

“TAKE! TAKE! TAKE!” HOST-GUEST RELATIONS AND ALL THAT FOOD: UZBEK HOSPITALITY PAST AND PRESENT

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Hospitality shown during feasting or feasting as a pillar of hospitality seems virtually inseparable in the Ferghana valley Uzbek context. In a place where hosts try to force feed their guests and guests have all to do to walk rather than roll away from their hosts after a celebratory meal, the host-guest dynamic continues to play itself out much as we have seen in the historical literature going back 600 years, back as far as the renowned trip from Cadiz to Samarqand by the King of Castile's ambassador to the court of Tamerlane, Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo. But is it fair to compare the gluttonous court orgies of a 15th century world conqueror to the table of an impoverished Post-Soviet Uzbek peasant? Yes, I think it is precisely because of the “Take-Take-Take” concept. During meals, especially where guests are present, hosts and sub-hosts (other local guests) urge the outsider guests to eat as much as is humanly possible. Extricating oneself from these great “stuff-a-guest-till-he-screams” affairs require tact, deftness, and the general appearance of *sang-froid* amidst all of the passionate urgings and behests to “take,” to “look while sitting,” (a way Uzbeks have of indicating that the guests are sitting and seeing the food so that, certainly, they must eat more), and, “Look (which means eat) at the pilaf.” Not wanting to overdraw this distinction, I am not arguing that Uzbeks are unique in their efforts to show hospitality by making guests eat inordinate amounts of food (compare the literature on village Iraq or village Malaysia), rather I'm saying that they have refined this strategy with a particularly aggressive edge.¹

Moreover, when we examine the memoirist and ethnographic literature, whether (Zahiriddin Muhammad) Babur's writings of 16th century northern Afghanistan or the works of leading Russian Imperial Geographical Society members (Middendorf 1882, Nalivkin 1880, Ostroumov' 1896), we get a sense of the preservation and reproduction of culinary practices, especially with regard to hospitality and the penchant to overwhelm guests with food,

and creature comforts.² My argument in part rests on the assertion that culinary practices regarding hospitality and the host-guest relationship has endured over centuries cutting across socio-economic strata based on historical texts and my own fieldwork in Uzbekistan undertaken at various times from 1992-2001. Furthermore, I want readers to be aware that the foods cooked and served show both similarities and differences, so that the diet of Uzbeks has altered considerably since the Russian colonialist period—post-1860s. Continuous dietary changes since then serve to alter culture in ways that affect social relations, politics, and economics.

Much of Uzbek culture, given its myriad regional variations and particularities, strikes the outsider or newcomer as traditional and customary, which may be a natural viewpoint but also a misleading one. The traveler's predilection for old ways and ancientness in an area such as Central Asia (born perhaps from distant travels and for the gratification of experiencing a relatively different world so personally) often privileges and idealizes a questionable equalization—to wit, the life of contemporary Uzbek people with the medieval ruins of Samarqand and Bukhara. He chooses to ignore the modern marvels of DVD players, the popularity of Dido, karaoke machines, satellite dishes, and the annoying ringing of cellular telephones that constitute an increasingly ubiquitous part of Uzbekistani urban and town life because such things are all too familiar to him.

Russian/European Influences on Diet

Images of the past, customs and traditions, and those things that have endured the vicissitudes of colonization, revolution, and this past decade's opening to China, parts of the Near East, Europe and America should not suffer from hasty cultural analyses. Specifically, the second half of the twentieth century brought enormous changes to rural Uzbek households just as they brought to the American diet regarding

foodstuffs and eating practices. While Uzbeks may entertain guests, prepare meals, and eat in ways that do indeed reflect centuries long patterns, what has and continues to change are the very substances of culinary behavior.

