

*TIJS Graduate Research & Travel Grants
Summer 2015*

RAHIMJON ABDUGAFUROV, ICIVS

rahimjon.abdugafurov@emory.edu

Advisor: Devin Stewart (ICIVS)

Purpose: To learn Judeo-Tajik and acquire Judeo-Tajik primary sources in Uzbekistan to help me read Judeo-Tajik sources as well as incorporate them into my research in a form of a scholarly paper in which I study the reactions and responses of Bukharan Jews to Muslims in the region.

I am Rahimjon Abdugafurov and I am a third year PhD student in the Islamic Civilizations Studies Program. Through the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, I was awarded the Judith London Evans Student Grand in the summer of 2015. With the funding, I traveled to Bukhara, Uzbekistan, to learn Judeo-Tajik and to obtain works written by Bukharan Jewish scholars of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I improved my Tajik and worked on the Judeo-Tajik language with a tutor. I was also able to learn more about the Bukharan Jews, their lives, professions, religious practices, and education. I also have purchased 12 books, including manuscripts, from the booksellers as well as from Bukharan Jewish religious leaders. The books that I have acquired range in topic from linguistic to religious as well as a poetry collection. Since the books I acquired are not permitted to be transported outside Uzbekistan, I have digitized the books and uploaded to my online memory storage. I have placed the hard copies of the books, including manuscripts, in my personal library in Uzbekistan.

Elnatanov Rafael Mihaylovich, the director of the Bukharan Jewish Cultural Center in the region of Bukhara, has been very helpful in both in meeting with scholars who did work related to Bukharan Jews as well as in acquiring books. Mr. Elnatanov also works as a director of the Bukharan Jewish Charity organization named “A-Maayan.” I have built a close rapport with Mr. Elnatanov and his staff members in which they expressed their concerns and financial problems openly with me. Since the events in Ukraine, the international foundations that were providing the Bukharan Jewish communities have stopped their financial assistance. One result of cutting such funds is that the Bukharan Jewish Cultural Center does not have funds to continue to teach Hebrew to the Bukharan Jewish youth in these days.

The Bukharan Jewish Cultural Center is also working on building a museum dedicated for the Bukharan Jewish Heritage in the city of Bukhara. The government of Uzbekistan provided the center with land and they are now working on obtaining funds and building the museum where artifacts, books, and other Bukharan Jewish cultural items will be displayed.

At the moment, I am working on deciphering the books from Judeo-Tajik into English and I am working with Professor Hossein Samei, the professor of Persian at the MESAS on this project. I also plan to work more in the spring semester with Professors David Blumenthal and Don Seeman on the project.

I would like to thank the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies for helping me obtain such a generous grant and hope to cooperate with the Institute in a variety of matters related to Bukharan Jews in the future.







Rahimjon with Rafael Ilntanov, head of the Bukharan Jewish Cultural Center in Bukhara, Uzbekistan