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Cover illustration: Detail from the cover
of a Samarkand tourist guide, 1965.

Marco Buttino

Samarkand

Living the City in the Soviet Era and beyond

Samarkand, located along the Silk Road, has a history that is often confused with a fabled image of the East. This book, however, deals with a real city, narrating the changes that took place while it was part of the USSR and in the period following, all the way up to the present. In Samarkand, the passage between these two eras reflects the broader transformation that affected Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian countries, which were internal colonies, first of Russia and then of the Soviet Union, before becoming independent states. Step by step, the reader enters the city, its various districts, private homes, public places, and hears the stories of diverse individuals and families.

Based on archival records, interviews and photographs, the book traces the changes in cultures and ways of life in Samarkand over this period, and investigates the tensions of the post-Soviet years. The Russians vanished from the city they had colonised or guided through the years of Soviet "modernisation", as did many populations that had been deported there during the Second World War, and various local minorities. The city experienced a period of profound crisis, was transformed in terms of the composition of its population, constructed a new national image, rewrote its history and finally emerged ready to receive tourists with their cameras.

Marco Buttino taught Contemporary History at the University of Turin (Italy). He has conducted research on the social history of the Soviet Union and post-Soviet countries. His particular field of study is urban change and migrations. His publications regarding Central Asia and the former USSR include: *La rivoluzione capovolta. L'Asia centrale tra il crollo dell'impero zarista e la formazione dell'Urss*, Naples, l'ancora del mediterraneo, 2003 (Russian transl.: Moscow, Zven'ya, 2008), and *Changing Urban Landscapes: Eastern European and Post-Soviet Cities since 1989* (ed. by), Rome, Viella, 2012.

CONTENTS

Introduction

1. Uzbekistan: From Colony to Independence
2. The City and Its Inhabitants
3. The Old City: The Tajik *Mahallas*
4. The *Mahalla* Vostok
5. The *Mahalla* of the Mugats
6. The *Mahalla* Shanghai: The Korean Deportees
7. Schools, Factories, Politics: Moulding the Soviet Citizen
8. Towards the Future

Notes for a Colonial and Post-Colonial Comparison

Appendices

Glossary

Archival Sources and Bibliography

Index