In terms of dietary changes that have strikingly affected rural Uzbek culture in this century, we need to look back at least as far as the mid-1930s. The pre-war decade showcased a radical, often devastating restructuring of the agricultural products and relations in the countryside, part of a social revolution with the collectivization of agriculture at its core. In addition to the legendary increase of cotton cultivation and production (the making of a monoculture), the newly consolidated Soviet regime introduced tomatoes, cabbages, potatoes, berries, peppers, dill, parsley, and other various greens to the daily diet of rural Uzbeks³. The most widely consumed source of fat in the contemporary Uzbek diet is cottonseed oil, so cotton growing has contributed to the alteration of the diet significantly. Cottonseed oil largely replaced the more favored oils of sesame and flaxseed (Jabborov 1994:159-160). Mutton fat, especially the bottoms of fat-tailed sheep, butter, and horse fat continues to be used for holiday and festive meals, but usually beyond the fiscal reach of most peasants on anything approximating a day-to-day level. Cottonseed oil must be heated to very high temperatures in order to help ensure the burning off of harmful pesticides and defoliants. People complain about this, but have resigned themselves to its flavor and utility. However, they do talk romantically about how good the cooking oils of their grandparents' generation must have been.

Potatoes and tomatoes enjoy very wide use today, especially in salads, soups, stews, and as fried accompaniments to other dishes. While I've never heard anyone complain about tomatoes (men also love to eat them with salt while drinking *portvine* or vodka), I have heard complaints about the very delicious *Gallandskii kartoshki* (Holland potatoes); words to the effect that potatoes are not good food for the hot Uzbek climate, and that their high natural sugar content helps cause diabetes. Others have said, even while eating them (!), "Potatoes is not a food for Uzbeks." My own eating experiences show me that potatoes today are nearly as important and ubiquitous in the diet as are wheat and rice.

What a Guest May Expect

Mehmon kirsqa eshikdan, risqa kelar teshikdan (Should a guest walk through the door, food will come through a hole in the floor) (Uzbek proverb)

In some cultures, notably ours, planning for the arrival of guests is crucial to the success of the host. Yet in others, notably Uzbekistan for purposes of this essay, it is the guest or guests who are far more crucial than the planning that goes into the visit or occasion itself. What I mean to say is that the guests' wellness and fullness are most crucial along with the notion that their good mood must be maintained or uplifted at all costs. Once this is better explained and understood, visitors to Uzbekistan will have a much better sense of what hospitality and eating together are all about, and the better one's understanding still of the importance of meals as the measure of good hospitality. And, yet again, it can only strike the uninitiated as strange that the hosts need no formal preparation time for providing what often turns out to be exquisite and extensive hospitality with regard to alimentary matters. Of course, when hosts do have ample foreknowledge of a guest's arrival, the aesthetic preparations may become extravagant in regard to the overall display of utensils, vessels, cloths, and cushions to say nothing of the sheer quantity and variety of the foods offered.

As a visiting anthropologist, there is a difference. Local people do want you to come over. After all, it's both an honor to them to host a foreign guest, and it also adds some prestige value to the household in the eyes of the other villagers. As a matter of fact, many villagers remark that they "need to have guests." The statement, akin to a rural axiom, more or less means that hosting others forms an essential part of well-mannered and well-regarded social intercourse in this particular social context.⁴ The opposite—that is, not having guests, or having them but once in a blue moon—signifies that the hosting household is generally unwelcoming, its household members are thought of poorly, or that the hospitality provided falls short of decency. I should also say that the guest as a person and the guest as a cultural idea impart a sense of identity to Uzbeks themselves in the sense that the taste left in a guest's mouth based on how s/he experienced hospitality under a

given roof reflects not merely on the hosting family but, it is considered, on the village as a whole (Sattor 1993:111). In other words, taking care of a guest requires the efforts of a village.

Part of what enables food to appear out of nowhere when an unannounced guest shows up, especially in various regions of Andijon and Namangon (FV), involves other diners whom the guest would never have expected. The guest often feels flattered by the new and seemingly spontaneous attention, but what's actually going on is the activation of a social network (Niozmurodov and Aliev 1990:36). The host appoints members of his household to call on his close friends and relatives, letting them know that there has been an unexpected arrival and that they should come armed. Who brings vodka, who a bag of apples, who a kilo of meat, and still another with four eggs. It is a kind of potluck of ingredients or items that enables the host to pull off a banquet-like meal in ordinary circumstances. The alternative would be meager fare, which would devalue both parties to the event.

