

ISLAMIC AUTHORITY AND THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

**ISLAMIC AUTHORITY AND THE RUSSIAN
LANGUAGE:
STUDIES ON TEXTS FROM EUROPEAN
RUSSIA, THE NORTH CAUCASUS AND
WEST SIBERIA**

Edited by Alfrid K. Bustanov and Michael Kemper

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INTRODUCTION: VOICES OF ISLAM IN RUSSIAN

Michael Kemper, Alfrid K. Bustanov

This volume is meant to be a preliminary survey of the new Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation. This post-Soviet Muslim discourse on Islam comprises a very wide spectrum of voices; they all offer specific Islamic identities to their audiences and communities. There are a number of historical continuities and “ethnic” particularities, but the new Islamic discourse is also characterized by exchange and expansion: the transfer of “ethnic” Islamic interpretations to new areas where they are translated into new contexts. The result is an emancipation from “ethnic” particularities, accompanied by the naturalization of new trends from abroad that also address various ethnic groups. The result is a striking Islamic diversity, in which most of the “players” try to present their own interpretation as the only truthful one, and to isolate it from all others; still, we argue that they all contribute to the development of a new overall Islamic discourse that has hitherto not fully been acknowledged. Important is that Islamic authors make more and more use of the Russian language, which facilitates multi-ethnic communication on Islam in the Russian Federation.

In this book we try to elaborate a number of parameters that allow us to regard this newly-emerging “Russian” Islamic discourse not as a mosaic of isolated pieces but as a coherent phenomenon. For this purpose we collected and analyzed fragments from some Islamic texts “made in Russia” that allow us to circumscribe this discourse.

This volume is therefore designed as an analytical textbook that gives a general (though by necessity limited) overview of characteristic Islamic writings from the Russian Federation, for graduate classes on Islam and politics in contemporary Russia, and perhaps also as a tool for courses on Islam in Europe that do not shy away from also integrating the peculiar cases of Eastern Europe. Such a colourful

textbook is missing on the Western market (and, by the way, also in Russia). There is a growing amount of good research on the history of Islam in modern Russia,¹ and there are some useful volumes of articles on Islam in Russia today;² but Western students who do not read first-hand sources in the Russian language barely get an impression of how Muslims in Russia articulate Islam, and the dominant political focus on extremists/terrorists prevents them from seeing the wider spectrum of Islamic schools, trends and communities in the Federation.

Our book presents ten “case studies”, most of which analyze one or several text fragments that we translated into English. The individual case studies are from Moscow, Daghestan, Chechnya, Tatarstan and West Siberia, and might therefore also be useful for readers who are interested in only one of these regions. Our selection of Muslim authors is by necessity open to question; we have chosen what *we think* represents broader trends in “Russian Islam”, and what might be interesting for a Western audience. We cannot cover all interesting Islamic interpretations and authorities of “Russian Islam”, but we hope to provide a framework into which also other texts and trends can be placed.

¹ Overviews of recent scholarship are given in Vladimir Bobrovnikov, “Islam in the Russian Empire”, *Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. II (Cambridge, 2006); Stanislav M. Prozorov (ed.), *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, tom I (Moscow, 2006); *Research Trends in Modern Central Eurasian Studies (18th-20th Centuries): A Selective and Critical Bibliography of Works Published between 1985 and 2000*, ed. by Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (Tokyo, 2006); *Central Eurasian Reader: A Biennial Journal of Critical Bibliography and Epistemology of Central Eurasian Studies*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, vol. 1 (Berlin, 2008), vol. 2 (Berlin, 2011).

² Hilary Pilkington, Galina Yemelianova (eds.), *Islam in Post-Soviet Russia: Public and Private Faces* (London, 2002); Shireen Hunter, *Islam in Russia: The Politics of Identity and Security* (Armonk, 2004); G. Yemelianova (ed.), *Radical Islam in the Former Soviet Union* (London, 2010); Roland Dannreuther, Luke March (eds.), *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism* (London, 2010). Focusing on the political side of Islam, from very different perspectives, are G.M. Hahn, *Russia's Islamic Threat* (New Haven; London, 2007), and Aleksei Malashenko, *Islam dlia Rossii* (Moscow, 2007). For useful reference works of Islamic institutions in Russia and their leaders, see Ia.I. Zdorovets, *Musulmane: Islamskie lideri i organizatsii na territorii Rossii* (Moscow, 2007); R.A. Silant'ev (ed.), *Entsiklopediia: Islam v sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow, 2008).

While we are above all interested in the relation between religion and politics in Russia, from the perspective of the Muslim authors themselves, we also pay much attention to the dogmatic and spiritual aspects of Islam, and especially to the question of historical continuity and change. Our goal is to move away from the West's (and Russia's) obsession with militant Jihadists, and instead show the broader picture of Islam in Russia's center and its regions; the book is therefore also an attempt to provide a stimulus for integrating more Islamic studies methodologies into the study of Islam in Russia (which, in the 20th century and largely to this day, has been dominated by Cold War perspectives where Islam is above all studied as a geopolitical factor in relation to the Kremlin, neglecting broader questions of Islamic law, Sufism, Islamic education, and Islamic language and terminology).

Each text fragment is furnished with an introduction that gives basic information about the historical context, the respective author, his or her institutional background, the community he or she addresses, and the interpretation he or she stands for. The translation parts are equipped with a minimum amount of explanatory footnotes [in square brackets], and with a linguistic analysis of the "Islamic styles" of the particular authors.

Languages of Islam in Russia

Yet next to being a basic textbook, the present volume is also a piece of experimental research on the relation between the Russian language and Islamic authority in Russia. Here our goal is to raise questions, and to develop a methodological framework for more research that has to follow, including on a comparative level. How are Islamic contents "translated" into Russian, and what happens to the Russian language if it becomes a major vehicle of Islam? With these questions our book might also be of interest for students of Russian sociolinguistics.

Our research is embedded in the larger question of how the various "Islamic languages" in Russia interact with each other. Historically, the Russian language is of course the language of the Orthodox Russians, and Russia's Muslims have, in

history and today, other languages at their disposal for writing Islamic texts. The most widespread “Muslim” language in Russia is Tatar, which is spoken (and, to a lesser degree, written) in a large belt of Tatar settlements and urban minorities from St. Petersburg in the west over Moscow, the Volga area (including cities like Nizhnii Novgorod, Kazan, Saratov and Astrakhan) to the Urals (where Tatar coexists with Bashkir, another Turkic language) and Western Siberia (with cities like Omsk, Tiumen’ and others). Other important “Muslim” languages are those of the Northern Caucasus, especially Chechen and Ingush and the many languages of Daghestan (Avar, Dargin and Lak from the Caucasian language group as well as the Turkic languages Kumyk and Azeri, to mention only the most widespread ones that also have a developed Islamic literature), plus a number of languages of the Northwestern Caucasus (e.g. Cherkes and Kabardinian, Balkar and Karachai). Finally, there are also Azerbaijani, Kazakh, Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik, Kirgiz and other Muslim communities on Russian soil using their own idioms, plus Persian, Arab and Turkish diasporas (the latter often coalescing around business/construction projects and consulates).

Historically, it was primarily Arabic, Persian and Turkic that Russia’s Muslims used for Islamic literature; “Turkic” is meant here as the collective term for various forms of “Old Tatar” (or “Chagatay”) plus vernacular variants of Tatar, Bashkir, Kumyk and Azeri, often with strong elements of Ottoman Turkish. In the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries there was a blossoming Arabic Islamic literature in the North Caucasus and also in the Volga-Urals.³ Up to the early 20th

³ For the nineteenth-century Arabo-Islamic literature in Daghestan see, as a first-hand source, *Die Islamgelehrten Daghestans und ihre arabischen Werke. Nadīr ad-Durgilīs (st. 1935) Nuzhat al-adhbān fī tarāğim ‘ulamā’ Dāğistān (Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia, vol. 4)*, ed. by Michael Kemper and Amri R. Sixsaidov (Berlin, 2004), as well as source studies in Vladimir O. Bobrovnikov, *Musul'mane Severnogo Kavkaza: Obychai, pravo, nasilie* (Moscow, 2002), and Michael Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan. Von den Khanaten und Gemeindebünden zum ġihād-Staat* (Wiesbaden, 2005). For the Volga-Urals see the Arabic source studies in Michael Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien. Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin, 1998), as well as the Turkic manuscripts explored in Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and 'Bulghar' Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden, 1998); Allen J. Frank, *Muslim*

century, Arabic was the most important language for treatises, commentaries and textbooks on Islamic law and theology, and partly for Islamic history writing. In the fields of poetry and Sufism we also find Persian and Turkic, next to Arabic; and Turkic was especially widespread in Islamic historiography and in writings for secular purposes, especially in diplomacy with the Russians and Ottomans. All of these languages, including Tatar and the North Caucasian languages, were written in the Arabic script, from right to left, with a few extra signs to denote sounds that do not occur in the Arabic language (like the Daghestani consonants [ts] and [ch] and Turkic vowels like [ü] and [ö], for example); this Arabic alphabet for vernacular “Muslim” languages is traditionally referred to as *‘ajam* (lit., “foreign”). By the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, many of the “Muslim” languages in Russia had already undergone significant adaptations of their *‘ajam*, so that Arabic-script Tatar, for example, was by no means unsuitable for conveying modern sciences. (And up to the present day the Muslim Uyghurs, in China’s region of Eastern Turkestan, write their Turkic language in a reformed Arabic script.)

It was only in the 1930s that Arabic, and vernacular literature in the Arabic script, were de facto eliminated from public usage in the USSR. This happened by a double state-enforced alphabet change of the “Muslim” languages: in the late 1920s all major written languages of Soviet Muslims obtained a Latin script (that is, “European” letters), and by the late 1930s the languages were again given a new alphabet, this time Cyrillic (that is, a “Russian” script, with a number of special signs for vowels and consonants of each “Muslim” language that do not occur in Russian). What was advertised as a modernization push for national cultures (first into the direction of universal progress, then towards “coming closer” to the Russian big brother in the Soviet family of nations), had the intended side effect that it deprived the younger generation of any access to the pre-revolutionary literature in their own languages and in Arabic, that is, of reading Islamic books.

Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia. The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh Inner Horde, 1780-1910 (Leiden, 2001).

Even more disrupting was the full-blown attack on Islam which physically eliminated the Islamic elites of the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union, in the late 1920s and in the 1930s; Muslim intellectuals as well as imams and scholars of Islam (many of whom had initially taken a neutral or even positive attitude towards the Bolsheviks) were first marginalized and then either killed or sent to the labor camps or to exile. From then on the use of “the alphabet of the Quran” was almost regarded as a crime. To be sure, a few representatives of the old generation continued to use the *‘ajam* (Arabic) script for private purposes (including in the Volga area), and in the North East Caucasus some students of Islam maintained a minimum familiarity with Arabic in their “underground” studies of Islam. But by the 1970s the knowledge of how to read Arabic and their own languages in *‘ajam* had largely disappeared. Equally important for the destruction of the Arabic tradition was that the Soviet Union had only few state universities outside of Moscow and Leningrad where Arabic was taught, with the result that also very few secular historians were able to use Arabic or Arabic-script texts for the study of Russia’s own Islamic communities.⁴

The USSR thus produced a sharp rupture for Islamic literature, and for the transmission of Islamic knowledge to the younger generation in general. Soviet campaigns of anti-Islamic propaganda, state terror and repressive legislation did not manage to eliminate Islam; but they did exterminate, in the 1930s, most Islamic authors and authorities, they largely destroyed the Islamic infrastructure of mosques, schools, libraries and pious foundations, and they deprived Muslims from access to their religious books.⁵ In the last two decades of the USSR most Soviet Muslims had only very limited knowledge of their faith, and only few people had access to one of the mosques that were “officially” allowed to function.

⁴ For the development of Soviet and post-Soviet academic scholarship on Islam in the USSR, with a focus on their politicization, see the contributions to *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. by Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (London; New York, 2011).

⁵ For the repression of Islamic education in the 1930s, its low-level maintenance in the post-war period and its re-establishment after 1991 see the republican case studies in *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, ed. by Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, Stefan Reichmuth (London; New York, 2009).

But the situation varied from region to region, usually with a lower degree of religiosity in urban settings, and with a stronger role of Islam in remote rural or mountain villages where Islam was still an important part of the way of life, and where believers created alternative spaces for prayer. And even where the basic Islamic rituals were not observed – or only occasionally, on feasts – Islam continued to be an important marker of cultural and national identity, and a clear distinction vis-à-vis non-Muslims, especially Russians. Still, the formal transmission of Islamic knowledge was largely destroyed; it was reduced to two official nominal Islamic teaching institutes in Soviet Uzbekistan, which produced a low-quality Islamic education for a very small “Soviet Islamic elite” that was necessary to staff the official Islamic administrations and the few “official” mosques (not more than some 400 for the whole of the USSR in the early 1980s, most of which in Central Asia)⁶, and to a very small number of private (“illegal”) circles where teachers of the old generation read Islamic books with individual disciples.

