

---

# *Journal of Religious Culture*

## *Journal für Religionskultur*

Ed. by / Hrsg. von Edmund Weber  
in Association with / in Zusammenarbeit mit Matthias Benad  
Institute for Irenics / Institut für Wissenschaftliche Irenik  
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

ISSN 1434-5935- © E.Weber – E-mail: irenik@em.uni-frankfurt.de

---

No. 77 (2005)

The Official Interpretation of Islam under the Soviet Regime  
A Base for Understanding of Contemporary Central Asian Islam

By

Seyfettin Erşahin\*

*Abstract*

Islam, the Muslim traditions and the ulama in Central Asian societies are becoming increasingly important for assessing the situation in and around the region. To understand of the post Soviet Muslim republics it is necessary to know the Islamic heritage of the Soviet Union, i.e. the Islamic understanding and interpretation of Soviet official ulama which still influence the mind of the people and the contemporary Central Asian ulama. The official ulama were endeavouring to reconcile Islam with science and progress and to guarantee its survival in a modern environment, they served by an extremely energetic effort to preserve Islam at least in purity and integrity as religion and national sentiment and to prevent it from relapsing into deprivation and ignorance. The most important official Muslim religious figure, the Mufti of Tashkent Z. Babakhan interpreted Islam as a bulwark of progress, disseminator of knowledge, the religion of peace and friendship; portrayed the Prophet Muhammad as a “democrat, reformer and revolutionary, even a socialist”; reconciliation with socialism and communism.

Key words: Soviet Islam, Soviet Ulama, Central Asia.

To understand of the post Soviet Muslim republics it is necessary to know the Islamic heritage of the Soviet Union, i.e. the Islamic understanding and interpretation of Soviet official ulama / clergy which still dominate and influence the mind of the people and the contemporary Central Asian ulama.

Islam, the Muslim traditions and the ulama in Central Asian societies are becoming increasingly important for assessing the situation in and around the region. In Central Asia Islam has always been one of the dominant factors of the religious and cultural identity, regulating internal life and to some extent external orientations of the region, even under the Soviet Government. This is true of the towns, where the quarter (the mahallah) remained the smallest unofficial social unit in which traditional relationships between people were made sacred by Islam, where people always performed the main religious observances, and where the ulama enjoyed prestige and were influential by virtue of their knowledge. It is also true of the coun-

tryside, which has preserved the rules of communal relations that became adapted to the collective-farm system.

More correctly formulated, Islam is one impact on social and political life an instrument by the ruling elite as well as by the opposition; and even in foreign policy particularly to strengthen the authority of Central Asian states in the Muslim world. This circumstance should be neither ignored nor considered an absolute, especially in making political decisions. The turning to Islam in the region has a complex and controversial character. On the one hand, all the Central Asian states are secular in accordance with their constitutions, religion is separated from politics. On the other hand, practically any country of the region has avoided registering a special attitude to Islam on the part of the official authorities, including the top-level figures of the states.

### *The Official Interpreters of Islam in the Soviet Union: the Ulama*

There is no clergy in Islam in Western sense since based on the belief that no intermediary between the believer and Allah. But in the course history to comment on Islamic matters and to lead the believers in collective prayers religious leadership emerged. As in every Muslim society in the Soviet Union the ulama was considered into two categories: the official ulama and the unofficial ulama. In this article we dealt with the first one. The ulama of the region has been playing very considerable role in the social, political, economic and cultural life for a long time.

At the very beginning of the Bolshevik Revolution the Tatar Muslim nationalist communist Sultan Galiev (1880-1939?), seeing an obstacle to antireligious propaganda pointed out the power and role of the ulama among the Russian Muslims stating that: "... the situation of the Muslim clergy among Russia is that whereas among Russians we find on parish for every 10.000 to 12.000 inhabitants, among Muslims there is one mosque for every 700 to 1.000 souls and each mosque is served by at least three members of the clergy: the *mullah*, his assistant, and the *muezzin*. The strength of the Muslim clergy can also be explained by reason of its social and political position among the Muslim population. The mullah is at the same time priest (in charge of religious rites), teacher (each mullah has a religious school connected to his mosque: *mektep* or *medreseh*), administrator (in charge of regulating estates, registering civil acts of stage), judge (competent in affairs of marriage, divorce, and succession), and at times even a doctor of medicine. Furthermore, the Muslim clergy are elected and this places them in more favourable and solid position than, for example, the Russian clergy. The Russian priest, appointed by the superior authority, certainly has a lesser authority over his flock than does the Tatar or the Uzbek ulama in his *mahalla*. The latter consider themselves just the same to be "servants of the people" and lend an attentive ear to their wishes. They are more democratic and closer to the people, and exercise a greater influence on them than does the village priest over Russian *muzhik*."<sup>1</sup>

From the right beginning of the Umayyad period to now there have been two kinds of the ulama: the official ulama (*ulema-i resmi*) and the non-official ulama (*ulema-i gayr-i resmi*). The first one has always been on the side of authority because of that they depend on the official salary of income to some extent economically. This is why, it has been said that they try to legitimize the policy of the authority to persuade the mass. For doing that they found evidence from the Koran in which "Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter" (Koran, II/217). Therefore they always want the peace or stability in the state as well as in the society. The ulama have responded in diverse ways to the ideological and political developments partly because in each region they related to localized political and historical situation. The orientation of the ulama derived in part from their position vis-à-vis the political structure. On the other hand, that position depended to a degree on the government's relative strength.

Under the Soviet regime thorough co-operating apparently willingly, with the authorities the ulama were expected: 1. to demonstrate to the outside world the Soviet Union as a show-case of communist economic achievements that more successful and rewarding than Western capitalism; 2. to testify to the freedom, welfare and general prosperity of Islam in the USSR; 3. to demonstrate that the USSR is the best friend and partner of the Muslim world. At first sight it seems a paradox that the Soviet official ulama served the atheist state, but they had had to adopt themselves to the new situation.

The Central Asian and Transcaucasian pre-revolutionary hereditary ulama survived until the Second World War. Especially after 1941 when the German armies started to invade Russia, the Soviet Government followed a relatively soft policy towards all religion. In this respect, assessing that Islam is no longer a direct threat to the Soviet Government, on the contrary helping factor for the interest of the country and its people decided to show some 'leniency' with regard to religious figures. Moreover, for dividing Islam geographically, creating centralized 'religious administrations', controlling the ulama, reinforcing the liberal moderate and loyal establishment and checking the expansion of the radical-conservative and anti-Soviet Islamic movements Stalin set up four Muslim religious boards (Dini İdare / Müftiyat / Dukhovniye Upravlenia) in 1942 for Central Asian, Transcaucasians, Northern Caucasian and Russian Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

The Muslim Religious Boards guided theoretically by the Koran, the Hadith and the maslahat / the interests of the believers to resolve questions of religious dogma. The decision / fatwa of a religious board on any religious question were brought to the knowledge of all Muslims over signature of the mufti of the Religious Board.<sup>3</sup>

After the Second World War the most important Islamic establishment in the USSR was the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan where 75 per cent of the Soviet Muslim lived. The Soviet Government depended on the Mufti of Tashkent for propagation of its views among the Sunni Muslims of the Islamic World (rarely on the shaikhu'l-Islam of Baku among the Shiite Muslims). It was the only one to have a publication facility, and the only two official medreses in the USSR. The Board's inconsistent and conformist position has been criticized by unofficial even official spiritual leaders.<sup>4</sup> The official ulama never protested against anti-religious pressure and fulfilled the task which it is entrusted.

The Soviet ulama's composition of was heterogeneous. With a few old survivors of Stalin's repression, trained in the pre-1928 Turkistani or Tatar medreses, the young ulama graduated of the two Central Asian medreses Mir Arab of Bukhara and Imam Bukhari of Tashkent, who in some cases had completed their education abroad, in Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Yemen or Libya.<sup>5</sup> The last group may be subdivided into two categories: sons of ulama for whom clerical careers were hereditary especially in Central Asia and Caucasus and former Soviet intellectuals who, before joining the Muslim establishment, finished their studies in regular Soviet schools an even in universities.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Atheistic Assaults on Islam and Muslims in the USSR*

The lands of the Soviet Muslims i.e., Central Asians and Caucasians was a "frontier world" located along the extreme northern and north-eastern border of the World of Islam (*Daru'l-Islam*), facing the World of War (*Daru'l-Harb*). This inhospitable geography contrived to give the Soviet Muslims a unique character. The Soviet Muslims, in their history have been faced the challenger of the "infidels", the Khazars, the Qara-Khitays, the Mongols, the Kalmuks, and Christian and Marxist Russians, by the methods they employed: attempted genocide thorough wholesale massacres, massive or selective transfer of population, religious proselytism, biological or cultural assimilation and so on. The response and reaction of the Muslims to these challengers took many different forms such as 1. efforts to preserve the ter-

ritory and the culture by armed resistance and uprising, especially by Sufi brotherhoods under the leadership of feudal lords; 2. defence of Islam thorough conservative or modernist movements against encroachment by rival ideologies, whether Buddhist, Christian or Marxist; 3. co-operation with infidels in the hope of eventually regaining lost power.<sup>7</sup> The Soviet official ulama were in the third category, moderate and mainly followed the footsteps of the pre-revolutionary Tatar jadidism<sup>8</sup>.