First, the hosts always spread a tablecloth. It might be greasy and made of thin calico or a thick, cotton-synthetic blend, but it goes down just the same. *Dasturkhon* in Uzbek signifies both the physical table covering as well as what's placed atop it—namely, the foods. It may be placed above the floor where diners are seated or on the floor itself with diners comporting themselves around it, seated on the cushions or quilts known as *kurpa*, which are among the most essential items of furniture in an Uzbek home. Then they set down bowls of candy, cookies, nuts, and granulated or lump sugar⁵. Next comes the bread, fresh, stale, or in between, accompanied perhaps by all or a combination of honey, jams, and butter or heavy cream. Then, cherries and apricots in early summer, sometimes, strawberries; toward August there are figs, apples, peaches, all kinds of melon, and, later, the noble pomegranates and quinces; winter features various compotes and conserves as appetizers. For snacking hosts never neglect the cucumbers and tomatoes accompanied by a bowl of dipping salt; hosts peel and slice the latter group for their guests. In fact, most fruits are often sliced and peeled by the host or the sub-hosts, who then distribute them to guests; the same is true for walnuts, which hosts take great pride in crushing between their hands before placing them near the guests. Green tea arrives, and then the host will get

down to the business of finding out who his guests are and why they've come to visit, if the guests dropped by unexpectedly or were completely unknown to the host in the first place.

People from Ferghana valley (FV)⁶ villages don't display culinary hospitality through large amounts of plates and utensils. They emphasize, rather the quantity and varieties of foods served. Exhibiting features common to rural, communal cultures, they mostly share physical dishes and use utensils (almost exclusively stainless steel or aluminum serving spoons) sparingly⁷. When found, forks and knives constitute the accoutrements of European-style restaurants. Metal flatware and even ceramic or porcelain tableware only started to become a part of daily life in rural areas after the 1930s, and were introduced to the Uzbeks largely by both Russians and Tatars⁸ (Vasil'eva and Karmysheva 1969:182). Uzbeks typically eat from bowls and large serving plates. Bowls filled with soups, yogurt, compotes, and salads (namely, *shakarob*)⁹ are often shared among a number of *convives* at table. And the same is true for the large serving plates that usually hold steaming pilafs. The doling out of spoons today serves either foreigners or the younger generations, people younger than forty. It also appears to show neither prestige nor a marker of civilization per se for the host family, although a combination of these is present to a degree; but it seems to indicate a modern habit resulting from 20th century Russian diffusion. The highest quality porcelain used in rural homes usually comes with unique motifs particular to Uzbek society and its way of life. Thus, typical colors are dark blues and reddish orange with gilded depictions of cotton bolls, deer, doves, abstract designs, and flowers. From time to time, one may be served china with gilded images of medieval monuments. Most rural people eat from the large dishes (*lagan*) with their right hands, forming scoopers for the pilaf. They often point out that food tastes better when consumed in this manner. Furthermore, because rural Uzbeks highly prize oily pilafs, they say that you know you've had a good *palov* when the oil from the plate drips or slides down from one's hand to one's elbow.

People always say, "Come over to our place and we'll drink tea." Usually, one need only smile, nod, and say thanks, or "Yes, let's do that some time," or "We will, but another time, okay?" To the unwitting, the invitation seems

very genuine or straightforward, but it's really no more than our cultural equivalent of "Let's get together some time" with the obvious difference that people will often try to physically lead one toward the path to their homes, or they will gesture for you to come with them as they make the offer. This adds yet other proxemic and kinesic dimensions to offers of hospitality to which most Westerners are unaccustomed.