Since the start of Gorbachev’s Perestroika in 1986, all religions obtained a new significance in the Soviet Union, and Muslims in all areas of Russia began to “rediscover” Islam. It would be a big word to speak of an Islamic “boom”, especially if we compare the Russian case with what was going on in the Islamic scenes in the equally secular Republic of Turkey at that time. Still, in the early 1990s Islam re-entered the public sphere from which it had been violently eliminated in the 1930s: thousands of mosques were built or re-opened in the North Caucasus and in the Volga-Urals, several hundred in Western Siberia, and also a few in major Russian cities.⁷ While in the late Soviet Union there were only four “Muslim spiritual administrations” (Muftiates, in Ufa, Makhachkala, Baku

⁶ Yaacov Ro’i, *Islam in the Soviet Union. From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (London, 2000). Ro’i’s monograph is less on the survival of the Islamic traditions and communities as on how the central authorities gathered information on Islamic activities in the regions and reported on them.

⁷ New research suggests that rural areas (especially with migrant communities) played a special role in this re-Islamization of the last decades – by contrast to Western Europe, where re-Islamization and radicalization are usually an urban phenomenon, with the “banlieus of Islam”; international research project “From Kolkhoz to Jamaat” (Christian Noack, Stéphane A. Dudoignon, supported by Volkswagen Foundation), publication of results forthcoming.

and Tashkent), after 1991 dozens of new Islamic administrations were opened, as directorates for the individual mosque communities in a given region. By 2008 the number of these Muftiates/Muslim Spiritual Administrations had grown to at least 57;⁸ not only the major “autonomous” republics with a sizeable Muslim population (like Tatarstan and Bashkortostan) but also most other regions of the Russian Federation, and the major cities like Moscow and St. Petersburg, have their own Muftis. Also Islamic education has seen a new development. In addition to the occasional basic teaching of Islam in many mosques and some small-scale (and often short-lived) private enterprises, a number of professional Islamic educational institutions emerged in Moscow, Kazan (with the “Islamic University of the Russian Federation”) and Ufa, as well as in Grozny and in various places in Dagestan, characteristically with branches in smaller towns. While almost no Islamic literature had been published in the USSR, after 1991 many Islamic publishers appeared on the market who produced a wide array of publications, from Qurans and basic Islamic guide books to Islamic histories and theological and legal literature, next to Islamic journals and newspapers. Finally, in the “Muslim republics” (in quotation marks) not only Islamic institutes but also state universities and research institutes began to study and publish Islamic sources and regional Islamic encyclopedias.⁹ Many Muslim authors tried to reconnect with the pre-1917 Islamic mainstream tradition of their home areas, while others adopted new interpretations from abroad.¹⁰ The production of Islamic texts in Russia experienced a new expansion with the massive spread of the Internet; online Islam reaches out primarily to young audiences, including many who are not attached to traditional mosque communities.

⁸ R.A. Silant'ev (ed.). *Entsiklopediia: Islam v sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow, 2008), 28-63.

⁹ See the impressive series *Islam v Rossiiskoi federatsii – Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, edited by the Nizhnii Novgorod Islamic Khusain Faizkhanov-Institute: vol. 1: *Islam na Nizhegorodchine* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2007); vol. 2: *Islam v Moskve* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2008); vol. 3: *Islam v Sankt-Peterburge* (Moscow; Nizhnii Novgorod, 2009); vol. 4: *Islam v Tsentral'no-Evropeiskoi chasti Rossii* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2009); vol. 5: *Islam na Urale* (Moscow, 2009).

¹⁰ *Diversität - Repression - Anpassung - Neuorientierung? Studien zum Islam in der Sowjetunion und dem postsowjetischen Raum*, ed. by Raoul Motika, Michael Kemper, Anke von Kügelgen (Wiesbaden, 2012, forthcoming).

As the written tradition of Islam had been completely interrupted in many areas, and seriously marginalized in others, Muslim authors in today's Russia have mostly no immediate literary models to follow, at any event not in the Russian language. Consequently, they develop their own styles of "writing Islam in Russian". This dynamic process of rewriting traditions and creating new ones is the focus of this book.

In our linguistic analysis we look specifically at how Islamic terms of Arabic or Tatar origin are transferred into Russian, as loanwords or in full translation. Which are the central terms and concepts, and how are they "naturalized" in Russian? How is an author's use of the Russian language linked to the communities he represents, the audiences he targets, and the Islamic interpretation and political message he stands for?

Hypothesis: An Emerging "Russian" Islamic Discourse

This volume is meant as a preliminary study for analyzing the contemporary Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation as a whole; and we take the study of Islamic language as a gateway for this discourse analysis. We argue that the new discourse of Islam gradually shifts from the "ethnic" languages of Muslims to Russian, which becomes the major idiom for targeting a multinational Muslim readership.

The Russian language is the only idiom that almost all Muslims of the Russian Federation understand, and there are a number of factors indicating that Russian is of increasing importance for Islamic literature in the Russian Federation. First, the autonomy of the "national republics" of the Russian Federation, high in the 1990s, has over the last decade clearly been decreased. The renewed centralization of the Russian Federation since the early 2000s made an end to experiments with Islam and nationalism for creating separate political identities on republican levels, e.g. in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. The rolling back of regional and republican autonomy discourages the use of the particular "ethnic" languages, and supports the position of Russian; and in the Volga-Urals (but less so in Chechnya, which has a special deal with the Kremlin) it also limits the leeway of regional

players to use the “Islamic card” in their political bargaining process with Moscow. Islam thus develops an “all-Russian identity”. Today Muslims in all parts of Russia are facing a common state policy towards Islam; everywhere Russian-language media (largely state-controlled) produce the same paradigms, and state legislation produces similar legal categories, and the administrations employ similar instruments with regard to Islam. In these discourses, Islam is presented as having a double-face: there is a “good”, “tolerant” and “patriotic” Islam, one which is home-grown (“traditional”), and a second “dangerous”, “disruptive” Islam that is classified as a threat, and that is thought to come from abroad, and is therefore “non-traditional”.¹¹ (Similar developments are at work with regard to “non-traditional” Christian denominations, especially evangelicals and sects from the West.) At the same time Russian is traditionally regarded as the prime language of education in the Russian Federation, and as such still enjoys high respect also among Muslims; it should not come as a surprise that imams who went to school in the late Soviet or early post-Soviet period make references to the great Russian writers Anton Chekhov or Lev Tolstoi in their mosque sermons. And just as Russian also provides access to Western and global literature and education, so also Islamic literature from the Muslim Middle East reached Russia’s Muslims above all in Russian translations; neither Ayatollah Khomeini nor the major ideologist of the Muslim Brothers Sayyid Qutb or the contemporary “Global Mufti” Yusuf al-Qaradawi are read in the Persian or Arabic originals.

The second factor at work in the “Russification” of the Islamic discourse is that Soviet and post-Soviet modernization and especially internal migration have gradually broken up the confinements of the “traditional” dwelling areas of Muslims. The old but still widespread view that Russia contains only some “Islamic islands” of ethnic minorities is no longer accurate. Today more Tatars in Russia live outside of the Republic of Tatarstan than within its borders, and Moscow has by now a larger Muslim community than Kazan, the capital of the

¹¹ This state policy of dividing Islam into a “bad” and a “good” one seems to be a global trend, characteristic not only for Russia and other post-Soviet states but also for countries with Muslim majority populations. Cf. J. Rasanayagam, *Islam in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan: The Morality of Experience* (Cambridge, 2011), chapter 3.

republic of Tatarstan. Also many Muslims from the republics of the North Caucasus go to Russia for seasonal or permanent work (not only to Moscow but also to the boom towns in the North and in Siberia). Next to business and labor migration, also higher education brings young Muslims to Russian cities. Muslims who want to set up an Islamic life in Moscow or St. Petersburg, or in Omsk and Tiumen, will find themselves in a multi-ethnic environment where the Muftiates are predominantly in the hands of Tatar Islamic authorities but where Russian is the major language of communication, including in the mosque; and also in the Caucasus, with its many small national groups, Russian performs the role of bringing Muslims of all ethnic backgrounds together. Also Islamic teachers and preachers settle in regions where their Islamic interpretations are perceived as new. Resulting from the increasing internal migration and mobility also the “ethnic” trends of Islam from particular regions are spreading out to various ethnic groups at many different places where they have to use Russian, not particular national languages, if they want to have a broad appeal; in our volume we discuss this with the expansion of the Daghestani branch of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi brotherhood to West Siberia, in chapters 5 and 6. Also the major Tatar Muftis and Islamic writers realize that their audiences are more and more of immigrant backgrounds, as we will see in chapters 3 and 4.

A third factor is the increasing communication between Russia’s Muslims and professional academic specialists in Islam and Muslim history, many of whom are Muslims themselves. This means that there is also a growing interaction between the academic style of describing Islam and the religious language of Muslims in Russia; in result the Islamic discourse is becoming not only more professional but also more academic, in order to meet the demands of a well-educated Islamic youth which approaches its religion also scientifically.

As the fourth factor we suggest to regard a phenomenon that only very few researchers have so far paid attention to, and if it is treated then mostly as a curiosity: this is the growing number of highly-educated ethnic Russians who discover Islam for themselves, and who produce Islamic literature. As we show in the last three chapters of this volume, their “Islamic Russian” is often much more sophisticated than that of “ethnic Muslims”, and reflects the urban academic

training of many Russian converts (and often also their acquaintance with Islamic texts from abroad). While some of the “ethnic Russian Muslims” deliberately segregate themselves from other Muslims in Russia (chapters 8 and 9), there can be no doubt that the literary and organizational activities of Russian converts to Islam have already given the overall discourse of Islam a new dimension (chapter 10).

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, also in the internet of the Russian Federation the major language of Islam is Russian. “Islam.ru”, as the Islamic online niche is called,¹² brings together Russian-speaking Muslims not only from the various regions of the Russian Federation but also from Ukraine, Central Asia and the South Caucasus, and partly even from Russophone diasporas in the West. A systematic study of the Russian Islamic internet as a coherent scene and interactive environment in Russia remains an important research task for the future; in this volume we use internet material in chapters four, six and seven.

The result of all this, we argue, is that we obtain a “Russian discourse of Islam” that is fed by the “traditional” Islams in the various “Muslim” areas of Russia, but that increasingly transcends these “ethnic” or republican boundaries. The Islamic discourse in Russia appears either as a mosaic with some well-established traditional and some new centers, or as a huge Eurasian space that has no dominating center – both views are justified. Either way, this Islamic discourse becomes peculiarly “Russian”, in the sense of “pertaining to the Russian Federation” but also in its linguistic and discursive patterns through which it discusses the Soviet past and the post-Soviet present of Muslims. This new “Russian” Islamic public sphere also integrates elements of Islamic trends from abroad, from the Muslim Brothers and Hizb ut-Tahrir, Turkish groups (Nurcuis and the Gülen movement, Süleymanîs and Naqshbandîs), Iranian Shii models, Pakistani and Indian movements, popular preachers from Central Asia, and even some transnational Sufi groups from the West (as presented in our volume with the example of the Murabitun World Movement, chapter nine); but one gets the impression that all of these movements are read in a distinctly Russian fashion, in

¹²Ainur Sibgatullin, *Islamskii internet* (Moscow, Nizhnii Novgorod, 2010).

a form that expresses the views, interests and experiences of Muslims in the Russian Federation.

If our hypothesis of an emerging “Russian Islamic discursive area” is correct (and more research has to be done on this issue), then the Russian Federation becomes a case that can be compared to the European Union, where we observe a similar interplay between “ethnic” Muslims (here: of the places of origin of the first-generation migrants, from Pakistan over Turkey and Egypt to Morocco and Suriname), on the one hand, and a new Islamic universalism (the “deterritorialization of Islam”, in the words of the French scholar Olivier Roy),¹³ on the other. A major difference is that European Muslims do not have *one* European, former colonial language that would be understandable to all of them (which Russia’s Muslims do have, in the form of Russian) but are confronted with several European languages, from English, French, Italian and Spanish over Dutch, German and Danish to Polish, Bulgarian, Greek and others. Here the European language map is a disconnecting factor, one that even enlarges the linguistic diversity among Muslims, rather than a unifying element. Consequently, one can argue that the preconditions for a common Islamic discourse are less beneficial in the European Union than they are in the Russian Federation. Equally important to note is that there seem to be only few direct connections between Muslims in the Russian Federation and in the EU, and little literary interaction. And also the research communities are still divided: the expanding field of research on Islam in Western, Southern and Northern Europe, and on “Euro-Islam”, takes hardly any notice of Islam in Russia, while Muslims in Russia are basically busy developing a distinctly Russian framework of Islam, not a European one. Language barriers and mental maps from the Cold War period are thus largely still in place, on both sides.

