: The history, religion and culture of a community in the Islamic world*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 16.

Qoğman-Appel, Qaṭrin. *Jewish Book Art Between Islam and Christianity: The Decoration of Hebrew Bibles in Medieval Spain.* Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Rathjens, Carl. *Jewish Domestic Architecture in San’a, Yemen.* Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1957

Radjai, Jihan-Jennifer. “The Judeo-Persian Carpets of Kashan: Zionist Art and Cultural Craft Manufactured in Iran.” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 45 (2014): 135-152.

Rapport, Evan. *Greeted with smiles: Bukharian Jewish music and musicians in New York*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Radloff, V. “Srednyaya zerafshanskaya dolina,” *Zapiski Imperatorskogo Russkogo Geograficheskogo 6*, (Saint Petersburg: Obshchestva po otdelu etnografii 1880), 33-92

Rodov, Ilia. “The eagle, its twin heads and many faces: Synagogue chandeliers surmounted by double-headed eagles.” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 37 (2004): 77-129.

Roberts, Sophie. *Jews, Citizenship, and Antisemitism in French Colonial Algeria, 1870-1943*. Diss. 2012

Rosenfield, Yael. *The Bukharian Jewish Museum: Creation of a Collection Catalog and Implementation of Collection Management Techniques*. Diss. Fashion Institute of Technology. Fashion and Textile Studies, 2006.

Sabar, Shalom. "From Amsterdam to Bombay, Baghdad, and Casablanca: The influence of the Amsterdam Haggadah on Haggadah illustration among the Jews in India and the lands of Islam." *The Dutch Intersection*. Leiden: Brill, 2008. 279-299.

————————. "The Preservation and Continuation of Sephardi Art in Morocco." *European Judaism* 52.2 (2019): 59-81.

————————. "Jewish Amulets from the Beginning of the Modern Age until the Twentieth Century." in Filip Vukosavovic, ed., *Angels and Demons: Jewish Magic through the Ages – Exhibition Catalog.* Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2010, 24-27.

Salemann, Carl. "Chudaidat. Ein Jüdisch-Bucharisches Gedicht." *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, VIIe Série. Tome XLII, No. 14. St. Petersburg, 1897.

Sarshar, Houman M., ed. *The Jews of Iran: The history, religion and culture of a community in the Islamic world*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2014.

Scholem, Gershom. "The Curious History of the Six-Pointed Star." *Commentary* 8 (1949): 243-251.
————————.*On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1965.

Schwartz, Dov. *Studies on Astral Magic in Medieval Jewish Thought*. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Swetschinski, Daniel, Julie-Marthe Cohen, and Stephen Hartog. *Orphan Objects. Facets of the Textiles Collection of the Joods Historisch Museum, Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Joods Historisch Museum, 1997.

Shterenshis, Michael. *Tamerlane and the Jews*. London: Routledge, 2013

Shaw, Stanford J. *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic*. London: Springer, 2016.

Shokeid, Moshe. *The Dual Heritage: Immigrants from the Atlas Mountains in an Israeli Village*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971.

Shokeid, Moshe and Shlomo A. Deshen and *The Predicament of Homecoming: Cultural and Social Life of North African Immigrants in Israel*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

Serjeant, R. B., and Lewcock Ronald. *San'ā. An Arabian Islamic City*. London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1983.

Sonntag, Heather S. *Genesis of the Turkestan Album 1871-1872: The Role of Russian Military Photography, Mapping, Albums & Exhibitions on Central Asia*. Diss. University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2011.

Stiefel, Barry L. *Jews and the Renaissance of Synagogue Architecture, 1450–1730*. London: Routledge, 2015.

Stillman, Norman. *The Jews of Arab lands*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1979.

Sukhareva, Olga. "Kvartal′naya obshchina pozdnefeodal′nogo goroda Bukhary." *Nauka.* Moscow, 1976
---------- *Suzani. Central Asian decorative embroidery*. Tashkent: International Institute for Central Asian Studies, 2011.

Sunderland, Willard. "Empire without Imperialism?: Ambiguities of Colonization in Tsarist Russia." *Ab imperio* 2 (2003): 101-114.