Staff, Pillar, and Ballast of Life

Mezbonning himmati, mehmoning hurmati, elimizning qudrati—non. Uni ardoqlash, qadrlash har bir kishing olizhanob insonilik burchidir. (Bread signifies the host's generosity, the guest's respect, and our homeland's strength. To cherish and value bread is the duty of every person's noble humanity.) (Niozmurodov and Aliev 1990:47)

Meals formally begin when the *mezbon* (host) breaks the bread that his wife or one of his children brings to table. The moment of breaking bread literally is spoken as such—that is, someone will say "*Non sindiring.*" In the FV hosts are known for carefully breaking up several loaves of bread and then carefully distributing the pieces around the entire table. Covering a table with bread demonstrates the importance not of the decorated table or its settings but of the fact that it should be fully covered by foods; and in terms of a sacred food nothing comes closer to a truly godly food than bread. Part of every child's enculturation begins with learning respect for bread (Niozmurodov and Aliev 1990:48): if bread is dropped, it must be picked up and kissed; if one no longer wants bread, one must place it in a spot higher than his own head; bread may only be placed on any surface's right side; bread must never be stepped upon; when traveling any significant distance from home, one always takes a loaf of mother's bread; and bread may be placed under a person's pillow if he suffers from nightmares. With the exception of pre-meal snacks, such as candies, nuts, and fruits, the formal beginning of any meal must begin once the oldest person present tears a piece of tandir-baked bread and eats it. Then all the others will tear off a piece from among those spread around the table nearest to them and also begin eating.

The *tandir* oven is an essential part of any peasant's home as is his roof. Tandir-baked bread, known as *obi non* or *oi non*, is a whole wheat bread. Women bake bread, and for a woman it is a matter of great pride and prestige when her bread is praised. Rural Uzbeks consume more bread than any other foodstuff, meaning more wheat than any other grain, pulse or tuber, and wheat has long been raised in Central Asia. Oddly enough, however, poor rural families often baked bread not so much from wheat but more from sorghum and corn, bread known as *zoghora*. Scholars such as Jabborov claim that such crops are rarely used for baking bread any more (1994:160), but I have been served this kind of corn or maize bread on more than a few occasions. Wheat or dough foods prepared from often came in the form of noodles, so the consumption of wheat for many peasants of the FV long has been associated not so much with breads but with a special noodle soup, known as *laghmon*, supposedly reflecting Uighur influence, which in turn reflects the strong culinary influence that western China has long had over the FV; steamed wheat dumplings stuffed with mutton and onions, known as *manti*, are yet another example of this type (Gubaeva 1991:82-90).

As rings true for tortillas in Mexico, bread in Uzbekistan can never be too stale. For peoples who have known grinding poverty and starvation, who are sometimes on the verge of famine, bread simply could not be placed in a trash bin. Rock-hard and even moldy bread may simply be dunked in tea or thrown into soup, or even into a pilaf. I recall my eventual disappointment when once excited that we would be eating "duck soup." I became disappointed because I soon found out that duck soup meant the placing of old bread into bowls of cold water whereupon it begins floating, hence the duck soup. After water logging the bread, my fellow diners simply ate it. This lunch convinced me that there were up and down sides to no longer being treated as an outsider. My guest status had worn off; now I was becoming just like the others, and I should begin to eat like them, too.

Today, facing increasing economic troubles, many rural Uzbeks move to cities to try to make a better life for themselves. With no work to be found, enterprising rural people turn to the skills they know will earn them some money, and therefore set up small, neighborhood bakeries. Bread baking functions as a survival mechanism.