A Three-Dimensional Model for Analyzing Islamic Russian

How can we conceptualize the study of Russian in Islamic texts? We found that there are several vectors for analyzing “Islamic Russian”, and we propose a three-

¹³ Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: the Search for a New Ummah* (New York, 2004).

dimensional model for describing the diversity of “Russian Islam” as a coherent phenomenon.

The first dimension in our analytical system of coordinates is the Islamic spectrum of ideas and traditions: from Sunnism to Shiism, or from legalistic positions of *jama'ats* and their leaders to the mystical techniques of Sufi groups. The different standpoints on this vector in the Russian Islamic system of coordinates originate from the historical, “ethnic” traditions of the various areas with Muslim populations, but also from influences from abroad. These are the “push factors” that drive the Islamic trends and communities away from each other, into very specific directions.

The second vector or dimension in our matrix stands for broader historical and political “pull” factors from outside of the Islamic spectrum. The first of these is the state, in its historical depth, namely the Soviet experience and the current legal framework that has grown out of it, both on federal and on regional/republican levels. Many of the texts that we analyze here are full of administrative terminology that can be identified as peculiar “(post-)Soviet speak”.¹⁴ The longevity of this phenomenon results partly from the fact that the Russian state has, since the times of Catherine the Great and all through the Imperial and Soviet periods, maintained “official” Muftiates (Islamic Spiritual Administrations) that act as state-supported organs for the control and organization of all mosques in a certain area. This structural peculiarity of Islam in Russia produces a strong “administrative” element in the Islamic language especially of the post-Soviet Muftis, but to a lesser degree even of their opponents who act in private or in the underground.

As the second “pull factor” we identify the Russian Orthodox Church. This might appear as surprising, or paradoxical, since in the public image Islam has been re-emerging in strong defiance of Christianity, with the latter often seen as the dominant religion of the former colonial state that always supported the suppression of Islam and Muslims. But the relation between Islam and

¹⁴ For a thorough study of the late Soviet administrative language see A. Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2006).

Christianity in contemporary Russia is more complex than that. The state regards both Islam and Orthodox Christianity (plus Judaism and Buddhism) as the “traditional religions of Russia”, so that state recognition and support for Islam is closely linked to the growing role of the Orthodox Church in Russia. This results not only in a reinforced inter-faith dialogue between Islamic and Orthodox leaders (oscillating between comradeship and conflict), but also in a “translation of Islam” into the language of the Orthodox Church. This issue needs further in-depth research, which we cannot provide here; at any event, what our texts show is that state-supported leaders of Islam translate more Islamic terminology into Russian terms than we find in the writings of oppositional groups, and these translations by necessity lead to an adoption of phrases and notions that have, in the Russian language, a church-related connotation.

The third, vertical level in our system of coordinates for describing the language of Russian Islam has to do with education, and therefore with the different generations active in the discourse. On the one end of the spectrum we find self-educated village preachers who produce a rather popular style; on the other end we find urban academically-trained young writers with backgrounds in secular or religious higher education who produce highly sophisticated texts. Each of these groups has its specific social and political vision that it couches in very distinct variants, or “styles”, of the “Russo-Islamic” language.

This three-dimensional model is an alternative to the conventional model, which emphasizes ethnic origin and nationality as the most important markers of Muslim activists and writers in Russia, and which therefore emphasizes the fragmented character of the debate on Islam. By contrast, our alternative model suggests to look at the Islamic discourse as a coherent whole that is above all characterized by dynamism – a dynamism that is triggered by interpretational diversification (vector 1), conditioned by a broad (broader than Islam) tendency in society towards religion and coupled with the state’s attempt to control and direct religion (vector 2), and accompanied by a growing professionalization in the field of religious knowledge (vector 3).

There can be no doubt that also the ethnic vector and the regional (geographic) division continue to be important. We suggest that some old centers

of Islam, like Kazan (Tatarstan) and various towns and villages in Daghestan, remain closely linked to “ethnic” factors in Islam, but that new centers have emerged (Moscow, Saratov, Nizhnii Novgorod, but also Astana in Kazakhstan) which have a growing multi-national appeal; individual teachings of Islam can no longer be seen as a feature of just one place, region or property.

The Case Studies

Part I of this book, “Muslim Interpretations of Islam in the Soviet Union”, looks at two very different Soviet interpretations of Islam that developed next to each other, and next to the simplistic anti-Islamic propaganda machinery. Our first case is that of “Mirasism”, the attempt by Tatar academic scholars of the 1970s to rehabilitate certain Tatar Islamic authors of the 19th century. Islamic writings of the Tatar Muslim writers of the past were re-read in a fashion that downplays anything Islamic, and that instead focuses on the alleged “enlightenment” elements in the nineteenth-century Muslim Tatar literature. “Mirasism” thus refers to the reinterpretation of Islam as Tatar national cultural heritage in a Soviet Marxist interpretation. This “Mirasism” interpretation of Islam is still very widespread in Tatarstan today, where it has fed into a new interpretation with similar goals and features, namely that of an equally secularist Tatar “Euro-Islam”; but Soviet “Mirasism” has also provided the basis for the construction of a religious “Tatar traditional Islam” that is today mainstream among Tatar theologians. Enlightened Islam in Russia, so the core message of both academic “Mirasism”/“Euro-Islam” and religious “Tatar traditionalism”, is linked to the ethnic Tatar tradition, and the Tatars of today should continue the progressive trends of “their” Islam in order to fence off the “alien”, “backwards”, fundamentalist Islam intruding from the Middle East.

Chapter two (co-authored with the Arabist Dr. Shamil Shikhaliev, Makhachkala, Daghestan) looks at the work of the official Soviet Muftiates, the state administration for Islam. We discuss two fatwas produced by the Muftis of the Soviet Muslim Spiritual Administration of the North Caucasus in 1959 and 1986, respectively. The language of these fatwas demonstrates above all the power

of the Soviet “administrative language” of Islam. Both fatwas are directed against Islamic shrine veneration in Daghestan and Chechnya, and thus implicitly against the Sufi brotherhoods. While contentwise close to what we would today call “Salafism”, the Muftis also incorporate, and use, notions that we know from Soviet anti-religious discourses. However, our analysis also reveals differences between the two fatwas linked to the particular educational backgrounds of the two Muftis involved. And paradoxically, both official Muftis depended financially on the Sufi shrines which they attacked in their fatwas. This case study thus makes a strong argument that the line between Soviet “official” and “unofficial” Islam was fluent.

Part II of our volume, entitled “Muftism and Modernism”, discusses two major Islamic authorities from contemporary Moscow. Chapter three looks at some writings of Ravil’ Gainutdin, the major Mufti in Moscow, from the 1990s and 2000s. Mufti Gainutdin, an ethnic Tatar, exemplifies a “liberal” interpretation of Islam within the conservative, “traditionalist” camp. Here we see how far a thorough translation of Islamic concepts into the Russian language can move an Islamic text into the direction of the language of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Mufti’s language use reflects the circumstance that Islam’s recognition by state and society is precariously linked to the position of the Church; and both Church and Islam are acting in a triangle with the Russian state, as can be demonstrated by official texts from Gainutdin’s Council of Russia’s Muftis on military priests in the armed forces, for example.

Case four analyzes the language of a very popular preacher in Moscow, the imam of the Victory Park mosque Shamil’ Aliautdinov. A deputy of Mufti Gainutdin and equally a Tatar, Aliautdinov transcends the ethnic traditions of Islam in Russia and speaks to Muslims of all nationalities. With fragments from his writings on Islamic ethics we discuss in how far this also means a departure from the pre-revolutionary Tatar scholarly tradition of Quran interpretation. Aliautdinov has the educated youth as his major audience, and we argue that his interpretation of Islam amounts to something like an “Islamic lifestyle and success guide”, which he supports by many references to modern psychological advice literature from the West.

In the three chapters of Part III we look at the discourse of Sufis and of their opponents, the Salafists and Jihadists. Chapter five analyzes the writings of the major Sufi authority of Daghestan (and probably of the whole of Russia), Shaykh Said-Afandi Chirkeevskii, who was killed by a female suicide bomber in August 2012. Here we are interested in the image Said-Afandi created of himself, how he reflected upon the situation of the Naqshbandiyya-Shadhiliyya brotherhood in the Soviet Union and today, and how he attempted at reviving its spiritual practices under the new conditions. The texts shed light on the political and religious techniques that allowed Said-Afandi to make his branch of the brotherhood the dominant Sufi group in Daghestan and beyond. Here we also discuss the shaykh's views on his opponents (other Sufi groups as well as the "Wahhabis"), and on the role of women in Islam.

The sixth case study is from a village in Western Siberia, where the preacher Rafail' Valishin established himself as a major authority of Islam. Considering himself a disciple of the above-mentioned Daghestani shaykh Said-Afandi, Valishin led most men of his village community into the Naqshbandiyya-Shadhiliyya Sufi brotherhood. We translate two of Valishin's "self-published" pamphlets in which he heavily attacks the (as he calls them) "Wahhabis" in Siberia, in particular migrant Tajik preachers but also high functionaries in the local Islamic Spiritual Administrations. Valishin's booklets stand out for their huge amount of Arabic Islamic terms that largely remain untranslated, making his sermons veritable "insider texts". Interestingly, those whom he attacks, the Salafis, use the same style; we show this with the example of Abu Maryam, a Tajik preacher based in Saudi Arabia whose Russian-language online sermons enjoy popularity among Salafi-inclined young Muslims in the Russian Federation.

In chapter seven we introduce the reader to the Islamic language of the Jihadists in the North Caucasus, the sworn enemies of the Sufis and of the Russian government. Kavkaz Center, the online propaganda platform of the underground "Caucasus Emirate", is a collective enterprise and therefore reveals a wide variety of Islamic styles. For our case study we look at the style of its current leader, the self-proclaimed "Emir" Dokku Umarov. At first glance, his highly politicized language of Islam is characterized by a huge amount of untranslated

Arabic loanwords; at a closer look, however, we see that the pool of these Arabic terms is rather restricted (if, for example, compared with the above-mentioned Tajik preacher in Medina), so that the jihadist text remains comprehensible also for the non-initiated. Fighting for Islam does not presuppose an in-depth knowledge of Islamic law and dogma.

The fourth and last part of this volume, “Russian Muslims”, leads us into the milieu of “ethnic Russians” who became Muslims. The two protagonists we selected for translation and analysis, Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova (ch. 8) and Vadim (Harun) Sidorov (ch. 9), clearly made their choice for Islam out of political considerations; in their interpretations, Islam appears as a system in which political rule enjoys religious legitimacy. Both Ezhova and Sidorov came from radical Russian youth protest circles, and both converted to Islam in the early 2000s under the influence of the well-known Moscow “neo-traditionalist” Islamic philosopher and public figure Geidar Dzhemal’ (b. 1947). Translating their political identity into religious and political sectarianism, Ezhova and Sidorov however chose two very different models – that of Khomeini’s Iran, in the first case, and that of the ultraorthodox Sunni Murabitun World Movement, in the case of Sidorov (who is also head of NORM, the “National Association of Russian Muslims”). While they oppose each other in their left-wing/right-wing political orientations, Ezhova and Sidorov display a striking number of similarities in their language use, which reveals their common academic approach to Islam.

A broader analysis of the place of ethnic Russian Muslims within “Russian Islam” is then offered in chapter ten by our Tatar colleague Prof. Dr. Renat Bekkin (Islamic Studies, Kazan Federal University), who is himself a prominent personality in the academic and literary discourse on Islam in Russia. After a short survey of the history of Russian conversion to Islam, from the medieval period to the present, Bekkin looks at contemporary prominent personalities like Ezhova, Sidorov and Viacheslav (Ali) Polosin; and in the third part of the article Bekkin focuses on Russian Islamic art literature, with cases related to the “Islamic Breakthrough” Award competition of 2005 and 2006 and the Islamic literary journal *Chetki* (2007-2012) that he was himself in charge of.

Our conclusion will attempt to look at this broad array of material from a comparative perspective, to see whether we can speak of an emergent “Russo-Islamic” sociolect that accompanies the emergence of the new multinational Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation.