The ulama faced an unprecedented atheistic challenge and assault in the Soviet period. At the beginning the Marxist Soviet regime which claimed representative of scientific truth and future believed that the destruction of the old order would be an easy process, since Islam, like all other religions, was but a superstition from the past. It launched the massive assault against Islam around 1928. Its avowed goal was the destruction of Islam in order to bring about equality between Russians and Muslims, when would only be contemplated once all Soviet citizens were free from psychological ties of the past, in particular from the false ideologies propagated by the exploiting classes. The Bolsheviks believed that the staunch adherence of Muslims to the juridical and moral code of Islam erected psychological barriers between them and the non-Muslims.

The themes of anti-Islamic propaganda have fixed from the very beginning. Marxist arguments directed against all religion. The atheists denounced categorically religion is the “opium of toiling masses, distracting them from the social struggle against the exploiting parasites”; “it has played -and still playing- a reactionary role, being an instrument for spiritual oppression of workers”; “it inculcates in man the spirit of resignation and humility, thus distracting him from revolutionary activity”; “it is a fanciful, fallacious and anti-scientific creed, projecting the dream of Paradise into an imaginary other world”; and finally, the main argument used against all religions, “as a spiritual creed, is a hangover from the pre-socialist past, it is a mere survival doomed to disappear. It has no place in Marxist socialist world, which is building paradise on this earth... Marxism-Leninism and religious ideology are therefore incompatible and irreconcilable... and the Communist Party cannot remain indifferent or natural towards religion... it must fight it and defeat it.” The atheists used special arguments against Islam. According to atheistic propaganda, far from being the national or native religion of the Soviet Muslims, Islam is a foreign religion, brought to Central Asia and Caucasus by alien invaders i.e., Arabs, Persians and Ottoman Turks. Islam is claimed as the most conservative, even reactionary, and the least “social”: it sanctifies in its followers fanaticism, intolerance and xenophobia; it sets “Believers” against “Infidels” and is therefore an obstacle to friendship between different peoples of the Soviet Union. Islamic rites and customs, such as circumcision and fasting were criticised as primitive, barbarian and unhealthy, Islamic morals are thought to be opposed to Communist morals, with Islamic art and literature ossified and unable to evolve or progress. In summary, Islam belongs to the past, not even to the capitalist stage of evolution, but to the feudal era. As such, it has no place in society of “advanced socialism”.<sup>9</sup>

#### *The Official Islamic Interpretation of the Soviet Ulama*

With the main concern of preserving Islam under “infidel (kafir / dinsiz / bi-din) rule”, the Soviet ulama exhibited a high liberal even progressive intellectuality. They engaged in cautious but demonstrably effective propaganda in support of Islam, since felt responsibility for a religious intellectual revival among the Soviet Muslims. One of the most important themes advanced by the official ulama was that Islam is the most liberal, humanist and advanced of all religions, that it was endowed with the highest and most progressive culture, is the best fitted to prepare the faithful for construction of real socialism and that Muslims are the best - even the only people capable of building socialism. Moreover Islam is one of the greatest doc-

trines in the history of humanity. Its basis is the Koran which its principles and letters remain invariable and valid in the course of the centuries, guide for all generations of believers. This is because Islam is always contemporaneous. By its teachings it can be found the correct solution to all vital problems of life and answers to the most complex and confused questions. Lastly, there is no contradiction whatsoever between Marxism and Islam, because socialism in its ideal form is but a fulfilment of Islamic promises.

To search official interpretation of Islam in the USSR we have four fundamental sources. They are 1. the collection of the official *fatwas* mainly comes from the Tashkent Muftiyat; 2. the official periodical of the Tashkent Muftiyat *Muslims of Soviet East*;<sup>10</sup> 3. the book of the Grand Mufti of Tashkent Ziyauddin Babakhan<sup>11</sup> *Islam and Muslims in the Land of Soviets*;<sup>12</sup> 4. and *some works* of the Soviet atheists.<sup>13</sup> For analysing the official interpretation of the Soviet ulama we mainly sought after the views and comments of the Mufti since summarises the official approaches.

The Mufti aimed three audiences: to persuade outside world that there was freedom, progress and prosperity for Muslims in the USSR, to response atheistic claims and to teach Islam to the Soviet Muslims.

First of all, Babakhan looks Islam and its history, especially the Central Asian one as a source of pride, success and confidence for all Muslims even all humanity. He thinks and believes that hence Islam not only a religion and wisdom, at the same time it is a way of life, suitable for people of all ages, nations and races, and the most widely differing social groups.<sup>14</sup>

On the contrary to the atheistic claims, Babakhan underlines that in the past ulama has achieved understanding of Islam and developed Islamic sciences such as Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), theology (kalam), commentary (tafsir), sayings of the Prophet (hadith), history (tarih) etc. To revitalise Islam he says that "the present dynamic epoch demands us that we should synthesise all the best that our predecessors achieved and, relaying on ideas of the Holy Koran and the Sunna, we should lead the faithful along the path of Truth thorough intricate labyrinth of events in the age of the splitting of the atom and the conquest of Space... As the eminent theologian Mohammad Abduh said in his day, the meaning of the Holy Koran is to be commented in accordance with the requirements of the times."<sup>15</sup>

He never mentions the Sufi tradition of the Central Asia and Caucasus since in the atheistic literature Sufism severely criticized and the Soviet authorities forced the ulama to condemn such activities. In this connection the Religious boards opened a front to battle the Sufi circles. At the end of the 1950s Babakhan issued fatwas on Sufism.<sup>16</sup>

The Mufti referred in his book 30 sources from the East and West. He applied al-Bukhari's al-Sahih, al-Mufrad, al-Thulathiyat, al-Ghazali's al-Ihya, al-Maghinani's al-Hidaya, al-Kawakibi's at-Tabaiu'l-Istibdat, Amin al-Xoli's al-Alaqa beyne'l-Nil wa'l-Wolga, Yakut al-Hamawi's al-Mujam, the Russian orientalist E. A. Belyayev's Proxiojenie Islama, I. Y. Krachkovski's Izbirannie Trudi, Y. Kuznetsov's Duruziya na piyati continentax, V. A. Kreyedov's Religia i zakon, documents of Muslim congress in the USSR and the Muslim World, weekly published in Karachi. Among them there are no Turk and Turkish one.

### *The Main Themes of the Official Interpretation*

#### *1. The Relationship between the Soviet State and Islam*

It seems that the Mufti welcomes the policy of the Soviets, of Lenin on religion and Muslims since the Tsarist regime as an official policy humiliated Islam, Muslims and the ulama before Christianity. It is clear that every restriction under the tsar on all religions except the state / Orthodox religion was an infringement of the interests and insult to the dignity of many

nationalities. According to the Mufti, in that time Islam was the religion of oppressed peoples, the Muslims of Russian Empire suffered not only social but also national oppression. Their religion and customs were trampled on and they themselves were victims of discrimination in various fields of life, their lands were turned into colonies. However, within a few years after the Bolshevik Revolution, some of the ulama, especially the official ones, had begun to urge acceptance of the new regime. For example, the Muslim Religious Board of Ufa pronounced a fatwa declaring that “By the great grace of Allah, the Revolution which has taken in Russia has destroyed a brutal, despotic autocracy which persecuted the Religion of Islam”.<sup>17</sup> Also the Mufti of *Mahkeme-i Şer’iye* (the Highest Muslim Religious Board of Turkistan in Tashkent) Zahiruddin Allam, declared a supporting fatwa in 1925.<sup>18</sup>