Palov—the Hospitality, Ceremony, and Holiday Food

...*palov ozbek mehmondostligining ramzi hisoblanadi, uni aziz mehmonga atab alohida khafsala bilan damlaidir, katta-kichik mehmonavoqliklar palov oshisiz otmaidi.* (...pilaf is considered the symbol of hospitality, and not to present a pilaf separately to an esteemed guest really shows one to be incapable of hosting any kind of guests.) (Mahmudov 1989:199)

The first true taste of Uzbek culture for the uninitiated comes in the form of a consistently greasy pilaf, which Uzbeks call *palov* or *osh*¹⁰. It forms as fundamental a part of the modern Uzbek identity as does the men's skullcap, the *doppi*, and the people's self-characterization as being labor-loving, *mekhmatkash*. Its ubiquity and desirability, when transposed to the American popular foods context, seems like a combination of hamburgers, hot dogs, and pizza. Made of carrots, onions, cottonseed oil, beef or mutton, salt, saffron or cayenne, and short-grained rice, it does require a good two hours of preparation and cooking, but people claim it is an easy dish to prepare. Naturally, because they make it all the time. An Uzbek cookbook author claims that there are at least 200 different kinds of pilafs savored throughout Uzbekistan (Mahmudov 1989:199).

When plates of *palov* are presented, they have the form of a rice pyramid, piled with a large chunk of fried beef or mutton on top. The host then grabs the red-hot meat and will cut it into morsels, using a loaf of round bread as his cutting board. Once he's finished, he then puts it back atop the rice mound. The idea is that those dining from the large plate will cut a swathe through the rice, chickpeas, eggs, quinces, pomegranates, and raisins until they finally face off over the pieces of meat. That's the idea but not the common practice; the latter warrants that guests and host vie with one another to push the pieces of meat to each other using either spoons or fingers. Everyone pretends that he doesn't want the meat when in fact most salivate over it. Good form requires that younger persons try to push over as much meat to older persons until they signal their fill by rejecting the pushed pieces more than three times.

The genesis of *palov* in Uzbek culture indicates that it was not commonly a meal for the peasant masses, basically because meats were inaccessible to them. For the peasants, *palovs* were largely consumed when the landlords hosted feasts for weddings and circumcisions. (Tol'stov, S.P. et al., eds. 1962:308). It was only in the postwar period that eating *palov* became so common that it has been typical for families to eat it once a week.

Palov eating is the ultimate sign of the good life for peasant families, and it remains the number one dish for weddings and all other community festivals¹¹. The latter often require the work of tens of people as they prepare all the ingredients necessary to make the *palov*. The *palovs* that are prepared in huge cauldrons (servings for close to 300 people) usually require the services of the village "chefs" who are always men; women cook family *palovs*. These holiday "chefs" have no formal training, and are not cooks by profession, but they are men who make delicious *palovs* and are therefore called upon to serve up the big feast meals.

Today discussing *palov* with peasants really brings out interesting political and economic issues, to say nothing of those concerned with social relations. *Vodka* and *shampanskoe* have accompanied the big *palov* parties for the postwar generations, but today since the practical collapse of the post-Soviet economy for many peasants, lots of people complain bitterly about what they perceived they've lost since the Soviet disintegration. At weddings, for example, people often have to ask neighbors and relatives to make contributions in ways that are sometimes embarrassing for the hosts. Even though rural Uzbeks have long engaged in reciprocal relations with neighbors, there are certain contexts for borrowing or lending, and increasing poverty brings out trying circumstances in the case of weddings because the host family should be able to handle the basic expenses to host the 200-300 people who turn out for the event.

Because I think one can make a case that *palov*, and all of its associations with rural celebrations and its role as defining a well-nourished life, greatly symbolizes or represents the identity of Uzbeks, people's ability to prepare it and eat it as they wish greatly affects their outlook on their political and economic conditions.

Tea Time is All-Day Long

Uzbeks drink green tea much like modern Americans now consume bottled waters—all day long and in copious quantities; they will also tell visitors that they've been drinking green tea for many generations, even though many other rural residents can also remember times when real teas were not commonly available. Instead, during the 1930s through the 1950s, many rural residents recall drinking herbs and teas made from fruit tree leaves and spearmint most of the time.¹² Whereas green tea has long been drunk throughout Central Asia, there have been periods in the recent Soviet past when it was hard to come by; in such times people made herbal teas. Contemporary residents of Tashkent prefer black or Indian teas, and this more than likely reflects European (Russian) influence. Records relating to beverage habits as far back as the mid-18th century show that while tea drinking, especially tea with milk and sugar, commonly occurred its consumption was limited to cities and the homes of the well-to-do (Istoriia Uzbekistan III 1993:331), although not all scholars agree on this point. Shaniyazov, for example, asserts that tea drinking became popular throughout the country by the end of the 19th century (1972:114)