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PART I:
MUSLIM INTERPRETATIONS OF ISLAM IN
THE SOVIET UNION

FROM MIRASISM TO EURO-ISLAM: THE TRANSLATION OF ISLAMIC LEGAL DEBATES INTO TATAR SECULAR CULTURAL HERITAGE

Alfrid K. Bustanov and Michael Kemper

Tatar Mirasism in the Soviet Union

In the Soviet Union, Islam was always a highly politicized issue. In the first years after the 1917 October Revolution the Bolsheviks still regarded the Muslims of Russia as peoples that had been oppressed by Russian Tsarist colonialism, and that were therefore natural associates in the Soviet project of modernization. Indeed, in the 1920s many Muslim intellectuals and teachers of modernist inclination (“Jadids”) joined the Bolsheviks in the Volga-Urals, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and found employment in Soviet institutions. While the Orthodox Church was strongly identified with the Russian Empire, Tsarism and Imperialism, and therefore came under full attack from early on, things developed differently with regard to Islam. Marxist theoreticians had no consensus on the “class character” of Islam; in the 1920s, there was a prolific debate among Marxists of whether Islam was “bourgeois” or “capitalist” in character, or “Bedouin” and “agricultural”; and some authors even found socialist elements in Islam. All of these views were supported by arguments from the Quran or from Islamic history, and the whole debate was meant to help establish how the young Soviet state should relate to Islam. This relatively diverse Marxist debate about Islam was aborted in the early 1930s, when during the radicalization of the political debate it was established that Islam was “feudal” in character, and that Islamic authorities always used to defend the political and economic interests of feudal exploiters. This characterization gave “academic” legitimacy to the full-blown campaigns against the Muslim elites that took place in the course of collectivization, the “Cultural

Revolution”, and the Red Terror of the 1930s.¹ The second half of the 1930s saw the complete destruction of the Islamic infrastructure (mosques, schools, libraries) and the execution, imprisonment or exile of almost the whole Islamic religious elite, including most prominent Jadids who had cooperated with the new government. Also many of the Orientalists who wrote about Islam in the 1920s, including devoted Marxists, were persecuted or killed. The “feudal character of Islam” became a long-standing dogma of Soviet historiography and Oriental Studies, with only slight modifications in the post-war period.

Under “High Stalinism”, from the late 1930s through the war years to Stalin’s death in 1953, Russian historiography rehabilitated the Russian heroic past: Moscow’s conquest of Kazan and the Volga area in the mid-sixteenth century, Russia’s subjection of the Caucasus in the early and mid-nineteenth century, its gradual conquest of the Steppe and finally, in the 1860s to 1880s, of Central Asia, were regarded as beneficial not only for Russia but also for the Muslim nations of those regions, who, voluntarily or against their will, were drawn into the orbit of “progressive Russia”, and thus benefitted from the integration into the Russian market, from Russian cultural influences and, eventually, from the 1917 October Revolution. This interpretation stressed the concept of “Friendship of Peoples”, and it cemented the leading position of the Russian nation as the “Big Brother” of all other peoples of the Soviet Union.² In contrast to the 1920s, when historian Mikhail N. Pokrovskii (1868-1932) and his school had claimed that the Russian conquest was an “absolute evil” for the colonized peoples, after 1938 the incorporation of non-Russians into the Russian empire and their ensuing contacts with Russians were regarded as having brought the Muslims towards economic, social and political progress. In the late 1940s and early 1950s the well-known “anti-cosmopolitanism” campaigns initiated a new witch-hunt against scholars who wrote about Islam and Muslim literature. These political campaigns were meant to isolate the histories and cultures of the Soviet Muslim nations from

¹ Michael Kemper, “The Soviet Discourse on the Origin and Class Character of Islam, 1923-1933”, *Die Welt des Islams* 49/1 (2009), 1-48.

² L. Tillet, *The Great Friendship: Soviet Historians on the non-Russian Nationalities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1969.

their broader Middle Eastern (Oriental) contexts. Huge parts of the national literatures were still taboo, as for example the Edigey epic cycles of the Tatars, Bashkirs, and Central Asian nations, and almost everything Islamic.

The decades after Stalin's death in 1953 witnessed the strengthening of national historiographies in the USSR republics, where multi-volume "republican" histories were produced, all within the same interpretational frameworks and following a similar chronology, and all with only negative references to Islam.³ Yet while the Party maintained its strict authority of defining the history of the Soviet peoples, Tatar historians started to revise the concepts that had been dominant in Soviet historiography during Stalin's reign, and to pay more attention to Tatar sources.

In 1981 the US scholar of Central Asia Edward Lazzerini described the Tatar socialist historians' rediscovery of the Tatar people's great past as "Mirasism",⁴ from Arabic *mirath*, "heritage", "patrimony". In the Tatar publications since the 1960s the word *miras* (also in the form *mirasibiz*, 'our heritage') became the core

³ On the Soviet republican histories see A.K. Bustanov, *The Soviet Oriental Projects in Kazakhstan: Institution-Building, Networks, Discourses, 1920s-1980s*, unpubl. PhD Thesis (Amsterdam, 2012); Yuri Bregel, *Notes on the Study of Central Asia*, Papers on Inner Asia (Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University: Uralic & Altaic Series, No.28, 1996); S. Abashin, "Ethnogenesis and Historiography: Historical Narratives for Central Asia, 1940s-1950s" (forthcoming); Z. Auezova, "Conceiving a People's History: the 1920-1936 Discourse on the Kazakh Past," in: *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. by M. Kemper and S. Conermann (London, New York, 2011), 241-261; E.E. Allworth, *The Modern Uzbeks: From the Fourteenth Century to the Present. A Cultural History* (California, 1990), 225-244; A. Khalid, "Nation into History: The Origins of National Historiography in Central Asia," in S.A. Dudoignon (ed.), *Devout Societies vs. Impious States? Transmitting Islamic Learning in Russia, Central Asia and China, through the Twentieth Century* (Berlin, 2004), 127-145; T. Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: the Case of Tajikistan* (Baltimore, London, 1970), 233-241.

⁴ E.J. Lazzerini, "Tatarovedenie and the 'New Historiography' in the Soviet Union: Revising the Interpretation of the Tatar-Russian Relationship," in: *Slavic Review*, 40, 4 (1981), 625-635; E.L. Lazzerini, "The Revival of Islamic Culture in Pre-Revolutionary Russia: or, why a Prosopography of the Tatar Ulema?" in: Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, S.E. Wimbush, *Turco-Tatar Past – Soviet Present. Studies Presented to Alexandre Bennigsen* (Paris, 1986), 367-372. Cf. also Azade Ayşe Rorlich, "Not by History Alone: The Retrieval of the Past among the Tatars and the Azeris", *Central Asian Survey* 3.2 (1984), 87-98.

concept for re-evaluating the Tatar national cultural and literary heritage in a Soviet framework. While Lazzerini defined Mirasism only as “studies of Volga Tatar culture, society, and history”,⁵ similar processes were also underway in other places where Tatars lived, from Belorussia to Krasnoiarsk, and from Tiumen to Tashkent. Mirasism developed in the period from the late 1950s to the 1980s, but as we will see below, it still has huge repercussions for Tatar national historiography today.

Following Lazzerini we can define Tatar Mirasism as an intellectual movement that included a number of factors. First, Tatar scholars manifested a growing interest in pre-revolutionary Tatar literary culture, including Oriental manuscripts and archival sources. This return to Tatar history as an object worth studying included the rehabilitation of pre-revolutionary and early Soviet Tatar intellectuals who had previously been condemned as enemies of the people; the focus of Tatar Soviet historiography had hitherto been on the Tatars’ contacts with progressive Russians, not on their distinction from them. Mirasist studies fed into the writing of the first Tatar national/republican history,⁶ and they also contributed to the development of studies of the history of the Tatar people at Kazan State University. Mirasism produced an impressive range of reference works, including Tatar dictionaries, Soviet bibliographies on Tatar history, an anthology of pre-modern Tatar literature, and, in the early and mid-1980s, a multi-volume history of Tatar literature.⁷

Similar forms of Mirasism also developed among other Soviet “Muslim” nations, including the Tajiks and Uzbeks.⁸ Mirasism was thus one of the major intellectual all-Soviet developments that one can identify for the post-War

⁵ E.J. Lazzerini, “Tatarovedenie and the ‘New Historiography’,” 625.

⁶ *Istoriia Tatarskoi ASSR*, 2 vols (Kazan, 1955-1960).

⁷ *Antologiiia tatarskoi poezii* (Kazan, 1957); *Borinġi tatar ädäbiyatı* (Kazan, 1963); *Tatar ädäbiyatı tarixı*, six vols (Kazan, 1984-1990); *Tatarskie narodnye poslovitsy*, ed. by N. Isanbet, two vols (Kazan, 1959-1964).

⁸ For general works on Mirasism among the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union see: Stéphane A. Dudoignon, “Djadidisme, mirasisme, islamisme,” in: *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 37, 1-2 (1996), 12-40; Yaacov Ro'i, “The Soviet and Russian Context of the Development of Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia,” in: *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 32,1 (1991), 123-141.

period; as a dynamic and multi-faceted intellectual movement, a new look at Mirasism might contribute to a reconsideration of the concept of “Stagnation” that still encapsulates our view of the USSR of the 1970. Especially for the non-Russian and Muslim nations of the USSR, the Brezhnev years (1964-1982) were a period of intense modernization,⁹ and, one can argue, also of a second wave of “Soviet cultural build-up” (the first one being the *kul’turnoe stroitel’sтво* of the 1920s and 1930s); in this second wave, Soviet identity was framed through Mirasism.

To understand the watershed that Mirasism meant in the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic it is helpful to regard it as a generational movement – as a trend among scholars who were educated in the late Stalinist period but whose careers came to blossoming in the decades of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. These young scholars emancipated themselves from the elderly generation of Soviet scholars who still had a vivid memory of the experience of state terror in the 1930s, and who were troubled seeing younger scholars embark on fields that they themselves had no knowledge about, and that they would have preferred to remain closed.

Let us first look at the intellectual milieu of “Mirasism” historians who made their careers at the two main research historical institutions which existed in Tatarstan’s capital Kazan at that time: Kazan State University (KGU), as the dominant institution for Tatar history writing, and the Ibragimov Institute (the Kazan Branch of Institute of Language, Literature and History of the USSR Academy of Sciences) as the leading Tatar institution for philological research. At KGU it was Mirkasym A. Usmanov (1934-2010) who became the leading expert of pre-Soviet Tatar history. Usmanov’s numerous academic works covered a wide range of topics, from the diplomatic history of the Golden Horde in the 14th-16th centuries over Tatar early modern (“feudal”) historiography to, in his later years,

⁹ Artemy Kalinovsky, “What we talk about when we talk about ‘Stagnation’”, introductory paper for the international workshop “Reconsidering Stagnation”, March 30-31, 2012, University of Amsterdam (publication in preparation).

the biographies of Tatar intellectuals of the 19th and early 20th centuries.¹⁰ In these works Usmanov formulated some of the main principles of the new vision of Tatar history, and today he is widely regarded as the father of a new, source-based and balanced Tatar historiography that created room for the proud expression of Tatar historical identity in a Soviet framework.

Between the late 1950s and 1980s many more Kazan-based historians investigated the Tatar historical sources. To be mentioned here are Abrar G. Karimullin (1925-2000), who published widely on the pre-revolutionary printed books of the Kazan Tatars (in Kazan book printing in Arabic letters started as early as 1801);¹¹ Al'bert S. Fetkhiev (Fätkhi, 1937-1992), who worked on the heritage of Tatar writers and scholars, producing some small but still valuable descriptions of Tatar manuscripts written by Islamic scholars from the region;¹² Naki S. Isanbet (Zakirov, 1899-1992), who studied Tatar folklore;¹³ and Marsel' I. Akhmetzianov (Äxmätjanov, b. 1939) from the Ibragimov Institute,¹⁴ who is still publishing on Tatar genealogies, manuscript culture and epigraphic inscriptions.¹⁵ All of these scholars were in close contact with each other, shared ideas and discoveries, and influenced a number of junior scholars who are now in leading academic positions.

The basis for the reinterpretation of Tatar history was sources. As many Tatar libraries had been destroyed in the 1930s, it was of utmost importance to recover

¹⁰ Usmanov's major works of the 1970s include: M.A. Usmanov, *Tatarskie istoricheskie istochniki XVII-XVIII vv.* (Kazan, 1972); idem, *Zhalovannye akty Dzhuchieva Ulusa XIV-XVI vv.* (Kazan, 1979); idem, *Zavetnaia meçhta Khusaina Faizkhanova. Povest' o zhizni i deiatel'nosti* (Kazan, 1980).

¹¹ A.G. Karimullin, *U istokov tatarskoj knigi* (Kazan, 1971); A.G. Karimullin, *Tatarskaia kniga nachala XX veka* (Kazan, 1974).

¹² A. Fetkhi, *Tatar ädipläre häm galimnäreneng qulyazmaları*, three fascicles (Kazan, 1960-1968); A.S. Fetkhiev, *Tatar ädipläre häm galimnäreneng qulyazmaları* (Kazan, 1986).

¹³ N. Isanbet, *Tatar teleneng frazeologik süzlege*, 2 vols. (Kazan, 1990).