From the point of view of Babakhan, the Soviets started to get away such policies and to make people equal before the law, because they were in need of the Muslim support to get the power and to achieve the revolution. The Soviets saw Muslims their allies in fighting imperialism and colonialism for the country’s socialist development. Hence it is not surprising that as early as November 20, 1917, less than a month after the October Socialist Revolution, Lenin, published a special appeal “To All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East”. Unconditionally taking the side of Muslims working people, “whose mosques and prayer-houses were destroyed, their beliefs, and customs trampled underfoot” by the previous regime, the Soviet government solemnly declared “Henceforth your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions were declared free and inviolable. Arrange your national life freely and without hindrance. You have a right to do that.”<sup>19</sup>

The Soviet Government issued its first decree on religious affairs called “On the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church” dated January 23, 1918, quarantined all citizens of Soviet Russia complete freedom of conscience and declared all religious belief, including Islam is as “a matter of the individual conscience.”<sup>20</sup> Babakhan cheers up this secularist historic decree. With regards to the separation between religion and state the Mufti considers that the decree advanced the democratic concept of equality of all religion before the law. All religious associations were obliged to submit to the general principles on private associations and unions. The Orthodox Church ceased to enjoy any state privileges and to receive any financial aid from the state. The equality of religions proclaimed by the decree was deeply humane and answered above all the aspirations of the peoples of the Soviet East, the Muslims. By proclaiming equality of religions the decree forbade the promulgation of any local laws and decisions which would restrain or restrict equal exercise of freedom of conscience by all citizens.<sup>21</sup>

According to the Mufti, the Soviet state kept on to support the Muslims with many other acts. In January 1918, the Commissariat for Muslim Affairs was instituted in order to guarantee the equality of Islam. In addition to this, the Bolsheviks presented one of the holiest treasures of the Muslims, the Caliph Othman Koran.<sup>22</sup> On the “defender of the rights of oppressed peoples”, Lenin’s instructions, simultaneously with the Othman Koran, the Muslim ancient architectural monument of the Kazan, the minaret of Suyumbike and well-known Karavan-Sarai mosque in the Ufa were also placed at the disposal of the Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

The Mufti reminds that the basic principles of Soviet legislation on religious cults are reflected in Article 52 of the new constitution of the USSR.<sup>24</sup> In the Soviet Union, manifestations of religious intolerance or incitement to hostility towards believers of any religious affiliation or towards unbelievers are regarded as crimes. The Soviet state vigilantly guards the rights of believers. It is established strict disciplinary and legal responsibility of persons violating their legitimate rights. The law obliges officials of state bodies to consider in good time any complaint or statement by believers and categorically forbids any restriction of citizens’ rights because of their attitude to religion. It is regarded as criminal offence for any official to

refuse to accept a person for work or in any educational establishment or to dismiss a person from work or from an educational establishment because of his or her religious views.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the Soviet official ulama supported the new constitution of the Soviet State. Over the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soviet regime in 1977, The Soviet Government adopted a new constitution. In the discussion and propaganda process the Muslim discussed the draft constitution in mosques to make specific suggestions to improve it. Both high-ranking ulama and believers hailed the draft constitution and made their contribution to its countrywide discussion.<sup>26</sup> For example, Haji Atajan Abdullaev, the imam-khatib of the Talhatan Baba Mosque of Turkmenistan said about the draft: “Having read the draft constitution carefully, we Muslims saw that its purpose and meaning is to meet the growing materials and cultural needs of the people, to give every Soviet citizen a greater part in running the country, to safe guard the freedom and equality of all the people of our country an to strengthen friendship and brotherly cooperation among them. Very many articles of the draft constitution are the consonant with the doctrine of the Holy Koran and pronouncements of our Prophet Muhammad. We endorse the draft constitution totally and without reservation because it expresses the will and cherished aspirations of all the peoples of our country including the Turkmenian people.” The Mufti of Makhachkala also sent a message approving the new constitution.<sup>27</sup>

The Mufti thinks that the main yardstick of a person’s position in society is his or her work for the good of the people. By guarantying the fundamental human rights, since in the early years of Soviet power the Muslim regions were considerably advance in their socio-economic life and general development behind a number of other regions of the country, special favourable conditions were provided for their representatives for many years as regards admission to educational establishment and appointment to leading post. Hence it is not surprising that the peoples of the Soviet East ascended the ladder of education, then for instance, Russians, and in short time, with the help of other nationalities in the country, attained the summits of human civilisation.<sup>28</sup>

When speaking of the genuine equality of Muslims with other citizens of the country Babkhan cites some examples which confirm every day and every hour that the Muslims make extensive use of their rights. From his point of view neither they nor their children are subjected to discrimination. The country’s schools and higher educational establishments are always open to them and they always have unlimited opportunity for putting their abilities into practice, for filling any appointments in state apparatus, industry, agriculture or in various institutions and organisations at widely differing levels. It is shown that prominent statement, public figures and major specialists in various branches of economy and culture have come from among Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmens, and other peoples of the Soviet East. They show skill in economic and political management of their sovereign republics and take an active part in solving all-Union or even world problems in the highest organs of the state power and apparatus.<sup>29</sup>

## *2. Islam and Socialism: as close friends*

The Mufti starts the topic with the question “Why did the Muslims in the Soviet Union accept the principles of socialism so quickly? Why have many Muslim countries of Asia and Africa, on achieving political independence, chosen the path of socialist orientation?”

According to the Mufti, the answer these questions correctly it must be compared the basic social and moral principles of Islam and of scientific socialism. Such a comparison will convince us that these principles have much in common, much that is mutually acceptable.<sup>30</sup>

For supporting his ideas the Mufti tries to find out some similarities between Islam and socialism. To him, Islam teaches that since people depend on one another there are close social links in society. The work of each man is a contribution to the good of society. Hence it is the

duty of every citizen to work, aiming at the highest possible quality. The Prophet Muhammad says in this connection: “The best of men is he who is of the greatest use to people.” It is society’s duty to provide every member with the possibility to get work, and also to give him fair payment. The only exceptions are those who are unable to work, but must receive the means of subsistence from society such as the zakat. Like Islamic environment, every citizen of the Soviet Union, irrespective of colour of skin, nationality, religious affiliation or origin, feels that he is an integral part of society as a whole, a person equal in rights and free, whose labour merges with the efforts of the entire people to create well-being for all and the conditions for a happy life of all society. Moreover, all labour is honoured and respected. Every person is guaranteed a real right to work and all those who are unable to work receive a pension from the state.<sup>31</sup>

With the consideration that the practise of socialist society as regards the universal duty to work those not actually differ from the humane principles of Islam the Mufti says that “it is therefore scarcely any wonder that the Muslims of the Soviet Union, observing the teaching the Prophet Muhammad, endeavour to contribute as much as possible to the prosperity of their Motherland, and by their highly productive labour promote the rising of the entire people’s well-being.”<sup>32</sup>

Babakhan assumes that one of the most important principles of socialism is the striving to support the social activity of the individual. Socialism commands that it is impossible to build a prosperous society and ensure a happy life for all people unless everyman is active in work and in the socio-political field. This theory and practice is very close to Islam. It prescribes every believer to live a full and happy life, to make the interest of society his own. The Holy Koran also says: “O you believe! Give of the good things which ye have (honourably) earned and of the fruits of the earth which We have produced for you, and do not even aim at getting anything which is bad, in order that out of it ye may give away something, when you yourself would not receive it.” (Koran II/ 267) “He who devotedly serves humanity and his country will be more honoured and respected of God” is one of the most important ideas of Islam. In the socialist teaching, as in Islam, the society has priority over the individual. Islam teaches that happiness of every individual is achieved through happiness of society as a whole by serving society. Allah himself predetermined solidarity of people, their cooperation in good deeds. The individual, counter poses himself to society; tries to get advantages for him can not hope to achieve happiness either on earth or in life hereafter. The Holy Koran resolutely censures inveterate individualists who care only for their own welfare.<sup>33</sup>

Babakhan comes one of the decisive issues of the Soviet regime, *ownership* (al-temellük). To him a thorough analysis of the principal sources of Islam, in the first place of the Koran and the Sunna, shows that in Islam there are two forms of ownership: *private* (al-temelluku’l-hâs / al-shahsiyya) and *social* (al-temelluku’l-âm).<sup>34</sup> The private ownership recognized by Islam is an individual’s personal work. Islam forbids becoming rich on another person’s work. For example, the *sharia* strictly prescribes the rule that the land belongs to those who till it. The Prophet for preserving the interests of the working people and supporting the rational use of natural resources says that “He who tills an empty field thereby acquires ownership of it.” Following the same rule Islam strictly forbids usury, monopolising of goods and giving short weight or measure since not to allow some people to get rich at the expense of others, to educate all members of society in the spirit of honesty and justice, to respect for work and working man. Allah says in the Holy Koran “Woe to those that deal in fraud, those who, when they have receive by measures form men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due.” (Koran LXXXIII/1-3)<sup>35</sup>