Srougo, Shai. "The social history of Fez Jews in the gold-thread craft between the Middle Ages and the French colonialist period (sixteenth to twentieth centuries)." *Middle Eastern Studies* 54.6 (2018): 901-916.

Sèbe, Berny "Assimilation and Empire," in John Mackenzie (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Empire*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016, 1-6.

Tolmasova, Svetlana. *Vospominanie ob otse*. Tel Aviv. 2002

Trachtenberg, Joshua. *Jewish magic and superstition: A study in folk religion*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012.

Um, Nancy. *The merchant houses of Mocha: trade and architecture in an Indian Ocean Port*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011

Utas, Bo. "The Jewish-Persian Fragment from Dandān-Uiliq." *Orientalia Suecana* 17 (1968): 123–36.

Vaissenberg, S., "Evrei v Turkestan. (Otchet o Letnei Poezdke 1912 goda)." *Evreiskaya Starina* V (1912) 390-405.

Vámbéry, Arminius. *Travels in Central Asia.* London: John Murray, 1864.

van Voolen, Edward. "Judaism—Visual Art and Architecture," *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and the Arts.* ed. Frank Burch Brown Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 270-278.

Vladimirsky, Irena. "The Jews of Kyrgyzstan," Museum of the Jewish People at Beit Hatfutsot

Wagner, Zeev (ed.) *Rossiyskaya Evreiskaya Entsiklopediya*, 4th edition, Moscow. 2000.

Wolff, Joseph. *Researches and missionary labours among the Jews, Mohammedans, and other sects.* Philadelphia: O. Rogers, 1837.
————. *Narrative of a Mission to Bokhara in the Years 1843-1845 to Ascertain the Fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Connolly.* London, 1846.
————. *Travels and adventures of the Rev. Joseph Wolff.* Saunders, Otley and Co., 1861.

Weiner, Annette B. and Jane Schneider, eds. *Cloth and Human Experience.* Washington, DC, and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989.

Yakubov, Yefim, "Few Remarks on the appearance of Jews in Tashkent and Kokand." *Vostok. Afro-aziatskie obshchestva: istoriia i sovremennost* 3 (2018): 64-75.

Yaniv, Bracha. "From Spain to the Balkans: Textile Torah Scroll Accessories in the Sephardi Communities of the Balkans." *Sefarad*, Vol. 66: 2, (2006): 407-442.
————. "Regional Variations of Torah Cases from the Islamic World," in J. Gutmann (ed.) *For Every Thing a Season, Proceedings of the Symposium on Jewish Ritual Art*. Cleveland: Cleveland State University, 2002), pp. 38-76.
————. "The Mystery of the Flat Torah Finials from East Persia," in: A. Netzer (ed.), *Padyavand, Judeo-Iranian and Jewish Studies Series*, Los Angeles, 1996, pp. 63-74.

Yarkov, Aleksandr Pavlovich. *Na primere evreiskoi diaspory kyrgyzstana*. PhD dissertation, Bishkek, 2002.

Yasharpour, Dalia. "ADLER, ELKAN NATHAN," Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition, 1982, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/adler-elkan-nathan

Yastrebova, Olga, and Arezou Azad. "Reflections on an orientalist: Alexander Kuhn (1840–88), the man and his legacy." *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 5 (2015): 675-694.

Yerushalmi, David. *Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews*. Los Angeles: Fowler Museum at UCLA, 2013.

Yusupov, A. & H. Sharipov. "Yaxudi v Xudjand," in *Sadriddin Ayni va Yaxudijoni Bukhora*, ed. Mansur Surush. Khojand: Noshir, 2011, 70-74.

Yusupova, M. A. "Dva Etioda Po Istorii Arxitekturi Uzbekistana," in *Evrei v Sredneĭ Azii: Voprosy istorii i kul'tury*. Tashkent: FAN Akademii nauk Respubliki Uzbekistan, 2004,185-203.

Zand, Michael. "Bukhara Jews," *Encyclopædia Iranica*. New York; London, 1989. Vol. IV.: http://www.iranica.com/articles/bukhara-index-350.

————. "Bukharan Jewish culture under Soviet rule." *Soviet Jewish Affairs* 9.2 (1979): 15-23.