¹⁴ In the early 1990s the Ibragimov-Institute for Literature, Language and History was split up into one institute for History and another one for Art, Language and Literature, both now under the new Tatarstan Academy of Sciences.

¹⁵ Among Akhmetzianov's main monographs are: M.I. Akhmetzianov, *Tatarskie shedzhere: issledovanie tatarskikh shedzhere v istochnikovedcheskom i lingvisticheskom aspektakh po spiskam XIX-XX vv.* (Kazan, 1991); M.I. Ähmätjanov, *Tatar qulyazma kitabı* (Kazan, 2000).

and take stock of the written heritage of the Tatars, and especially the huge unpublished manuscript production of Tatar Muslim authors of the pre-revolutionary period. In 1963 Usmanov initiated, at KGU, a program for collecting old manuscripts from the population ("archeographic expeditions"), the results of which were regularly published.¹⁶ Between 1963 and 1989 Usmanov directed the field research himself, going out during the summer vacation with a group of students and specialists for searching and collecting manuscripts in villages and cities of the Volga-Urals, but also in Tatar settlements of Central Russia and Western Siberia; since 1990 this expedition has been led by Usmanov's disciple Zavdat S. Minnullin. The results of these efforts are very impressive: over the decades, the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts of Kazan University's Library was enriched by more than ten thousand manuscripts in Turki (Tatar), Arabic and Persian, by about 1.500 old printed books and journals, and by several personal archives.¹⁷ These books and documents had for the most part been produced in the Volga region; others came from other parts of Russia or from Central Asia, Turkey, the Arab Middle East, Iran, and the Caucasus.

This new source base stimulated new research on Tatar history, language and literature. However, the historians still largely circumvented topics that had direct relation to Islam; they did excellent work on Muslim historical sources, and on Muslim historiography, but worked less on scholars of Islam (except if these scholars were also historians). On this basis of new "Oriental" sources there were several attempts, especially by Usmanov, to re-establish classical Oriental Studies at Kazan University. Still, these initiatives failed; it was only in the 1980s that a plan to set up Oriental Studies at KGU found the support of the university leadership, but due to the political and economic crisis in Russia the plans were

¹⁶ M.A. Usmanov, *Qauriŷ qalām ezennän. Arxeograf yazmaları* (Kazan, 1984).

¹⁷ For a general overview of the history of manuscript expedition see M.A. Usmanov, R.A. Shaikhiev, "Nekotorye itogi i zadachi arkhograficheskikh ekspeditsii Kazanskogo universiteta po vyivleniiu vostochnykh rukopisei (1963-1982)," *Stranitsy istorii Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia* (Kazan, 1984), 147-162.

introduced only piecemeal.¹⁸ In result, the number of young cadres who were trained in reading Oriental sources remained very limited; and within the RSFSR there was no academic training in Islamic Studies outside of Moscow and Leningrad (and partly, Makhachkala).

Iakh'ia G. Abdullin (1976): Reading Islamic Scholars as “Tatar Enlighteners”

Next to this source-based revival of classical Oriental Studies on Tatar history and literature there was, and still is, another branch of “Mirasism”, one that was in Soviet times concentrated in the section for *Obshchestvennaia mysl'* (“Social/Political Thought”, a discipline located somewhere between Marxist philosophy, history and social studies) at the Ibragimov-Institute for Language, Literature and History. The scholars in this field did not read Arabic-script sources, even though these sources were now available in the University library; instead, they preferred to work with Russian makeshift translations that had been produced by low-ranking co-workers at the Institute whose names are mostly not even mentioned in their publications.

What these Tatar Soviet scholars of “Social Thought” did was to produce a “Soviet Socialist” reading of Islamic sources which neglected the Islamic context and translated the religious writings into a secular language of social progress. Some Muslim scholars of the 19th century who produced works in the fields of Islamic theology, law or Sufism were thus presented as “free-thinkers”, “enlighteners”, and as critics of the “obscurantist tradition of Islam”. The major representative of this side of Mirasism was the historian Iakh'ia G. Abdullin (1920-2006), who worked at the Ibragimov-Institute since 1971 and for a while even functioned as its director. Abdullin wrote a series of books and articles on the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries “Tatar thinkers”, some of them published in Russian and others in the Tatar language, and several of them well-placed in the popular-academic Tatar literary journal *Qazan utlari* (“The Flames

¹⁸ Mirasym A. Usmanov, “The Struggle for the Reestablishment of Oriental Studies in Twentieth-Century Kazan”, *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies*, ed. by M. Kemper and S. Conermann (London, New York, 2011), 169-202.

of Kazan”, a major platform of Mirasism).¹⁹ As Mirasism was supported by the national republican academic infrastructures, it met little criticism. The study of Tatar Islamic literature of the 19th century with a conceptual framework of *Islamic studies* started only in the early 1990s, and was largely initiated by Western scholars.²⁰

Today it is easy to dismiss the Tatar “Social Thought”-type Mirasism for their obvious shortcomings and conscious misconstructions, some of which will be discussed below. Yet Mirasism should also be seen in the context of the general frameworks, facilities, pressures and incitements that Soviet scholars were facing. Historians, when dealing with Islam, could easily be denounced as “bourgeois nationalists” (who, by extolling the pre-Soviet literature of his or her particular nation, undermined the achievements of Soviet modernization and the “Friendship of Peoples”) or, even worse, as “Pan-Islamists” who called for a return to Islam as a political ideology (since Islam continued to be regarded above all as an “ideology” which was “propagated” by those Sufis and scholars of the 19th and early 20th century).

In fact, the Mirasist translation of Islam into a language of Soviet Tatar cultural heritage, with all its manipulations, was probably the only way how the Islamic heritage of the nineteenth-century ‘Tatar’ Islamic theologians could be brought back into the academic discourse. In the framework of the new paradigm it was essential to identify a number of “progressive” Muslim writers as “enlighteners” and to place them in opposition to a larger number of “traditional”, “obscurantist” scholars of Islam. The latter remained unstudied, and fell into the amorphous category of “Qadimism”, which was understood as the group of arch-conservative Islamic authorities and Sufi shaykhs who propagated only the old

¹⁹ Yaxya Abdullin, „Dini täglimatqa häm sufichiliqqa qarshi“ [„Against the Religious Dogma and Sufism“], *Qazan Utları* 2/1974, 149-159; Iakh“ia G. Abdullin, *Tatarskaia prosvetitel'skaia mysl' (Sotsial'nai priroda i osnovnye problemy)* (Kazan, 1976); idem, „Dzhadidizm, ego sotsial'naia priroda i evoliutsiia“, in: *Iz istorii tatarskoi obshchestvennoi mysli* (Kazan, 1979), 91-117.

²⁰ Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and "Bulghar" Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden; Boston, 1998); Michael Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien. Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin, 1998).

(Arabic *qadim*) and “scholastic” way of blindly accepting Islamic authorities of the past, and who taught their students to learn Arabic texts by heart without understanding their contents. The ideas of the “enlightener” theologians were regarded as “positive for their time” not because but *although* they reformed Islam; in this view nineteenth-century “progressive” Muslim authors still had to express their ideas “in the cloak of religion” because of the conservative nature of Tatar society, but still, their ideas were progressive. From the Mirasist perspective one would therefore just have to eliminate the Islamic surface of any discursive statement, to come to the core of the authors’ real social intentions. In the Mirasist reading, Islamic contents were thus pressed into the Marxist evolutionary straitjacket, and secularized: fighting against the “dark ignorance” in a society that was still characterized by feudal relations, the early Tatar “enlighteners” initiated a larger development of “Social Thought” that led to, first, the “bourgeois” Jadid educational reform movement and then the Tatar national movement, which in turn prepared the ground for the first Tatar socialists and Bolsheviks.

One of the best examples of this trend of Mirasism is Iakh”ia Abdullin’s 1976 monograph *The Tatar Enlightenment Thought (Tatarskaia prosvetitel’skaia mysl’)*.²¹ One of Abdullin’s major protagonists was the Tatar Islamic scholar ‘Abd an-Nasir al-Qursawi from the Tatar village of Qorsa (1776-1812). Qursawi was one of the first Islamic scholars from the Volga area who produced original works on Islamic law (Arabic: *fiqh*) and theology (*kalam*, lit. “dispute”; and *‘aqida*, “dogma”), and he became a very controversial personality already during his lifetime. In the Mirasism discourse Qursawi became the first Tatar enlightener who fought against the medieval dogmas and the stagnation of human thought in his contemporary Muslim society.

From Qursawi the line of transmission went further to an even greater personality for Mirasism, the Islamic scholar Shihabaddin al-Marjani (1818-1889) of Kazan. Marjani’s oeuvre encompassed Arabic writings on Islamic law and theology (in the lines of Qursawi) but also Tatar historiography, in the Tatar

²¹ Ia.G. Abdullin, *Tatarskaia prosvetitel’skaia mysl’ (Sotsial’naia priroda i osnovnye problemy)* (Kazan, 1976).

language; Marjani's historiographical work was therefore even more open for a "secular" reading than that of Qursawi, who produced only works on law and theology, and only in Arabic. For the Mirasists, the establishment of an indigenous Tatar Enlightenment tradition that goes back to the early 19th century, and that had its roots in Tatar culture, provided the Tatars with an own trajectory of progress so that they would no longer be regarded as just recipients of Russian modernization. What was left out of consideration was the circumstance that the nineteenth-century Tatar scholars of Islam were part of a broader Middle Eastern, and even global, movement of Islamic reform; similar ideas were discussed in many parts of the Muslim world, and they were genuinely religious.

How did the Mirasist "transfer" of these writings from an Islamic context into the framework of "enlightenment" and cultural heritage take place in detail? For this study we take crucial passages from Abdullin's argument on Qursawi, and compare them with what it is taken from, namely passages from Qursawi's major Arabic work *The Guide for Allah's Servants* (*al-Irshad li-l-'ibad*). Qursawi's book had been published only in Arabic, posthumously in 1904.²² Most probably, Abdullin relied on an unpublished Russian (or Tatar?) translation of Qursawi's work (or at least of some of its parts) produced by Zainap Maksudova, a less prominent co-worker of the Institute who knew Arabic and Persian.²³

The first passage we offer here deals with the role of Sufism (Islamic mysticism, Arabic *tasawwuf*), which was a central element of the Mirasist discourse: opposition to Sufism ("obscurantism") was regarded as a positive step on the way of liberating the nation from the shackles of the past:

²² Abu al-Nasr 'Abd an-Nasir ibn Ibrahim al-Bulghari al-Qursawi, *Kitab al-irshad li-l-'ibad* (Kazan, 1904). A full Russian translation of Qursawi's book has been produced more recently by Gul'nara Idiätullina: *Abu-n-Nasr Kursawi. Nastavlenie liudei na put' istiny (al-Irshad lil-'ibad)* (Kazan, 2005).

²³ Our assumption that Abdullin used Maksudova's Tatar translation is based on our identification of a very similar paraphrase of Qursawi's text fragment in the 1985 history of Tatar literature (*Tatar ädäbiyatı tarixı*, vol. 2 [on 19th century Tatar literature], Kazan, 1985, p. 23), where Maksudova's translation is referred to in a footnote. Reportedly, Maksudova's translation of Qursawi's book is preserved together with her private archive in the Institute of Art, Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Republic of Tatarstan.