The social ownership envisaged by Islam is social property. The purpose and role the social ownership in society are to serve all the people as a single collective, its wellbeing and prosperity. Social ownership should include all means in the world. The Prophet Muhammad



proclaimed the following principle: “There things are common to all: water, grass and fire.” At that time, when animal husbandry was the leading branch of economy, which fed, clothed and shod the members of society, when water was valued higher than diamonds, for without it life was impossible for man or beast, these three things were, indeed, the main items ensuring society’s very existence.<sup>36</sup> Allah records this conception in the Holy Koran: “O you people! Adhore your Guardina-Lord, Who created you, and those who came before you, that ye may have to chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens for canopy; and sent down rain form the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance...” (Koran II/21-22). Such authoritative interpreters commenting on this ayah, stress that Allah here reminds people of the tree basic divine blessing created for man’s benefit and necessary to ensure his normal subsistence. These basic blessings are land, air and water, which may not belong to any single person but must be the property of humanity as a whole.<sup>37</sup>

The Mufti supposes that in the Muslim countries as time went on, by developing the productive forces of society, a number objects such as big factories, huge electric power-stations, the land and the irrigation system, became the basis of economy and came to be included among the chief means. Therefore, some of the biggest ulama came to the opinion that, society had the natural an inalienable right of ownership of these objects too. The correctness of this view is confirmed not only by the enormous role of these objects in the life of society, but also by the fact that, as a rule, they are produced by efforts of the whole society. And society can nationalise such objects, guided by the general Islamic principle that society has full an unlimited right to nationalise any object if such a measure protects the interests of society, prevents damage to them, or leads to the successful solution of the problems facing society. Many socio-economic transformations carried out in a number of Muslim states have been effected within the framework of Islamic socialism and are in no way contrary to the prescriptions of the Koran and the Sunna.<sup>38</sup>

Babakhan, after these assumptions comes to the conclusion that the prominent Muslim figures in Central Asia as their colleagues abroad approved the confiscation of the land of the big landowners by the Soviet Government in the interest of the working people and peasants. For example, a fatwa issued by the *Mahkama-i Shar’iyya* of Turkistan in 1927 stating: “It is illegitimate and reprehensible for a person to get harvest from the land and make use of it, while being not engaged in agriculture but renting the land out to others for sowing... The government has the right to take away the surplus land from the big landowners and to give it to the peasants who need land and are in a position to cultivate it by their own efforts.”<sup>39</sup>

The Mufti puts the Islamic ideas and efforts behind the Soviet achievements stating that “history confirmed the reasonableness, humanity and justice of this statement. If today the Soviet Union is a world power, the bulwark of the world peace and social progress, if the peoples of our country are guaranteed unprecedented economic and cultural development and high growth rates of material well-being, if our country can render great assistance to developing countries in creating a modern economy, this has become possible to a decisive degree owing to the confiscation of the land, works and factories from the big proprietors and their transformation into the property of society, that is, of the whole people.”<sup>40</sup>

To justify the Soviet regime Babakhan refers Egyptian Muslim thinker Kawakibi. According to the Mufti, Kawakibi, by explaining the nature of the power and government, in his book *The Nature of Despotism (at-Tabaiu’l-İstibdat)* described the ideal society basing the fundamental principles of the Koran and the Sunna. Kawakibi includes the following among the most important functions of the state: satisfaction of people’s spiritual and physical requirements; respect for the opinions of every member of society; guarantee of equality, justice, safety of property and honour safeguarded by law. Babakhan believes that Kawakibi’s ideal society is not only implemented in the USSR, but much more thoroughly put into prac-

tice. In the Soviet Union it has been accomplished the comprehensive development of the economy and culture, the provision of the universal primary education, the guarantee of equality and justice for all citizens, the formation of the leading bodies of the USSR, which represent all the nations and classes in miniature, equal distribution of material and cultural values between the classes, nations and various religious groups. In other words, many of the lofty and highly humane principles of Islam have been realised in Soviet socialist society.<sup>41</sup>

The Mufti mentions so-called supports of the Soviet regime, especially of Lenin in cultural and economic fields. He never touches the Muslim uprisings against the Soviet hegemony during the civil war. On the contrary he thinks that Lenin liberated the oppressed Muslim peoples of the East from the hands of the imperialist powers. He called this relationship “friendship and cooperation” To him “A prominent role in creating the inviolable friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union was played by this great friend of the peoples of the East – Vladimir Ilych Lenin”<sup>42</sup>

### *3. The Islamic Moral: as a base for peace, coexistence and cooperation in the Soviet Union*

Babakhan interprets Islamic moral as a base for coexistence and cooperation, of course to make easy to life in the Soviet Union with different nationalities. He says that Muslims are all proud that as early as 1400 years ago Islam resolutely and clearly condemned all race discrimination. Islam thus manifests one of its most remarkable features as a universal, world religion equally close and just all people.<sup>43</sup> To him, Islamic moral is exceptionally humane and eternally contemporaneous. The combination of moral and legal standards in it does not distort its humane and progressive nature. Islam teaches believers love and mercy for all people whatever their race, nationality, religious belief, and social origin. The cornerstone of Islamic moral teaching is the idea that man is born to be happy. The Creator Allah loves him, does not discriminate between people according to their living standards, the colour of skin, or nationality.<sup>44</sup>

He also explains the attitude of Islamic moral to work and working people. The solicitude and respect for working people promotes the ennoblement of morals and leads to the development in the young generation of that spirit of industry and humanism which is so necessary for any country wishing to achieve the high ideals of equality, justice and prosperity. The Mufti interprets Islam as a religion of working people, not of exploiters.

The mufti describes the teachings of Islam on youth in accordance with socialist ideals. He thinks that Islam pays exceptionally great attention to the education of youth. The Holy Koran and the Sunna lay dawn that high moral qualities, respect for their elders, desire to work for the good of society should be cultivated in the younger generation. This is also spirit in which socialist society educates youth. The efforts of Islamic organisations and of the socialist state in this field, far from being opposed to one another, are to a great extent mutually complementary. Youth in the republics of the Soviet East have genuine Islamic traits of character.

### *4. Islam and Fatherland*

For the Soviet leaders it was so important to get the support and love of all citizens including Muslims on the Soviet motherland. Babakhan comments Islam as an essential source to produce love on the fatherland. He thinks that one of the most important demands which Islam represents to Muslims runs as follows: “Be a devoted son of your native country, serve humanity”. The Mufti believes that among the main moral rules of a Muslim are fulfilling the duty to his / her country. In that sense every Muslims in the USSR strives to fulfil this sacred duty prescribed to him by Islam. Following the example of the Prophet Muhammad who

combined prayer and meditation with active service of his country and humanity as a whole, the Muslims of the Soviet Union combine the service of Allah and the observance of Islamic religious rites with due and conscientious fulfilment of social obligations deriving from the sacred duty of the Muslim to the people of his country and the whole of humanity.<sup>45</sup>

Babakhan repeats that one of the main duties of a person to his country is to work its good. The richer society is the more possibility it has for improving the life of the citizens. Hence the better and more efficiently the Muslims work in social production, the more they promote the growth of their country's might. It is known that ever since its establishment the Soviet socialist state has endeavoured to develop and stimulate the social and political activity of all its citizens, including the Muslims. Any objective observer has no difficulty in perceiving that the Muslims in the Soviet Union take on active part in all spheres of life, seeing this as a guarantee of strengthening their country's might, by perfecting management methods in the various spheres of life, and developing the capabilities deposited in each human being by the Great Creator.<sup>46</sup>

According to the Mufti, at the same time the Soviet Muslims see its defence against enemy attacks as another duty to their Fatherland. By looking thorough history, especially the Second World War, it is seen the heroism displayed by the Muslims in fighting the Nazi Germany. For self-sacrifice and courage in the struggle against the Nazis tens of thousands of Muslims were awarded orders and medals. That was exemplary fulfilment of their duty to their native country and humanity in the best traditions of Islam. Today too, the Muslims of the USSR, having mastered technology and the subtleties of military art, stand with their brothers of other nationalities and religious beliefs firmly on guard over the frontiers of the Fatherland, over world peace.<sup>47</sup>

### *5. The Islamic Dogma, Cult and Socio-Ethical Problems*

As far as the main five pillars of Islam the shahada (profession of the unity of god), the salat (prayer), the zakat (compulsory alms), the savm (fasting) and the hajj (pilgrimage) are concerned the Soviet Muslims faced some serious difficulties.