For guests, green tea should be served in a fashion that's at least semi-ceremonial: wives or children bring the tea, and the household head then carefully pours and re-pours the tea from the pot into small round cups until the proper strength is reached as he ensures that few tea leaves make it into the guests cups. He then remains vigilant to the needs of each drinker, carefully pouring tea for all those who request it, dumping out the dregs and leaves of previous cups, and seeing to it that his designated server stands at the ready to bring in more fresh hot tea as soon as thirst demands it. Uzbeks characteristically fill the round cups only half way. Some claim this emphasizes their hospitable nature; to fill it to the brim, or close to the brim, would be symbolizing the hope that the guest will drink it down and be gone. Just a little at a time makes it likely that a guest will keep requesting more. Others, however, say that it really has to do with not burning one's lips or tongue, since the half-way mark gives one more distance and time to suck in or slurp up the tea.

Conclusion

Food and hospitality, cooking by logical extension, are downright inseparable in the

Uzbek village context as rings true in many other parts of the Near East, Middle East, South and Southeast Asia, including countries as far apart as Egypt, Turkey, India, and Malaysia. What links these peoples in addition to peasant farming and pastoralist economies is also the fact of Islam, which also exhibits its skein of pastoral nomadic, oases farming and tribal reciprocity attributes. Are all of these countries and peoples linked meaningfully with regard to a shared cultural history of hospitality and the meal? Perhaps, but sketching out analytical linkages seems a dull exercise to some extent if we fail to examine the very specific ways in which hospitalities reveal close similarities from one culture and geographical area to another¹³, e.g., how do people physically eat, what do they eat, how do they present their foods, how do hosts carry on during the meals, how are guests incorporated into the hosts' cultures through meals, what kinds of drinks and what manners of drinking obtain. Answering such questions forces us to delve into extant literatures on the subjects as well as gets our hosts to explain their reasoning from within the domains of their own culture.

In this essay, I have focused on just a very few aspects of the traditional foods and eating arrangements that obtain in the host-guest relations among rural Uzbeks of the FV. By discussing aspects such as expectations of hosts and invitees, how food is presented, and the central place of bread, pilaf, and tea in the diet, I pointed out that the 20th century significantly altered the diet, and that the difficulties of Soviet and post-Soviet life are reflected in how people eat and also in how they talk about food, such that food talk connects to much larger issues, including politics and village social relations. I have provided some evidence to show that while there are substantial parallels among the host-guest relationship and feasting practices going back at least 600 years in Uzbekistan, the foods and materials used to eat are not quite so traditional as one might think, revealing several interesting discontinuities along with the continuities of table.

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¹ Neophytes to the culture often overeat because they think it pleases the host and also because they think no other choice is left them. Talking to other expatriates living in Uzbekistan, I have heard a number of tabloid-style headline remarks that betray the feelings of non-locals toward this kind of commensal practice, including “culinary terrorism,” “force feasting,” “torture the guest,” and “Hellspitality.”

² Hospitality in the Uzbek context is not a matter of selfless giving, but one of balanced reciprocity, which most guests only figure out much later, or sometimes even during the course of a meal. Unfortunately, this is not the place to discuss such an interesting and crucial part of the host-guest relationship. I advise readers to see my earlier work on this subject (Zanca 1999).

³ Many of these products, especially potatoes and sugar beets, were actually introduced at the beginning of the 20th century, but were not widely adopted on farms throughout the republic's territory

until after collectivization (Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR (Tom I Kniga Vtoraia) 1956:214).