Abdullin's Russian text:	Our translation of Abdullin's text:
<p>/65/ Kritika sufizma v tatarskoi prosvetitel'skoi mysli beret svoje nachalo tozhe s G. Kursavi, kotoryi nevezhd, pretenduiushchikh na sverkhatsional'noe poznanie bozhestva, kharakterizuet kak liudei rasputnykh i beznравstvennykh, a rukovodstvo tasoufom – dorogoi, vedushchei v bezdnu. "Na protiazhenii poslednykh stoletii, - pishet on, - sredi liudei poluchili rasprostranenie priniatie obiazatel'stva byt' vernym tasoufu, pretenzii na irshad (nastavlenie na put' istiny v sufizme) i istirshad (sledovanie etomu nastavleniiu). No eti liudi ne znaiut ni smysla tasoufa, ni tseli ego. I vse zhe oni prodolzhaui pogruzhat'sia v glubokii mrak. Po svoemu polozheniiu oni skhozhi s liud'mi, tonushchimi v beskrainem more i okutyvaemymi volnami, kotorye pogruzhaui ikh v bezdnu."</p>	<p>The critique of Sufism in the Tatar enlightenment literature also started with G. [i.e., Gabdannasyr] Qursawi; he characterized the ignorant people who pretended to [possess] the irrational knowledge of God as libertines and as immoral, and he said that to take <i>tasawwuf</i> as one's guidance is a way that leads into an abyss. He wrote: "Over the last centuries the people have accepted the idea that it is mandatory to be faithful to <i>tasawwuf</i>, and that claims to <i>irshad</i> (guidance on the true way in Sufism) and <i>istirshad</i> (the following of this guidance) have also become widely accepted. However, these people know neither the meaning of <i>tasawwuf</i> nor its goal. Still, they are continuing to sink into deep darkness. Their situation is similar to that of people drowning in an endless sea, and who are covered by waves which drag them into a chasm."</p>
In Qursawi's Arabic original, p. 51:	Our translation of the Arabic original:
<p>و لقد شاع فيما بين الناس في عصرنا و الاعصار السالفة منا الانتساب الى التصوف و دعوى الارشاد و الاسترشاد لكن لا يعرفون ما معناه و ما الغرض منه و لكنهم يعمهون في ظلمات بعضها فوق بعض او في بحر لجي يغشاه موج من فوقه موج</p>	<p>Today just like in previous centuries the belonging to <i>tasawwuf</i> and claims to <i>irshad</i> [spiritual guidance] and <i>istirshad</i> [being guided by a spiritual teacher] found wide spread among the people. However, the [Sufis] do not know the meaning of <i>tasawwuf</i> and its goal, and they are wandering in the darkness, one deeper than the other, or in a deep sea where they are covered by continuing waves.</p>

From a philological point of view there is no big difference between the Arabic original and Abdullin's paraphrase. Yet while the paraphrase is almost correct, Qursawi's ideas are put into a very different framework of interpretation, and therefore represented in a manner that is simply wrong. Abdullin wanted to show that Qursawi opposed the Sufi sheikhs and those who follow them because the latter did not understand the corrupt essence of Sufism; Qursawi therefore appears as an opponent of Sufism in general. The Arabic original suggests a very different picture: Qursawi speaks about the mistakes of those who do not know what Sufism really stands for. The whole chapter devoted to Sufism in Qursawi's book explains the true way to Allah, arguing that true *tasawwuf* has to be closely linked to *shari'a*. Qursawi did not portray Sufism as such as a corrupt phenomenon, but to the contrary expressed his deep respect: "*Tasawwuf* consists of cleaning the heart from destructive traits of one's character and from this-worldly aspirations, [and it is] in agreement with the natural forms [of man]".²⁴ Also, Qursawi often refers to well-known Sufis as positive examples of morality. As shown elsewhere, Qursawi's critique of the shaykhs and their followers was above all an attack on the particular Sufis of Bukhara, where he studied for a while and where he came into a severe conflict with many leading scholars and Sufis (and where his life was saved by the intervention of his own Sufi master, the Naqshbandiyya mujaddidiyya shaykh Niyazquli al-Turkmani, d. 1820).²⁵ In other words, Qursawi attacked the specific practice of Sufism in Central Asia. This is by no means a token of an anti-Sufi "enlightenment"; rather, mutual accusations of corruption were commonplace in Sufi literature, and the call for a "shari'a-minded" form of Sufism, the one that Qursawi demands in this text fragment, is

²⁴ Qursawi, *Kitab al-irshad li-l-'ibad* (Kazan', 1904), 51.

²⁵ Kemper, "Entre Boukhara et la Moyenne Volga: 'Abd an-Nasir al-Qursawi (1776-1812) en conflit avec les oulémas traditionalistes", *Cahiers du Monde russe* 37 (1-2) 1996, 41-52; Kemper, "Šihābaddīn al-Marḡānī über Abū n-Nasr al-Qūrsāwīs Konflikt mit den Gelehrten Bucharas (Einleitung, arabischer Text und Übersetzung)", in: Anke von Kügelgen, Ashirbek K. Muminov, Michael Kemper (eds.), *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia*, vol. 3, (Berlin, 2000), 353-383.

what characterizes the Sufi brotherhood of the Naqshbandiyya, both in Central Asia and in the Volga region, to which Qursawi himself was affiliated.

The second text fragment we offer here for comparison is on the issue of *taqlid* and *ijtihad*, that is, on a highly controversial question of methodology in the Islamic legal tradition. *Ijtihad* (lit. “to make an effort”, here: to exert oneself for finding a legal decision by referring to the sources of Islam, the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet) is, on the one hand, a synonym for *qiyas* (“analogy”), which is an accepted and important methodological instrument in Islamic law; in fact it is one of the well-known four “pillars” of Islamic law.²⁶ *Qiyas* means, roughly speaking, to find the solution of a contemporary “new” legal problem that has not yet been sufficiently or convincingly treated by other scholars by turning to the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet in order to identify similar cases in those two text corpora; the similar case then allows the *mujtahid* (the scholar who performs *ijtihad*, in most cases a Mufti who writes a *fatwa*, that is, a letter of legal advice) to make an analogy with the “new” case and to judge the new case in the light of the analogy. A simple case would be: the Quran declares that a certain sort of wine that was used in seventh-century Arabia is prohibited (*haram*); today the question arises whether Vodka is also *haram*; the *mujtahid* finds that wine is prohibited in the Quran because it intoxicates; Vodka also intoxicates; therefore it is also *haram*. In this definition *ijtihad* is the central tool of the Islamic legal scholar, at all times. On the other hand, after the 9th or 10th century scholars seem to have gradually reached a consensus that in Sunnism there can be no more *mujtahid* who claims that his own *ijtihad* is so encompassing, and so different from what has been done before, that he must be regarded as an “independent *mujtahid*”, that is, as a *mujtahid* who is independent of the four established Sunni *madhhabs* (schools of Islamic law; i.e. the Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii and Hanbali

²⁶ The other three “pillars” of Islamic law that the major Sunni schools agree upon are the Quran, the Sunna (the prophetic tradition that comprises the hadith reports about the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad) and, number three, the consensus (*ijma'*) as the community opinion of the scholars. While Quran and hadith are material sources, *qiyas*/analogy/*ijtihad* is the only methodological “pillar”; “consensus” is largely a rhetorical argument, since it is open to discussion whose consensus is meant, and the Islamic tradition is full of dissent.

schools), and who would therefore set up his own, fifth school of Sunni law. This consensus has often been described as amounting to the end of *ijtihad*, “the closing of the gate of *ijtihad*”. Still, also in the subsequent centuries Islamic legal scholars and Muftis continued to practise *ijtihad*, simply because with the time many more new legal questions arose that found no clear direct (literal) treatment in the Quran and the hadith, and that had not yet been worked out by the historical founders of the four legal schools and their disciples. Here the common solution was to declare that one’s *ijtihad*, dictated by necessity, was not “independent” but bound to the methods of the legal school to which the individual scholar and his public adhered. Scholars subsequently developed a sophisticated gradation system with categories of *ijtihad*, ranging from the “independent” *ijtihad* (which was now regarded as the prerogative of the four historical school founders) over “*ijtihad* within one’s own legal school tradition” to various forms of *taqlid* (lit., “following”). Yet also in *taqlid* a gradation became accepted, from a *muqallid* (the person performing *taqlid*) who has the ability to check the statements of the scholar whom he follows by comparing them with the texts of Quran and Sunna, over a believer who has no legal training and is thus obliged to “follow” the scholar whom he regards as the most competent, and finally to the most simple believer who has to “blindly accept” a scholar’s opinion without knowing why he does so (but knowing that he has to follow at least someone in order not to be without any guidance). So even in the case of *taqlid*, Islamic legal theory calls upon the believer to achieve at least a minimum of expertise to be able to check statements of the scholar the *muqallid* follows.²⁷

Qursawi, in his major legal work *al-Irshad* and also in his theological writings, made exactly this case for *ijtihad* “as good as one can”. At the same time he repeatedly maintained that he was no “independent” *mujtahid*, and that he remained true to the founding fathers of his legal school, the Hanafi *madhhab*. This is reflected in the fact that in his writings he constantly refers not only to Quran and Sunna but also to Abu Hanifa (d. 767) and his direct disciples,

²⁷ For an outline of these issues in more detail see Wael B. Hallaq, “Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?”, *Int. J. Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (1984), 3-41, and other writings by the same author.

Muhammad al-Shaibani and Abu Yusuf; as Abu Hanifa's disciples often came to other deductions than Abu Hanifa himself, Qursawi found a sufficiently broad range of legal answers even within the Hanafi school from which he could pick to support his own opinions. The particular problem Qursawi dealt with in many of his writings was the question how to perform the fifth daily prayer (the night prayer, which is, according to Islamic tradition, to be performed when complete darkness has set in) in the northern territories (i.e., Russia) where there is no complete darkness in the summer nights. Qursawi's reasoning was that Allah's general requirement for his believers to pray five times a day (and thus also to perform the night prayer, even when there is no night) has more weight than the traditional statement that the night prayer should be performed only when it is dark.²⁸

Let us now have a look at what Abdullin makes out of Qursawi's statements on this issue:

Abdullin:	English translation:
<p>/69/ Podniav znamia ratsionalizma i propoveduia svobodu chelovecheskogo razuma, tatarskie prosvetiteli ne mogli primirit'sia s ideei taklida. Vpervye golos protesta protiv nego podnial G. Kursavi. Priznanie obiazatel'nosti sledovaniia za avtoritetami i obvinenie v smertnykh grekhakh tekhn, kto skhodit s ikh puti, po ego mneniiu, iavliaetsia otstupleniem ot istiny. On edko vysmeivaet liudei, kotorye slepo povtoriaiut chuzhie slova i bez razmyshleniia vosprinimaiiut chuzhoe mnenie, sravniavaet ikh s sobakoi, neotstupno sleduiushchei za khoziainom. "Tysiachi amirov ili</p>	<p>Hoisting the flag of rationalism and preaching the freedom of human reason, the Tatar enlighteners could not agree with the idea of <i>taqlid</i>. It was Qursawi who for the first time raised the voice of protest against it. According to him, those who accept that it is obligatory to follow the authorities, and who declare that those who do otherwise are committing a deadly sin, are themselves committing apostasy from the truth. Qursawi acidly ridiculed those who blindly reiterate the words of others, and who without reflection accept the opinion of others. He compares them with a dog that constantly follows its owner. Qursawi</p>

²⁸ Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 272-306.

<p>liudei, pytaiushchikhsia vydat' sebia za uchenykh, - pishet on v svoei knige "Al'-irshad lil'-gyibad", - mogut tysyachi raz sovershat' odno i to zhe deistvie. No eto ne znachit, chto nuzhno verit' v pravil'nost' ikh postupka i sledovat' ikh primeru. Predstavlenie v kachestve dokazatel'stva deistviia amirov ili drugikh deiatelei, priniatie v kachestve obraztsa dlia sebia tekh uchenykh, kotorye kruzhat u poroga, porozhdeno /70/ lish' bol'nym voobrazheniem nevezhd i gluptsov."</p>	<p>writes in his book <i>al-Irshad li-l-'ibad</i>: "Thousands of rulers or people who are trying to pose as scholars can repeat the same act for thousands of times. But this does not mean that one has to believe in the correctness of their act and to follow their example.</p> <p>The idea that the actions of rulers or other persons can be accepted as a proof [for the correctness of this action], to take those scholars who spend their time at the doorstep [of the rulers] as a model for oneself, results only from the sick imagination of ignorant and stupid people."</p>
<p>Qursawi's Arabic original, p. 42:</p>	<p>Our translation of the original:</p>
<p>و لو عمل به الف امير او الوف ممن تزيى بزي العلم فلا يعمل به و لا يعتد عليه و الاحتجاج بعمل العمال و الامراء و من لازم ابوابهم من العلماء اصل خامس اخترعه او هام اهل الغفلة و الجهالة</p>	<p>Even if this was done by a thousand of rulers, or by thousands of those who wear the garment of a scholar: this does not mean one has to follow it and to rely on it. To argue by the actions of the officials and rulers and of those scholars who hang out at their doors, is the fifth argument [for <i>taqlid</i>] that is produced by the self-delusion of ignorant and stupid people.</p>

Abdullin used the second quote to prove that Qursawi was against blind imitation of authorities and even propagated "rationalism and freedom of human mind". However, Qursawi did not oppose all the methods of *taqlid*: on the same page in his work, Qursawi made it clear he rejected only extreme cases of *taqlid* when already nobody knows the source and the chain of transmission of this or that particular legal opinion: "There is no objection from our side when they have a correct basis in the Shari'a (*asl min al-usul al-shar'iyya*) or a correct narration [i.e.,

a *hadith*] transmitted through a reliable theologian (*naql sahib min thiqat mujtahid*), and that would allow them [to judge as they do]; but if they do not have a basis in the Shari'a, and if they do not have or a correct narration transmitted through a reliable theologian, then they act without knowledge and judge without a Shari'a basis, and that is nothing else but *bid'a* [i.e., forbidden innovation] and error."²⁹ So *taglid* is permitted as long as the *muqallid* knows that he follows a reliable Mufti/*mujtahid*.