The Mufti explains the fundamentals of Islam and cult and the requirements of the Islamic morality mainly on the traditional Hanafite trend. To him, the dogma of Islam rests on the six basic convictions: belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His apostles, predestination, the end of this world, resurrection of the dead / the last judgement. He refers to five pillars of Islam.

Of course the prayer is performed in rural even urban areas sometimes secretly, with the help of ulama who tended to minimize this obligation so as to avoid the attacks of the authorities. On the Friday prayer he makes some points. To him in principle all adult male Muslims should be present, but women also have the right to attend the ceremony, though not, of course, with the men, but in closed galleries or a special section of the mosque or in the very last row of the congregation.<sup>48</sup>

It is known that the socialist Soviet rule claimed that there is no poor to beg and no rich to make charity in its regime, everyman is equal and under the welfare state protection. In this ideological circumstance it is difficult to talk about the zakat. However, the Mufti explains the compulsory alms in the traditional line. He believes that Muslims considers such alms as being very beneficial for the salvation of the soul, and often practise it, either distributing it directly to the poor or contributing money, land or other property to mosques, madrasas or charitable institutions.<sup>49</sup>

The hajj, practically forbidden until the Second World War, after that time only some selected pilgrimages allowed going to Mecca. Fasting, because of official obstacles was simplified.

The Mufti mentions the rite circumcision / khitan which the atheists claimed that it is inhuman, unhealthy and barbaric feudal tradition as an Islamic symbol and one of the principal rites.<sup>50</sup> He says “as regard the attitude of Soviet Muslims to this ritual it may be said without exaggeration that they all consider it obligatory for themselves and their children and perform it in due time on boys in exact accordance with the Islamic doctrine”.<sup>51</sup>

The mufti never touches the matter of the relations between Sunnites and Shiites. Although in the rest of the Muslim world some intensive relatively hostile relations has been seen in the Soviet Union it has at least practically disappeared. Even the Azeri Sahiite students were educated in Bukhara Mir Arab Medrese and Tashkent Imam Bukhari Islamic Institute mainly in Sunni doctrine.

#### *6. The Spread of Islam in the Soviet Lands and Its Contribution to the Civilisation*

Some atheists insisted and claimed that Islam spread in Central Asia, Caucasus, the Volga region and the other places by force, i.e. by sword, being subjugated by Muslim armies. This approaches supported by the State and by some learned men.<sup>52</sup> But the Soviet Muslims insisted that their ancestors accepted Islam willingly without any force. In this discussion the Mufti was on the second side.

Babakhan emphasizes that Islam spread over the Earth, in particular on the Soviet Muslim lands with unprecedented speed. The first places in Soviet lands in which Islam began to spread were Azerbaijan and Daghestan by the effort of the second caliph Umar, then penetrated into Mavarau'n-Nahr in the second half of seventh century. Among the fighters of for Islam in the first place there ware the cousin of the Prophet, Qusam b. Abbas, the Prophet's disciples Bureyda b. Husaib and Qays b. Assim who buried in Samarqand and Marw. In the time of Abdulmalik, Qutaiba b. Muslim reached China. At the beginning of the tenth century, the Bulgars of the Volga region embraced Islam.<sup>53</sup> To him, the main reason to spread of Islam among the peoples so rapidly is the enormous attractiveness of it. The Mufti believes that Islam was not contrary to the interests of the peoples. He mentions the testimony of many writers of the middle ages, confirmed by modern scholars such as H. G. Wells and W. Barthold, showed that many peoples of the Caucasus and Dagestan, and Turks peoples embraced Islam in the main of their free will.<sup>54</sup>

The Mufti considers that Islam transformed the lives of the peoples who embraced it and enabled to contribute substantially to development of world civilisation. At the same time the Islamic civilisation was born not only by the Arabs, but all the Muslim peoples. The peoples of Central Asia contributed appreciably to the creation of the single Muslim culture which had an immense influence on world civilisation. Mavarau'n-Nahr was a land which produced brilliant scholars in all fields of science and literature, tafsir, hadith, kalam, fiqh, medicine, astronomy, geology, mathematics, physics, geography, history and linguistic.<sup>55</sup> He was also pride of the Muslim architectures in the USSR as a great legacy.<sup>56</sup>

#### *7. The Reasons for the Decline of the Islamic Civilisation and Its Remedy*

One of the important questions to answer for all the Muslims of the last three century is the decline of the Islamic civilisation. Babakhan makes some comments on the issue. He believes that the basic reason was the attitude of the Muslim political leaders and of the ulama. He thinks that in recent centuries the Muslim leaders ceased to adhere strictly to the teachings of the Holy Koran and the Sunnah. In the course of the centuries works of the great Muslim scientists did not receive due following and that science remained purely as a tradition, existing and for itself alone. The principles of Islam, transformed into a special instrument in the hands of the khans and emirs, were used in false interests. In their errors the rulers surrounded them-

selves with dishonest men, and condemned the best scientists to banishment. Everywhere fictions began to be spread about magic, ideological disagreements were multiplied. The Islamic science itself was reduced to the lowest level of teachings material for linguistics, logic and rhetoric. At the same time most of them confined themselves to spreading racist and dogmatic theories among Muslims.<sup>57</sup>

According to the Mufti, as far as the ulama are concerned a real caste system began to spread among them, even religious appointments almost became hereditary. And it was so easy to see a man who called himself an imam hire somebody for money in one community or another to do his work for him, fulfilling the duties of the imam at prayers. Among the ulama there arose the false ideas that it was inadmissible to translate the verses / ayahs of the Koran into other languages. They declared that “the scientists of the past had prepared everything, and we have nothing to strive for”. Their false ideas led them to the absurd affirmation that there was no need for people to delve into the meaning and content of the Koran and the Hadith, that what was required was blindly faith in them, their mechanical reading and learning by rote. Babakhan considers that it is a false path declaring all religious and secular problems had already been solved by the preceding ulama, advocating preservation the humiliating social orders, and wishing to direct man’s thoughts and inner activity. Being grasping and multiplying their wealth, the ulama not only failed to care for the poor and beggars, as the Holy Koran demands, but were afraid that independent reasoning of believers on the holy texts, searching in them for the answer to problems set by life would lead to the downfall of their own tyrannical rule. As far as Central Asia concerned khans, beys, emirs and sultans of the region neglected the instructions given by eminent ulema of the past on the necessity for people to be guided by the Holy Koran and the Sunna to seek for themselves the right ways of solving the complex problems of earthly existence taking into account to concrete social situations.<sup>58</sup>

As far as its remedy is concerned, Babakhan believes that with the 1917 Russian socialist revolution all religions acquired equal rights before the state and society, and there opened out before the Muslims a great way of rebirth Islam, of active study of the Holy Koran and the Hadith, Soviet Muslims obtained the possibility to cultivate educational establishments in the spirit of love and devotion to the principles of the Holy Koran and the Hadith.<sup>59</sup>

The mufti underlines that life is dynamic and Muslim to be dynamic too. He believes that the time changes human being (*ez-zaman gayyere'l-insan*). He says that there are so many differences between the Muslims live five hundred years ago, or at least century and the Muslims of our time. The Muslims have been changed a lot, and for the better by time, which have enriched and broadened their knowledge. They absorbed the experience and knowledge of previous generations of the Muslims, learned from the useful experience of other peoples. Technological and scientific progress has left its mark also on life, works and interests of Muslims.<sup>60</sup>

The Mufti believes that the Muslim of today has rightly rejected the idea of seclusion and isolation which pseudo-theologians preached, and resolutely followed the instructions of the Holy Koran concerning the necessity for intercourse with people of different nationalities and religious beliefs. The Koran does not condemn promoting a further broadening of contacts and cooperation with all people of good will for the sake of ensuring peace and well-being of nations. Babakhan rejects the idea cultivated by the enemies that Muslim is incapable of contributing to modern science and technology, modern production and culture. The experience of Muslims in the Soviet Union and a number of other countries has convincingly demonstrated that Muslims can and must be in the forefront of scientific and technological, social and economic progress.<sup>61</sup>

### 8. *Islam and Science*

There had been so many allegations in the atheistic literature that Islam is the enemy of science, totally contrary to it, a fanciful, fallacious and anti-scientific creed.<sup>62</sup> To response these claims the Mufti tries to show the friendship and cooperation between Islam and science.

