TAJIKISTAN (Jumhuriyi Tojikiston)

**QUICK FACTS**
- Population: 8 million
- Area: 143,100 sq. km (slightly larger than NY)
- Capital: Dushanbe (756,143 pop.)
- Languages: Tajik (official), Russian, Persian

**EDUCATION**
Tajikistan has wrestled with similar education-related problems faced by all the Central Asian Republics. Achievements in cultivating literacy under the Soviet regime were high, but maintenance of the educational infrastructure, in the aftermath of the collapse, has been a serious problem. Although Tajikistan underwent a serious nationalization effort that reduced the prominence of Russian in the educational environment, it has been difficult for the state to provide textbooks and other classroom material in the Tajik language. Tajikistan has a relatively large number of higher education institutions, however, the proportion of the population that receives degrees is low.

**RELIGION**
The state of Tajikistan, unlike all of the other former Soviet republics, claims an official religion: the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. Tajikistan has seen the exodus of most of its Russian Orthodox population since the Soviet period bringing the percentage of Islamic adherents in the nation to 98%. The Pamiri people make up a small portion of that number (about 3%) who follow the Ismaili sect of Islam. Religious life and tradition dominate Tajik society. Official holidays and custom reflect the preeminence of Islamic life.

**ETHNICITY**
Mountainous terrain has allowed for the preservation of greater ethnic and linguistic diversity among the Tajik peoples. That being said, Tajiks make up over 80% of the population and Russians are less representative in Tajik society than in any of the other Central Asian republics. Uzbeks make up the largest ethnic minority. The Tajik language is mutually intelligible with Persian and is the most divided from the rest of Central Asia. The Pamiri people, who reside in the south of the country are ethnically and linguistically distinct from Tajiks. As opposed to predominantly Sunni Tajiks, the Pamiri follow the Ismaili sect of Islam.

**FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS**
Like other Central Asian countries with a mixture of Persian and Soviet pasts, Tajikistan celebrates holidays such as International Workers’ Day (May 1), Victory Day (May 9) and Norwuz (Persian New Year, celebrated on the Spring Equinox). Tajik customs and family structures resemble those in the rest of Central Asia, with traditional patriarchal family hierarchies and Islamic religious practices representing the norm. Ramadan is celebrated, the Muslim month of fasting every year.

*Tajikistan is the southeasternmost Central Asian republic. It constitutes an area that has been ruled historically by numerous different empires including: the Achaemenid empire, the Hephthalite empire, Samanid empire, Mongol empire, Timurid dynasty, and the Russian empire. Since 1991, Tajikistan has been an independent country, although from 1992 to 1997 the country was caught up in a violent civil war over the religious or secular nature of the independent government. During the civil conflict, over 500,000 people fled the country, significantly affecting ethnic and social dynamics. Up to 100,000 people are estimated to have died in the conflicts, but Emomali Rahmon emerged as the political victor from the conflict, surviving an assassination attempt in 1997 and a number of coup attempts. Tajikistan is the smallest of the Central Asian Republics and as mountainous as Kyrgyzstan with as many as 8,000 glaciers throughout the country.*
CONTEMPORARY TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan experienced the most violent transition out of the Soviet Union of any of the Central Asian Republics. A civil war consumed the country for over 5 years until a peace treaty was brokered by the UN in 1997. Estimates of the number of people who died in the conflict vary greatly and range somewhere between 20,000 and 100,000. Since then the country has never fully recovered economically and remains the poorest of the Central Asian republics, in ways sharing more similarities with Afghanistan than its former Soviet neighbors.

The conclusion of the civil war brought the solidification of power for Emomali Rahmon, a former Soviet apparatchik who managed to emerge victorious despite several assassination and coup attempts. Rahmon has had to maintain a fine balance in order to retain control of the government in the wake of rising Islamic nationalism. The movement has pressured him to implement de-Russification policies, the most high-profile of which was officially changing his own name in 2007 to reflect a government push to develop a stronger sense of Tajik nationalism rooted in the Islamic world. Rahmonov became Rahmon. Through a referendum in 2016, he strengthened his position by removing term limits, gaining life-long immunity, and having his title changed to “Leader of the Nation.”

TAJIKS IN THE USA

There is little concrete data on the experience of the Tajik community in the United States as the exact number of Tajik expatriates is unknown and relatively small. Official numbers posit somewhere around 6,000 in 2014. In collaboration with the Embassy of Tajikistan an organization known as the Tajik American Cultural Association, a community hub is beginning to emerge. The largest concentrations of Tajiks in America can be found in California, New York, Nebraska, and Washington D.C. Many of them have come initially on work visas and gained citizenship (often times through marriage).

USEFUL LINKS

www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-16201032
http://steppemagazine.com/
http://www.centraleurasia.org/central-asian-survey

NAMES

Names in Tajikistan are usually of one of two origins, Arab or Persian. This is due to the a long history of Islamic culture and assimilation. Today, the difference between the two are politicized. Examples of male names include Bahram, Daryush, and Faramarz. Examples of female names include Nikoo, Parirow, and Rasa.

FAMOUS TAJIKS

One of the most famous Persian poets of the 13th century, Kamal Khujandi was born in what is now the Sughd Province of Tajikistan. Many ethnic Tajiks have played an important role in Afghani politics in the last decade, often times having earned their credentials as freedom fighters during the Soviet invasion of the 1980’s. These include Ismail Khan, Minister of Water and Energy since 2005 and Abdul Latif Pedram, a politician and spokesperson for women’s rights in Afghanistan.

TAJIK WORDS

Hi ................................. sah-lohm
Good morning ................. Soobh-ba-khayr
Yes ................................. Ha/Ba-le
No .......................................................... Ne
Please/You’re welcome ..... Loot-fan/Il-ti-mos
Thank you ................. rah-mat/tasha-koor
How are you? ............... shoo-moh-chee-khel?
I do not understand ............na-fah-mi-dam
Do you speak English?.........Shumo Anglisi gap mezaned?
Help!................................. Yori Dihed!
My name is ...................... No-mee man … Where are you from? .... Vy otkuda?