As discussed above, Qursawi's "rationality" was completely bound to the question how to understand Allah's commands, and which of them weighs more under certain geographical circumstances, the general command to pray or the more specific "attachments" to the general command, namely when to pray; and he used this reasoning only in matters of Islamic ritual practice and in some theological questions about how to conceptualize Allah's otherness. Abdullin's selective reading of Qursawi's treatise on these issues leads to a grotesque simplification: Qursawi's endorsement of going back to the Quran and the Sunna is treated as rationalism and enlightenment, without even mentioning the Islamic context (that is, Qursawi's embeddedness in a very sophisticated discourse of scholars of Islamic law (*fuqaha*'), with their very specific terminology), and without discussing the legal cases in which Qursawi operated. Important is to note that also Qursawi's opponents like 'Abdarrahim al-Bulghari (d. 1834) – a scholar who argued that *ijtihad* was no longer possible, and who was therefore not turned into an enlightener by Abdullin and his school – used rational arguments from within the same Hanafi tradition, and their efforts to compare the various statements of their Hanafi predecessors to come to a solution of the night prayer problem in the North were no less "rational" than Qursawi's theological writings. The only difference in this particular issue was that they did not declare their reasoning to be *ijtihad* (particularly out of piety towards the great predecessors), and secondly that they regarded Allah's commandments as not being subject to a differentiation between "general", absolutely mandatory requirements and "secondary" rules that might be dropped if the geographical

²⁹ Qursawi, *Irshad*, 42.

conditions demand it. ‘Abdarrahim al-Bulghari therefore adopted the viewpoint that the night prayer must be left out when the God-given marker for this prayer, the night, does not come.³⁰

Interestingly, both Qursawi and al-Bulghari shared their detest of the Islamic practice in the Khanate of Bukhara, where they had spent some years of learning at the feet of the local scholars, and they especially detested the protection that certain shaykhs and scholars received from the Manghit rulers of the Bukharan Emirate (as can be seen from Qursawi’s quote above, where he refers to the amirs); both argued that Islam has to be purified (in the sense of *tajdid* and *islah*, the perennial ideas of a “renewal” and “reform” of Islam) from the corruption they perceived around them. So the Soviet Marxist ‘Mirasist’ actually sided with that of the two rival scholars who demanded more prayers!

For Abdullin, *taqlid* is the “blind following of authority”, taken out of the context of Islamic law; consequently, *ijtihad* is for him also “rational and free thinking”.³¹ Abdullin does not give us a term that Qursawi might have used for denoting his “enlightenment”; but it would be no mistake to say that what stands behind Abdullin’s concept of “enlightenment” in the text is *islah*, which literally means “repairing contemporary Islam to bring it back to the original Islam”, but which he violently misreads as “enlightenment”. This misinterpretation was only possible by completely neglecting the Islamic context of Qursawi’s individual statements, and also his broader agenda.

Mirasism Today

This is the way how the Tatar secular academic intelligentsia of the 1970s translated Islamic terminology into secular notions of rationalism, by denuding the local Islamic literature of its religious meaning and transferring it into a

³⁰ On ‘Abdarrahim see Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 172-212.

³¹ For the attempts of Soviet anti-Islamic writers of the post-war period to identify a tradition of “free thinking” (*svobodomyслиe*) within the Islamic tradition see also Kemper, “Ljucian Klimovič, der ideologische Bluthund der sowjetischen Islamkunde und Zentralasienliteratur“, in: *Asiatische Studien – Études Asiatiques*, vol. LXIII-1 (2009), 93-134, here: 122.

broader debate about a progressive cultural heritage that had clear political overtones. Also important to note here is that what Abdullin constructed was a *Tatar*, that is, national, tradition of enlightenment. However, in Qursawi's time the term "Tatar" was not yet accepted as the ethnic self-denomination of the Tatar-speaking Volga Muslims; while Russians did call the Muslim population 'Tatars', the latter associated this with the infidel Mongols, and accepted this term only in the late nineteenth/ early twentieth centuries. In Qursawi's time most "Tatar" authors used to sign their writings with the ascription (*nisba*) "al-Bulghari" ("from Bulghar"), to express their affiliation not in ethnic but in cultural and religious terms, to an Islamic Volga-Urals area that had its center in the ancient Muslim site of Bulghar, south of Kazan. According to local legends of the 19th century and earlier, Bulghar was the place where the Islamization of the region had started, still in Muhammad's lifetime.³² The projection of twentieth-century ethnic/national denominations back into the early 19th century was (and still is) commonplace not only among the Soviet and post-Soviet scholars of Tatarstan but also in neighboring Bashkortostan, leading to cases where particular Islamic personalities (like the above-mentioned 'Abdarrahim al-Bulghari) are claimed as Tatars by the Tatar historians and philologists and as pure Bashkirs by their Bashkir colleagues.³³

The construction of a Tatar enlightenment tradition that had its roots in the early 19th century, and that then proceeded to the Tatar representatives of the Jadid movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, has been very popular in

³² Frank, *Islamic Historiography*, for these legends.

³³ See the Tatar literary history *Tatar ädäbiyatı tarixi*, vol. 1 [medieval period, ed. Sh.Sh. Abilov] (Kazan, 1984), 428-443, where 'Abdarrahim al-Bulghari is called Gabderäxim Utiz-Imäni, since Utiz Iman, where 'Abdarrahim worked for a while, is a village in present-day Tatarstan (to call him "Bolghari" was obviously considered not appropriate because it would refer to a larger Volga-Urals area, not to Tatarstan specifically); and, for the Bashkirs' view, *Bashqort ädhäbiyatı tarixi* vol. 1 [medieval period, ed. G.B. Khusainov] (Ufa, 1989), 468-482, where 'Abdarrahim al-Bulghari is called "Gäbderäxim Usman", since both "Bolghari" and Utiz Imäni" would refer to places in neighboring Tatarstan. Many more examples of "double listing" can be found in these two competing but overlapping and very similarly constructed literary histories of the Tatars and Bashkirs.

Tatarstan up to our days. Many prominent Tatar historians still support this enlightenment tradition and distinguish the “enlightened”, “rational” and “tolerant” Tatar Islam from the allegedly “backwards”, “dogmatic” and “medieval” Islam of the Middle East. Just like Abdullin attempted to draw Qursawi and his followers close to a European concept of Enlightenment, so also Rafael Khakim (Khakimov, b. 1947), the director of the Institute of History of the newly created Academy of Sciences of Tatarstan (and until 2008 State Advisor to the President of Tatarstan) attempts to understand Tatar Islam in a European way.³⁴ This is how Khakim interpreted the work of Qursawi:

“At the turn from the 18th to the 19th centuries the theologian Qursawi called upon the Tatars to modernize Islam. At that moment a movement started that became known as “Jadidism” (from the Arabic “*al-jadid*”, meaning renewal, reform). Qursawi wrote: ‘You are no true and pious Muslims. You moved away (*otstupili*) from Allah’s Quran and from the traditions of the Prophet.’ He rejected the *madhhabs* and suggested to turn [directly] to the holy book, and to come to a critical evaluation of the existing traditions. In the eyes of his contemporaries the following of *taqlid* (authority) [277:] was not a method for salvation, and what was needed was an independent inquiry – *ijtihad*. And for Qursawi the public opinion (*obshchestvennoe mnenie*) could not be taken as a criteria for what was the truth. He held that the scholar who was convinced of the truthfulness of his own judgment (*rassuzhdenie*), and [who was convinced] that his judgments were in accordance with the ‘straight path’ (*priamoi put’*), could regard himself as a *jama’at* (community of Muslims) [of his own], and therefore had the right to act according to his own views, even if his actions were rejected by the majority. A person who defends the truth (*istina*) is equal to the community. This idea was revolutionary for Tatar theology. Qursawi’s ideas were continued by a brilliant line of Tatar theologians. The major pathos of the Jadids was the struggle against *taqlid*, [a struggle] for critical thinking, for a high education of each Muslim, for the equal rights of men and women, for tolerance in relations

³⁴ Rafael Khakim, *Where is Our Mecca? (Manifest of Euroislam)*, <http://www.kazanfed.ru/en/authors/khakimov/>; R. Khakim, *Dzhabidizm (reformirovannyy islam)* (Kazan, 2010).

with other religions, and for openness to the cultural achievements of Europe. Jadidism is the source of all contemporary Tatar culture.”³⁵

This is a beautiful example for the translation of Qursawi’s legal discourse via Jadidism to present-day Tatar culture. This line of thought leads to a formulation of what Khakimov calls “Euro-Islam”, and that is interpreted as flowing out of the Islamic positions of Qursawi, Marjani and the Jadid movement:

“The term ‘Euro-Islam’ needs to be understood as a contemporary form of Jadidism. (...) ‘Euro-Islam’ reflects above all Islam’s culturological aspect (*kul’turologicheskii aspekt*), more than its ritualistic part, which is left to the discretion of the individual person. The key thesis of Euro-Islam is the special focus on *ijtihad*: the method of critical reflection as a necessary condition for the contemporary interpretation of the Quran.”³⁶

What we see here is that “ritualistic” Islam is sidelined; according to Khakim, “rituals cannot be a criteria for distinguishing a believer from a non-believer”.³⁷ This amounts to a rejection of the concept of the individual Islamic duties (prayer, fasting, and so forth) – an opinion to which only few “believers” will subscribe. What Khakim puts at the center of his view of Islam is *ijtihad* in its broadest definition, not as a specific method of legal deduction (that Qursawi, as we saw above, used for finding answers to burning questions of the Islamic *ritual*!) but as something universal that can best be described as an open, critical and “progressive” attitude, opposed against a largely undefined “medieval backwardness”. Khakim:

“The struggle of the reformers against the medieval traditions should not be understood as a struggle between ‘true’ Muslims against the adherents of innovations (*novovvedeniia*)³⁸ or against heretics (*eretiki*). [Rather,] it is a struggle

³⁵ Rafael’ Khakim, “Islam v Povolzh’e”, in : R. Khakim, *Ternisty put’ k svobode* (Sochineniia. 1998-2007) (Kazan, 2007), 276-284, here: 276-7 (our translation). The article is also available online in a full English translation, as: Rafael Khakimov, “Euro Islam in the Volga Region” (2004), <http://www.kazanfed.ru/en/authors/khakimov/>

³⁶ Khakim, “Islam v Povolzh’e”, 281.

³⁷ Khakim, “Islam v Povolzh’e”, 282.

³⁸ [Obviously in the sense of Arabic *bid’a*, “forbidden innovation in Islam”.]

between progress (*progress*) and backwardness (*ostalost'*), for in the Quran one can find verses that defend both positions."³⁹

And finally, *ijtihad* transcends the realm of the Muslim world:

"*Ijtihad* brings the East closer to the West; it is the very beginning of liberal thinking (*liberal'noe myshlenie*). If a free personality acquires education and sciences, if he strives for the progress of society, then this is completely acceptable not only in Western but also in Islamic culture. Islam was given to the World for progress, to liberate people from slavery and bondage; Islam in itself is justice, freedom of spirit, and the strife for knowledge. Islam calls for tolerance and condemns violence. It is flexible enough to provide answers to the challenges of our time."⁴⁰

The attempt to represent the Tatar tradition of *ijtihad* as "Euro-Islam" of course goes beyond Abdullin's conceptual framework because it accepts Islam in the Tatar tradition as a positive phenomenon in itself, something which was not possible in the 1970s. In a similar direction goes another leading Tatar academic historian, Aidar Khabutdinov, who sees Qursawi as "a leader of the nation" and at the same time as "an Islamic Martin Luther",⁴¹ similarly taking the work of Qursawi (and of other Islamic scholars from the Volga-Urals) out of their context of a legal debate that also encompassed many other parts of the Muslim world. Perhaps Khakim's "Euro-Islam" is also meant as an alternative to the more traditional concepts of "Euro-Islam" proposed by well-known intellectuals in the West like Tariq Ramadan;⁴² Khakim's Tatar model of "cultural Islam" (denuded of all religious aspects in general) is presented as a model for all European Muslims.

³⁹ Khakim, "Islam v Povolzh'e", 279.

⁴⁰ Khakim, "Islam v Povolzh'e", 284.

⁴¹ A.Iu. Khabutdinov, *Lidery natsii* (Kazan, 2003), and many other works of the same author.

⁴² Cf. Tariq Ramadan, "Manifesto for a new 'WE': An Appeal to the Western Muslims and Their Fellow Citizens", the Independent, 6 July 2006, downloadable in an extended version at: <http://www.tariqramadan.com/Manifesto-for-a-new-WE,743.html?lang=fr>; Tariq Ramadan, *To be a European Muslim* (Leicester, fourth edition 2010), and the growing Western literature on and by Ramadan.