According to the Mufti, on the subject there are numerous ayahs and hadiths. Islam and science were never opposed each other, nor can they be. First, Islam and science, faith and reason have one and the same source, one and the same Creator-Allah. Second, the objects studied by religion and by science also have one and the same source. Islam studies truths given by Allah people to be assimilated; science for its part studies nature made by the Creator reveals the laws of the world deposited in it by Allah. And the ever new achievements of scientific knowledge convince us the infinite wisdom of the Creator and of His Omnipotence. Muslim history knows no inquisition of the middle ages, no mass persecutions of science and scientists. On the contrary, precisely at the Middle Ages, the age of the wide spread and triumph of Islam, falls the period of unprecedented flowering of science and culture in the Muslim World.<sup>63</sup>

Babakhan reminds that the Central Asian Muslims raised some of the greatest scientists, eminent poets, famous theologians and jurists of the Islamic civilization. But as time went on, the majority of the Muslims led a life of poverty and had no rights whatever; the overwhelming majority of the population in these regions was illiterate. The ignorant khans and bays, who had usurped power, did not bother about implementation of the Islamic principles on the necessity for all Muslims- women and men- to acquire knowledge.<sup>64</sup>

The Mufti also mentions the discussion on the palace of science in Islam at the end of the nineteenth century Russia. He refers the study of Ataullah Bayazıdov, akhund and imam of St. Petersburg' grand mosque, Bayazıdov wrote a pamphlet called *İslam i Nauk* (*İslam ve İlim*) on relations between religion / Islam and science, in which he refuted the allegations that Islam is the enemy to science which was mainly said by French thinker E. Renan.<sup>65</sup>

### 9. *The Family*

The atheists with prejudice claimed that it is an undeniable fact that Islam takes a particular harsh line against women and advocates their segregation and oppression. The Soviets were vigorous fighter for modernising the traditional Muslim family structure. First of all, they believed that the Muslim family in traditional line is the real bastion of Islam and even Muslim identity; and attacked the polygamy, the veil, the payment of kalım (buying the wife), the position of women in Muslim society and family.<sup>66</sup>

The Mufti makes some points on this crucial issue. He considers that the family is the primary cell of any society. The way people are brought up in the family determines to a great extent their moral qualities and character. Here the relations of children with their parents are of great importance. If a person is reared in a family in which the children honour their parents, respects their age, experience and knowledge, of other things being equal. That person can become honest, respectful and decent. On the other hand, it is difficult to expect noble conduct towards others in a person brought up in a medium in which the children have no respect for their parents. Islam supports and sanctions the natural love of children for their parents as a most important moral principle.<sup>67</sup>

He conceives that the Muslims' attitude to women has changed. The old idea of woman as a mere object of amorous delight (*metaatun cinsiyyetun*) and a house slave (*abdetu'l-beyt*) whom a man buys, has been replaced by a conception of woman, based on undistorted under-

standing of the Holy Koran and the Sunah, as a member of society having equal rights with man, his companion and helper in his often difficult affairs.<sup>68</sup>

Islam is no less resolute in its utterances on a respectful attitude of members of the family to one another, on consideration for women. At a time when people in society were far from recognising the equality of women, the Holy Koran emphasises that man and woman were entirely equal before Allah.<sup>69</sup>

### *Conclusion*

At the apex of the Soviet regime Sharaf Rashidov, first secretary of Uzbekistan Communist Party, touched the influence and role of the ulama in his report at the 1963 VIII<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the Central Committee: “The clerics are cleverly adapting to the new conditions; they don various masks, they are fighting for each soul ... they are especially interested in the young ... It would be great mistake to imagine that they are fighting a losing battle. Their power and their influence are proved by the number of people at prayers in mosques, and by the number who observe religious festivals and religious rites.”<sup>70</sup> They were endeavouring to reconcile Islam with science and progress and to guarantee its survival in a modern environment, undoubtedly they served by an extremely energetic effort to preserve Islam at least in purity and integrity as religion and national sentiment and to prevent it from relapsing into deprivation and ignorance.

In the case of the head of the most important Muslim religious board the Mufti of Tashkent Ziyauddin Babakhan he interprets Islam as follows in the moderate line:

1. Affirmation of Islam as a bulwark of progress, disseminator of knowledge, promoter of education, preceptor of equality, bearer of freedom, the religion of peace and friendship; defence of Islamic rituals as scientific value; idealization of pristine Islam;
2. Portraying of the Prophet Muhammad as a “democrat, reformer and revolutionary, even a socialist”;
3. Reconciliation Islam with socialism and communism; always praising economic, social and cultural policies the Soviet regime, never mentioning its atheistic dimension;
4. Modernization of the Sharia rules especially with regard to women, the family, and daily life.

Because of lack of freedom and knowledge the official interpretation of Islam in the Soviet Union emerged in contradictions; i.e. from time to time conservative and liberal, so in a way could be considered moderate modernism. Some Soviet authors claimed that distorting its original nature from the very beginning of the Bolshevik regime the ulama interpreted Islam according to social, political, economic and cultural developments. But the ulama denied such allegation. However, though forced to adopt, Islam had not in any way been contaminated by Marxism, submissive to the atheist state, there had never been found any evidence to accuse the official ulama, even by their enemies, of infidelity (kufr), heresy (shirq), or innovation (bid’a). On the contrary, for example, as far as Islamic law and theology concerned, Islam in the USSR was the same religion it was before 1917.

Parallel to the activities of the official ulama, the revival processes of Islam and traditions slowly took place during the 1950s and 1960s especially in the Fergana Valley. The latent processes of religion in the region began to develop openly in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. At this stage politicization of Islam had also been seen. The political extremism and terrorism have become a reality in Central Asian too. There is growing realization that there is a need for scholarly religious studies and for a different approach to the training of theologians. There is also a need to respond appropriately to the changes in the religious-political situation in the countries of Central Asian.

Despite its limited role, the Islam is a social and political reality in Central Asia which cannot be denied today. Its importance varies from country to country. Islam is constantly influencing the socio-political processes, shaping the concepts of values and regulating relations between people. Islam is also undoubtedly a political tool, whose role will grow to probably intensify the struggle between the various parties and groups, primarily between the regimes and oppositions. On the other hand, there are influential forces in Central Asia which insist on abridging the role of religion and taking it out of the political spheres. It seems that the best solution to this dichotomy is to reach a compromise between things purely secular and Islamic, in the absence of which the worsening of social, interethnic and religious conflicts will constantly threaten Central Asian societies. To solve the dichotomy another important factor was the attitude of the ulama. In the Soviet period they earned very considerable and significant experiences which help to solve the problem.

---

\* Ass. Prof., The Ankara University, Faculty of Divinity. E-mail: ersahin@divinity.ankara.edu.tr

My thanks to Prof Dr. Mustafa Erdem of the Ankara University and the recently late Prof. Dr. Bagali Kasimov of the Tashkent State University for reading and some constructive criticizing the draft of this article.

<sup>1</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen & S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union*, The University of Chicago Press 1979, 146-147.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandre Bennigsen & Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Official Islam in the Soviet Union", *Religion in Communist Lands*, 1979 VII/3, 148-159. Official relations between the religious boards and the Soviet Government were regulated by the Council of Religious Affairs, which was attached to the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union. The Boards was represented in each republic by a branch called the qaziyat. Alexandre Bennigsen & S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire*, C. Hurst & Company, London 1985, 14; Otto Luchterhandt, "The Council for Religious Affairs", *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet, Chambridge University Press, 1993, 55-83.

<sup>3</sup> Ziyauddin Khan Ibn Ishan Babakhan, *Islam and the Muslims in the Land of Soviets*, tr. R. Dixon, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, 57-58. "Orta Asya ve Kazakistan Müslümanları Diniye Nezâreti I. Meclis Toplantısı", *Orta Asya ve Kazakistan Müslümanları Diniye Nezâreti Jurnalı*, 1946/3-4, 29.

<sup>4</sup> There existed great differences, in particular, between the more progressive and modernist board of Tashkent and the more conservative Caucasians. Until 1970 the traditionalist mufti of Dagestan, Hajj Kurbanov, openly opposed the modernistic activities and views of the Mufti Ziyauddin Babakhan of Tashkent, condemning as "contrary to the spirit of Islam". Bennigsen & Wimbush, 16. Alexandre Bennigsen & Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, 150.