⁴ Moreover, in addition to the importance of having guests, the Uzbek language is rich in proverbs that remind people about how to take care of guests. And no example could better support and illustrate this point than the following: *Mehmon—otangdan ulugh*/A guest (is reckoned) greater than one's father. For other admonitions about treating guests well, see *Ozbek Khalq Maqollari* (Uzbek Folk Proverbs) 1981:191-194.

⁵ To this day the difference between granulated, lumped (*qand*) or crystalline blocks of colored sugar (*navot*) mark boundaries of relative wealth and poverty. The pieces of lumped beet sugar known as *qand* are what the poor people can usually afford; granulated white sugar is a mark of refinement, and the *navot* often appears during holidays. Most of the sugar is processed from sugar beets, a food crop of 19th century Russian colonization

⁶ Historically, the Ferghana valley has been populated by agrarian and pastoral nomadic groups alike with little regard to clearly marked ethnic distinctions. Today the territory of the valley is shared by the nation states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, with most of its area lies in Uzbekistan, shared by the provinces of Andijon, Farghona, Namangon, and Qoqon; contemporary inhabitants of the FV are perhaps too conscious of their ethnicities.

⁷ The communalism of Uzbek food culture stems in no small part from its large households. Although the trend in rural areas since WWII has been toward greater two-generational or nuclear family households (parents living with unmarried children), the orientation of village settlement patterns remains virilocal, and nearly half of all rural

households still keep to extended family living arrangements. At the time of the penultimate Soviet census, more than half of the rural population lived in households of six or more people. (Savurov and Tashbaeva 1989:64)

⁸ Of course, I must point out that Uzbeks have produced copperware, leadware, ironware, silverware, and all kinds of artistic ceramic for centuries, especially in the great urban centers of Bukhara, Samarqand, and Tashkent, but these were not widely spread throughout the countryside, to say nothing of the impoverished households of peasants. The book *Kustanrnye promysly b bytu narodov Uzbekistana XIX-XX vv* (1986) is an excellent introduction to Uzbek artisanry and craftsmanship, especially with regard to kitchen implements since before the beginning of Russian colonialism (1860s).

⁹ *Shakarob*, also known as *achiq-chuchuk* in Tashkent, literally means “sugary” or “sweet water,” which is an odd name for a salad of tomatoes, onions, occasional Thai peppers, salt, perhaps some vinegar, and a splash of water.

¹⁰ *Osh* is a term familiar to Persian speakers, since it means soup in Persian. How it came to be associated with pilafs, no matter how oleaginous, is anybody's surmise. Be that as it may, it's curious that among our earliest Western accounts of the use of this word, *osh*, in Central Asia Gonzalez de Clavijo discusses it as a hot yogurt-like concoction prepared from curds, cold water, boiling water and thin, crisp flat cakes (1928:192) My surmise is that the term *osh* has come to mean pilaf, or hot stews more generally, only recently because there are still popular dishes, such as *goja osh* (a soupy sorghum or wheat dish) that are mainly watery and served hot.

¹¹ Bell and Valentine rightly problematize the notion of community

(1997:93-117). I use it here not to mean a whole town or village, but perhaps as a micro-community that represents a part of the village, people connected to one another through marriages, blood, friendships, work, school, etc., and who see and interact with one another on some sort of friendly level.

¹² Paradoxically, during the 1930s green tea and black tea began to become much desired throughout rural Central Asia. The economic calamities of those years, however, kept teas in short supply. Vasil'eva and Karmysheva point out that what rural Uzbeks commonly drank up until the 1930s were water, buttermilk, and yogurt with water, herbs, and salt, also known as *airan* to those familiar with Turkey, or *dokh* to those familiar with Iran (1969:144).

¹³ I say a “dull exercise” because as scholars and travelers we find ourselves saying, “Oh, is that the way they do it in Yemen (for example), that’s just like Turkey, except in Turkey people....” And then we all walk away from these encounters knowing, or thinking that we know, that these peoples share a culinary past through direct contact or diffusion or independent invention, but we’re left simply marveling at the similarities with no ability to explain them meaningfully.