<sup>5</sup> See the top official Central Asian ulama: the first mufti Ishan ibn Abdulmajidhan (1860-1957), "The Late Mufti Ishan Babahan ibn Abdumajidhan", *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1976/4, 4-5. the second mufti Ziyauddinhan Babahanov (Ziyauddin b. İşan Babahanov) (1908-1982) Shamsuddin Babahanov, el-Mufti Ziyauddinhan ve Tüراسühi'l Fikriyyi, Mosokova, 1986; "A Word About the Life and Everyday Activities of Shaikh Ziyauddinkhan ibn Ishan Babahanov," *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1983/1, 4. The third mufti Şemsuddinhan Babahanov (1937-) "His Eminence Mufti Shamsuddinkhan ibn Ziyauddinkhan is 50 Years Old (Jubilee Report)", *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1987/3, 11-13. The deputy mufti İsmail Mahdum Sattiyev (1893-1976) "Shaikh İsmail Mahdum Sattiyevning Yarkin Hatırası", *Sovyet Şarkı Müslümanları (Uzbek version of Muslims of the Soviet East)*, 1976/1, 24. the deputy mufti Abdülğani Abdullayev (1928-1999) "Biographies of the Newly-Elected Religious Dignitaries, Shaikh Abdulgani Abdullah", *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1975/4, 9. The deputy mufti Yusufhan Şakirov (1927-2000) "Biographies of the Newly-Elected Religious Dignitaries, Shaikh Yusufkhan Shakirov", *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1975/4, 9-10, Shayh Yusufhan Shakir Cenablari Mübarek 60 Yashıda", *Sovyet Şarkı Müslümanları*, 1986/3, 22-23. the qadı of Kazakhstan Sakin Saad Vakkas Gilmanof (1889-1976) "Sakin Saad Vakkas Gilmanof", *Sovyet Şarkı Müslümanları*, 1976/2, 31. The qadı of Tajikistan Abdullah Kalanov (1924-) "Kazı of Tadjikistan Mirza Abdullah Mirza Kalan is 60 Years Old", *Muslims of the Soviet East*, 1985/2, 19; *Zamanımız Ulamaları (the Ulama of Our Time)*, ed. Ziyadulla Munavvarov, İmam al-Bukhari Halkara Jamgarması, Tashkent, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> For example the two deputies Yusufkhan Shakirov and Abdulgani Abdullayev, before joining the religious circle and career finished secular Soviet high education, first graduated from Tashkent State University, the second of the Tashkent Nizami Teacher Training Institute. Babakhan 111.

<sup>7</sup> Bennigsen & Wimbush, 62.

<sup>8</sup> Abdulgani Abdullayev, "Islamic Tradition of Raising Children and its Applicability in Uzbekistan," *Muslims of Soviet East*, 1980/1, 5-8. In this article the deputy Mufti of Tashkent Abdullayev praised Tatar jadids Ebu Nasr Kursavi (d.1812), Shabuddin Mercani, (d.1889) Rızaeddin Fahreddinov (d. 1936) and Uzbek jadid Abdullah Avlanî (d.1938). See for more information about religious thought of the pre-Soviet Tatar Jadidism,



Shamsuddin, "Reformist Movements among the Muslims of Tsarist Russia", *Islam and the Modern Age*, X/4, November 1979, 27-50; İbrahim Maraş, *Türk Dünyasında Dini Yenileşme (1850-1917)*, (Religious Rejuvenation in Turkish World (1850-1917), Ötüken yay. İstanbul 2002.

<sup>9</sup> In the USSR between 1948-1975, in addition to Russian ones, 923 anti-religious books and pamphlets were published in 21 Muslim languages. In the Uzbek language 177, Dagestani 140, Kazakh 126, Azeri 96, Tadzhik 70, Kirgiz 69, Tatar 65, Chechen-Ingush 50, Turkmen 44, Bashkırt 24, Kabard 13, Adyge-Cherkess 12, Karakalpak 11, Abhaz 6, Uygur 5, Georgian for Ajars 4, Karachaj-Balkar 3, Nogai 3, Dungan 2, Ossetian 2, Abaza 1. The majority of them appeared between 1960-1946, Bennigsen % Quelquejay, 157, footnot 6. See more information Baymirza Hayit, *Documents on Soviet Russia's Anti-Islam Policy in Turkistan*, Köln 1958; L. İ. Klimovich, *İslam, Uning Kelib Chikishi ve İctimai Mahiyati (Islam, its Emergence and Social Nature)*, Kızıl Özbekistan Nashriyatı, Tashkent, 1956; M. Aliyev, *İslam Dini ve Oning Merasimleri (Islam and its Ceremonies)*, Tashkent, 1958; M. Abrarov, *Shariat ve Oning Sosyal Mahiyati (The Sharia and its Social Nature)*, Fan ve Turmuş Kütüphanası, Özbekistan Fanlar Akademisinin Nashriyatı, Tashkent, 1961; Muttalib Ahmedoviç Osmanov, *İslam Akideleri ve Merasimleri (Islamic Dogmas and Ceremonies)*, Tashkent, 1975; İlmi Ateizm Esasları (The Fundamentals of Scientific Atheism), ed., İ. M. Müminov, Tashkent, 1962; İlmi Ateizm ve Ateistik Terbiye (Scientific Atheism and Atheistic Education), haz., M. M. Hayrullayev, Taşkent, 1979; Fanny Bryan, "Anti-Islamic Propaganda: Bezbozhnik, 1925-35", *Central Asian Survey*, V/1, 1986, pp. 29-47.

<sup>10</sup> The only official periodical of the Tashkent Muftiyat since 1968 appeared in the Uzbek, Arabic a few years later English, French, Russian and Persian version),

<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly the most significant official Muslim figure Ziyaeddinkhan Babakhan comes from a traditionally religious family which numbered many outstanding Muslim figures. After the death of his father Ishan Babakhan ibn Abdu'l-Majid Khan 1957 who was the mufti of Tashkent he had held this office of the Tashkent Muftiyat until his death 1982. He presented in his book as "a passionate champion of peace and friendship of all the peoples of the globe." p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Moscow 1980. Russian version of this book *İslam ı Musulmane v Strane Sovetov* and Arabic one *el-İslam ve'l Muslimun fi Biladi's Sofyeytiy*.

<sup>13</sup> Nugman Ashirov,, *Evolutsiia islama v SSSR (The Evolution of Islam in the USSR)* Moscow 1972, *İslam i Natsi*, Nugman Asirov, Moscow 1975; *Musulmanskaya Propoved*, (the Islamic Sermon), Moscow 1978. A. Artıkov, *İslam Dinini Zamanavilashitirishga Urmishlarning Mohiyati (The Nature of Efforts for Reforming of Islam)*, Özbekistan Bilim Camiyati, Tashkent, 1985; A. Alimuhamedov, *İslam Dinindagi Merasimchilik ve Urf-Adatlar (Ceremonies and Traditions in Islamic Religion)*, Özbekistan Nashriyatı, Tashkent 1969; Abdulla Ahadov, *İslam Zamanga Maslaşganda (Islam Reconciling with the Time)*, Ateist Kutubhanaçası, Özbek Nashriyatı, Tashkent, 1989. A. Bennigsen, depending on N. Ashirov's works, scholarly studied the evolution of Islam in the Soviet lands some a quarter century earlier "Modernization and Conservatism in Soviet Islam", in *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union*, ed. Dennis J. Dunn, Colorado, 1977, pp. 239-278.

<sup>14</sup> Babakhan, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Babakhan, 7. The Mufti sometimes refers Jamalud-Din Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) and Abdurrahman Kawakibi as prominent Muslim thinkers and figures. Babakhan, 26-27, 95. See for the evaluation of Afghani by Russian Muslims, Edward J. Lazzarini, "Sayyid Jamal-ad-Din Afghani from the Perspective of a Russian Muslim", *Towards a Modern Iran Studies in Thought, Politics and Society*, ed. Elia Kedourie & Sylvia G. Haim, Frank Cass, London 1980, 56-63.

<sup>16</sup> Şemsuddinhan b. Ziyaeddinhan b. İshan Babahan, *el-Müfti Ziyaeddinhan ve Türasühü'l Fikriyyi*, Moskova, 1986, 236-239. A similar fatwa issued by the Mufti of Makahchkala Hacı Kurbanov. See more details Alexandre Bennigsen & S. Ender Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union*, London 1985; "Explanations to the Muslims the Question of Zikr", *Muslims of Soviet East*, 1978/2, 22; *Muslims of Soviet East*, 1981/2, 18-19. Ironically Babakhan and his father, the first muftis Ishan Babakhan and his descendants were from the family of Sayram khojas, disciple of the Nakhshibandi order. Ş. Babahanov, *el-Müfti*, 19. One of the most important official religious figures, the deputy mufti Abdulgani Abdullayev's grandfather was the ishan Qadiri order of Fargana. "Biographies of the Newly-Elected Religious Dignitaries", *Muslims of Soviet East*, 1975/4, 9.

<sup>17</sup> James Critchlow, "Islam and Nationalism in Central Asia", *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Pedro Ramet, Durham, 1989, 202.

<sup>18</sup> *Asri Müslümanlık*, 1 Fevral 1923/2 Recep 1343, S.3, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Babakhan, 44.

<sup>20</sup> *Kanun, Din, Cherkov (The Collection of Decrees of the Soviets on Religious Affairs)* eds. P. S. Kribosheeyev, Ö. A. Rüstemov, N. İ. Hasanov, Tashkent, 1987.

<sup>21</sup> Babakhan, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Babakhan 47. It is believed that one of the oldest copies of the Koran / the Caliph Othman Koran was in Samarqand. In 1869 this copy sent to St. Petersburg. The numerous attempts made by the Muslims to get it back

before the October Revolution was unsuccessful. In 1971, after the February Revolution, a group of Muslim soldiers tried by force of arms to take this Koran away from St. Petersburg, but the Provisional Government prevented them. Immediately after the victory of the October Revolution a Council of Local Muslim set up in Petersburg applied to the government to hand over this Koran to the Muslims. See more details İsmail Mahdum Sattuyev, *Tarihu'l Mushafi'l-Osmani fi Tashkent*, (The History of the Caliph Othman Koran in Tashkent), Publication of the Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Tashkent 1391 / 1971.

<sup>23</sup> Babakhan, 48.

<sup>24</sup> "Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited. In the USSR, the church is separated from the state, and the school from the church." Article of the Constitution says: "Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without any distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality sex, education, language, attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile, or other status." Babakhan 52.

<sup>25</sup> Babakhan 52.

<sup>26</sup> "Sovyet İttifakı Müslümanları Konstitüsüya Layihasını Ma'kullemekteler", (the Muslims of the Soviet Union is Approving of the Draft of the Constitution) *Sovyet Sharkı Müslümanları*, 1977/4, 12-13.

<sup>27</sup> Vahabov, 15-16; Nugman Ashirov, *Musulmanskaya Propoved*, (the Islamic Sermon), Moscow 1978, 18.

<sup>28</sup> Babakhan, 51.

<sup>29</sup> Babakhan, 51-52.

<sup>30</sup> Babakhan, 86. See Babakhan's same approach on common bases between Islam and socialism, Ahadov, *İslam*, 20.

<sup>31</sup> Babakhan, 87-89.

<sup>32</sup> Babakhan 89.

<sup>33</sup> Babakhan 90.

<sup>34</sup> Babakhan, *el-İslam ve'l Muslimun fi Biladi's Sofyetyi*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> Babakhan, 93.

<sup>36</sup> Babakhan 92-93.

<sup>37</sup> Babakhan, 94.

<sup>38</sup> Babakhan 94-95.

<sup>39</sup> Babakhan 95.

<sup>40</sup> Babakhan 95.

<sup>41</sup> Babakhan, 97. We come across similar ideas expressed by other official Muslim religious leaders. For example, Mirmurtuz Agaev, akhund of the Kachmas mosque Azerbaijan says that: "The Prophet Muhammad – pbh- showed the path to the realisation of the ideals of Islam, but these ideals have been implemented with the help of other ideals. And now in our country all the people live in freedom and plenty; their life is full of promise dreamt of by the wise Prophet Muhammad." Babakhan, 97. And the imam-khatib of the Mosque of Chimkent (Kazakhstan) states that "Great commonness between Islam and socialism force us to participate in constructing socialism." *Muslims of Soviet East*, 1975/3, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Babakhan 98-105.

<sup>43</sup> Babakhan, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Babakhan, 38-39.

<sup>45</sup> Babakhan, 118.

<sup>46</sup> Babakhan, 119.

<sup>47</sup> Babakhan, 119.

<sup>48</sup> Babakhan, 34.

<sup>49</sup> Babakhan, 35. The Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan issued a fatwa (23 August 1945) giving permission for paying the zakat to the religious institutions such as madrasas, masjids and mosques to provide sources religious activities and education. *Orta Asya ve Kazakistan Müslümanları Diniye Nezareti Jurnalı*, (the Journal of the Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan) 1946/3-4, 23. In the Tsarist era Russian Muslims prescribed the same decision on the zakat and the other charities. See *Rusya Müslümanlarının İkinci Umumi Siyezine Mahkeme-i Şer'iyeye Tarafından Daklad*, (The Declaration of the Central Muslim Religious Board at the Second General Gathering of the Russian Muslims) Ufa, 1917, 36-38. Sawfat al-Saka al-Amini, Assistant to the Secretary-General of the Islamic World League, after visiting the USSR, published an article called "Several Days in Samarqand" (the Islamic World News, March 17, 1975) stating that "the budget of Muslim organizations in the USSR is totally based on the zakat and other contributions from the faithful. I have personally observed that the believers donate gladly prompted by their faith and as a token of unchanged devotion to their religion" Abdulla Vakhobov, *Muslims in the USSR*, Moscow 1980, 8.

<sup>50</sup> See the discussion on the circumcision in the Soviet Union Ewa A. Chylinsky, "Ritualism or Family Life in Soviet Central Asia: the Sunnat (Circumcision), Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia, ed. Shirin Akiner, Kagan Paul International, London 1991, 160-170.

<sup>51</sup> Babakhan, 37-38.

<sup>52</sup> S. Bekbolat, "İslamning Peyda Bolişi ve Oning Sınıfı Fizyonomiyesi", (The Emergence of İslam and its Class Physiognomy) Hudâsızlar, (the Atheists) 1929/2; Prof. Ditakis, "İslamning Peyda Bolişi ve Oning Mahiyatı Hakkında Marx hem Engels'in Fikirleri", (The Emergence of İslam and Views of Marx and Engels on its Nature), Hudâsızlar, (the Atheists) 1929/ 7-8; Bolat, "Orta Asya'da İslam Dinining Mecburi Surette Tarkalışı", (The Forcible Spread of İslam in Central Asia) Hudâsızlar, (the Atheists) 1928/1, 26-32.

<sup>53</sup> Babakhan, 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> Babakhan, 10-13.

<sup>55</sup> In this respect the Mufti mentions some Central Asian scholars. Babakhan, 14-15.

<sup>56</sup> Babakhan, 66-71.

<sup>57</sup> Babakhan, 27.

<sup>58</sup> Babakhan, 27-28.

<sup>59</sup> Babakhan, 29.

<sup>60</sup> Babakhan 117.

<sup>61</sup> Babakhan 117-118.

<sup>62</sup> For example see Reshid Khan, "İslam ve Fen", (İslam and Scieence) Hudâsızlar, (the Atheists), 1928/5, 11.

<sup>63</sup> Babakhan, 109.

<sup>64</sup> Babakhan, 109.

<sup>65</sup> Babakhan, 109. Bayazıd's pamphlet was translated into Turkish and published, İslamiyetin Maarife Taalluku, Külnar & Ahmed Cevdet, Istanbul, 1308.

<sup>66</sup> See more details S. Aliullin, *Hatun-Kızlar Ortasında Dinge Karşı Teşvikat* (the Propoganda against Religion among Women), Özneşir, Semerkand, Taşkent, 1929; L. İ. Klimoviç, L. I. Klimovich, *İslam ve Hatun-Kızlar* (İslam and Women), Rusçadan çev, V. Rahimov, Özbek Devlet Okuv-Pedagogika Naşriyatı, Tashkent, 1960; H. S. Süleymanova, *İslam Dini ve Hatun-Kızlar* (İslamic Religion and Women), İlmi Ateizm Esasları, ed. İ. Müminov, Özbekistan Fenler Akademesi Neşriyatı, Taşkent, 1962, 182-183; John Anderson, *Out of the Kitchen, Out of the Temple: Religion, Atheism ad Women in the Soviet Union, Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. S. P. Ramet, Chambridge Universty Press, 1993, 215; Gillian Tett, *Guardians of Faith? : Gender and Religion in an (ex) Soviet Tajik Village, Muslim Women's Choices, Religious Belief and Social Reality*, ed. C. Fawzi el-Solh, Oxford, 1994, 128-151.

<sup>67</sup> Babakhan, 41.

<sup>68</sup> Babakhan 117.

<sup>69</sup> Babakhan, 42.

<sup>70</sup> Bennigsen & Quelquejay, *Official İslam*, 157