While *ijtihad*, in its broader meaning as “liberal free reasoning, criticizing the tradition” has become a buzzword in the twentieth-century discourse of Islamic reformism all over the Muslim world, the Soviet and post-Soviet debates in Tatarstan still stand out for their thoroughly secular transmutation of the *ijtihad* concept and also for their link to a particular national identity. By contrast, the centuries-old tradition of the sophisticated regional Islamic legal discourse where the *ijtihad* concept originally came from, was by 1976, and even more so by 1991, practically dead in Tatarstan.

The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Islamic scholars from the Volga region, from Qursawi over Marjani to Jadid scholars like Rida’addin ibn Fakhreddin (Riza Fakhreddinov, d. 1936) and Musa Jarallah Bigi (d. 1949), had been part of a broad professional Islamic discourse. They wrote books and treatises on issues of legal and theological methodology and theory which they then linked to practical questions like the night prayer in the North (or, similarly, on the question of how to end the daily fasting in Ramadan during Russia’s “White Nights”), and also to the question of whether the use of tea or coffee is permitted, and whether a Muslim may take a Christian girl as his wife. They also produced treatises and commentaries on theological problems of how to understand Allah’s attribute of Mercy (*al-rahma al-ilahiyya*),⁴³ or more generally how to imagine Allah’s eternal “essence” in relation to his non-eternal “attributes” that exist only in relation to His creation (attributes like Creating, Speaking, Seeing, Hearing and so forth that are mentioned in the Quran as Allah’s names, but that do not make logical sense before there was something to see and hear).⁴⁴ After the end of the Soviet Union, this professional, classical scholarly tradition of Islamic law (*fiqh*) and theological dispute (*kalam*) has not been fully revived. The professional knowledge and the skills of Quranic and traditional interpretation

⁴³ Musa Dzharullakh Bigiev, *Izbrannye trudy*, vol. 1 (Kazan, 2005), section 1 “Dokazatel’stva bozhestvennogo miloserdiia”). Translated from the Ottoman by Aidar Khairutdinov, in Rafik Mukhametshin’s series “Antologiya tatarskoi bogoslovskoi mysli”, the major enterprise to republish academic translations of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Tatar Islamic scholars and intellectuals.

⁴⁴ Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte*, 243-271.

that had been transmitted in Tatar madrasas over centuries cannot be reinvented, even if there is a new and expanding “turbaned” elite of Muftis and a new system of religious teaching institutions. But perhaps even more important is that those questions that Tatar scholars dealt with before 1917 appear today as completely unfashionable, and even as useless; today’s Muslims – and especially the Muslim youth in the Russian Federation – are less interested in religion as a system, in sophisticated legal and theological debates, than in religiosity as a lifestyle.

ADMINISTRATIVE ISLAM: TWO SOVIET FATWAS FROM THE NORTH CAUCASUS

Michael Kemper and Shamil Shikhaliev

The two documents that we are presenting and analyzing below are fatwas from the Soviet Spiritual Administration for the Muslims of the North Caucasus (*Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man severnogo Kavkaza*, DUMSK), dating from 1959 and 1986, that is, from the Khrushchev and the Gorbachev periods, respectively. The 1959 fatwa was signed by Mufti Magomed-Khadzhi Kurbanov (1888-1975, in office 1950-1975); the one of 1986 was produced by Mufti Makhmud Gekkiev (1935-2010, in office 1978-1989). Both fatwas attack shrine veneration in Daghestan, a practice commonly associated with Sufism.¹ And still, the two fatwas and their authors differ in a number of interesting ways that reflect the history of the North Caucasian Islamic Administration over the Soviet decades.

DUMSK

The North Caucasian Muslim Spiritual Administration was established in 1944, at a time when similar directorates/Muftiates were also opened in Baku (for the Muslims of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia) and in Tashkent (for Central Asia and Kazakhstan); and at that time also the “old” Muftiate for European Russia and Siberia in Ufa (established back in 1788 but rather dysfunctional since 1936) was given a new life. It is often argued that the creation of “official Islams” in the

¹ For similar fatwas from Soviet Central Asia see Bakhtiar Babajanov, “O fetvakh SADUMa protiv ‘neislamskikh obychev’”, *Islam na postsovetskoy prostranstve: vzgliad iznutri*, ed. A. Malashenko and M. B. Olcott (Moscow, 2001), 170-184; E.M. Tasar, *Soviet and Muslim: The Institutionalization of Islam in Central Asia, 1943-1991*. Unpublished PhD Thesis (Cambridge 2010). For pre-revolutionary fatwas from Central Asia on Sufi topics see B.M. Babajanov and S.A. Mukhammadaminov (eds.), *Sobranie fetv po osnovaniyu zikra dzhakhr i sama'* (Almaty; Tashkent, 2008).

Caucasus and Central Asia resulted from Stalin's attempt to shore up Muslim support for the war effort against Nazi Germany. While this is certainly true, the establishment of these new bodies was prepared gradually, in particular through Soviet government decrees "On the Guidelines of the Opening of New Churches" (Nov. 1943) and "On the Regulation of the Opening of Prayer Houses of Religious Cults" (July 1944). To some extent this meant a liberalization of state policies towards the Russian Orthodox Church as well as towards Islam and other non-Orthodox faiths. However, amendments to these legal acts adopted in 1945 imposed numerous restrictions on the opening of prayer buildings. Religious organizations were forbidden to perform educational, manufacturing or any other kinds of activities in these buildings. Still, registered Muslim communities could use their mosques and prayer houses free of charge, although the buildings continued to be property of the state or, in the villages, of the local *kolkhozes*. When an Islamic community was successful in its petition for an official licence to open a Friday mosque, it also obtained the right to collect voluntary donations from the believers and to conclude contracts as well as to employ "persons performing religious rites", such as muezzins (callers to prayers), imams (leaders of the prayer in the mosque) and *qadis* ("Islamic judges", whose function was however not to administer Islamic law but to mediate in conflicts around mosques and to report to the Muftis).²

The North Caucasus Muslim Spiritual Administration DUMSK was in charge of Islamic affairs of the Muslim populations of eight Soviet autonomous republics and regions (*oblasts*) in the North Caucasus.³ It was located in

² For more details see V.O. Bobrovnikov, A. Navruzov, Sh. Shikhaliev, "Islamic Education in Soviet and Post-Soviet Daghestan", *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, ed. by Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, and Stefan Reichmuth (London: Routledge, 2009), esp. 128-133. For the Soviet institutions dealing with Islam in the USSR see Yaacov Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev* (London, 2000).

³ These were the Daghestan ASSR, the Kabarda ASSR (since 1957: Kabardino-Balkar ASSR), the North Ossetian ASSR, the Adyge Autonomous region, the *raions* of Krasnodar and Stavropol, the Region of Grozny and, since 1957, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic and the Karachai-Cherkes Autonomous Region (the latter were re-established after the rehabilitation of their deported populations).

Daghestan, first in the town of Buinaksk and later, from 1973 onwards, in Daghestan's capital Makhachkala, and most of its officials were representatives of Daghestani nations. Chaired by a Mufti, DUMSK became a Soviet-style directorate in charge of processing, approving or rejecting the applications from Muslim communities (*jama'ats*) to open mosques and prayer houses and register their *imams*; the final decisions were always made on higher level, by the Council for Religious Cults (SDRK) in Moscow, in consultation with the KGB. DUMSK also took part in the management of the *hajj* pilgrimage which was partly restored in 1944-1945 (but which was in fact open to only a few officials). Russian became the official language for DUMSK correspondences, especially with the Authorized Representative for Religious Cults at the Council of Ministers of the Daghestani Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the Council for Religious Cults in Moscow, and also for the archive of the Muftiate. Still, the archive documents show that the DUMSK officials had only a weak command of Russian. For internal affairs and correspondence with the mosque communities they used the Kumyk and Avar languages. All officials of DUMSK, including those of Avar nationality, knew Kumyk, since most of them had for some time studied in Kumyk settlements of the Daghestani lowlands.

By spring 1945 there was not one legally functioning mosque in Daghestan and other "Muslim" republics of the North Caucasus. Between 1945 and 1950, the newly established DUMSK received 19 applications for the opening of mosques from communities in Daghestan and Kabarda. The first officially opened mosque in the North Caucasus was the historical Shi'i Friday mosque in Derbent (26 May 1945), followed by ten Sunni Friday mosques in Daghestani villages and a small Sunni Friday mosque in the centre of Makhachkala (1946). By 1951, according to data from the SDRK, as many as 35 mosques were functioning in the North Caucasus, 26 of which in Daghestan, 7 in Kabarda and 2 in Adyge.⁴ Compared to the time before the October Revolution, and even before the collectivization of the late 1920s, this was almost nothing; according to a report of the authorities, the number of mosque buildings that still existed in Daghestan by

⁴ Bobrovnikov, Navruzov, Shikhaliev, "Islamic Education in Soviet and Post-Soviet Daghestan", 130.

1986 amounted to 540, most of which were used for non-religious purposes or simply dilapidated. Of these 540 only 27 were “officially functioning” in 1986.⁵

The first DUMSK officials (including the very first Mufti, Khizri Gebekov, and his successor Magomed-Khadzhi Kurbanov) had obtained a local Daghestani Islamic education, of the time before the 1917 Revolution or of the 1920s when there were still functioning madrasas (Islamic schools) in Daghestan. They had learned their profession on the spot as “unofficial” students of imams and then as imams of, for the most part, “unregistered” mosques; and probably they were proud of the Islamic education they had obtained under difficult conditions. As we will see below, this changed in 1978, when the authorities installed a Mufti who had studied Islam not at home but at one of the two only Islamic teaching institutes in the Soviet Union, the Mir-i Arab madrasa in Bukhara (Soviet Uzbekistan).

In the 1950s to 1980s, the Muftis of the North Caucasus were thus in charge of a rather rudimentary “official” Islamic infrastructure, and they found themselves under strict control of the state organs and the Communist Party. Yet in the countryside there were many prayer houses that were not officially registered; Muslims simply gathered for prayer in private houses, in defunct mosque buildings, or in the open, at Islamic tombs (*mazars*) and graveyards. The two fatwas that we reproduce below reflect this situation: “unofficial”, that is, not authorized Muslim authorities continued to act as leaders of Islamic rituals, and ignored the purview of the Mufti.

In the 1970s and 1980s Western observers often regarded these “unofficial” Islamic practitioners as a potential threat to the Soviet state, and the Sufi brotherhoods as organizations with political aspirations. These assumptions of Western Sovietologists were fed by occasional Soviet newspaper reports about continuing Sufi circles in the Daghestani mountains, and by Soviet popular or academic anti-religious propaganda that depicted traditional Islam as a serious

⁵ G.I. Kakagasanov, M.D. Butaev, A.I. Osmanov (eds.), *Vlast' i musul'manskaia religiia v Dagestane (noiabr' 1917 g. – dekabr' 1991 g.)* (Makhachkala, 2007), p. 215.

obstacle to Soviet modernization⁶. Recent research has largely rejected these assumptions. In fact, it is very questionable to link the “unofficial” continuation of Islamic practises to anti-Soviet activities – believers simply found ways to practice Islam in private, or in semi-clandestineness, because the official infrastructure did not reach them; and in spite of all propaganda efforts, they were largely left to their own devices. Political motives among “unofficial” shaykhs and imams are rarely documented; rather, there is reason to assume that most of them made their peace with the Soviet system (although below we will also encounter a case documenting the contrary). Also, we now understand that the alleged dichotomy of “official” versus “unofficial” Islam was not as rigid as one might have gathered from the official publications; rather, persons who started their religious career as “unregistered” imams in the countryside stood in contact with the Muftiates, and could be hired for jobs in the “official” Islamic establishment; and certainly the Muftis and their officials were well aware of the “non-registered” mosques, and also visited them in order to exert control over the countryside, and to collect donations.

Our first text (of 1959/60) comprises three documents, namely an internal DUMSK report about a 1960 conference of the Spiritual Administration in Buinaksk where the problem of shrine veneration had been discussed and where it was decided to take action, second a speech of Mufti Magomed-Khadzhi Kurbanov that he had delivered at that meeting, and thirdly the fatwa itself, which had obviously already been produced the year before. These documents nicely reflect the “Soviet way” in which decisions and documents were produced, namely in regularly reoccurring “collective campaigns” that drew their legitimacy not from one individual but from a (staged) strategic debate with specialists in the cities (and later endorsed by Kolkhoz gatherings in the rural localities). The documents also show how decisions were implemented: through reading out statements in the mosques, through sending “authorized personnel” to the shrines to “explain” the un-Islamic character of ziyarats to the locals (and then to report

⁶ A. Bennigsen, S.E. Wimbush, *Mystics and Commissars, Sufism in the Soviet Union* (London & Berkeley, 1985); A. Bennigsen, M. Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London, 1983).

back about their alleged successes), and in some cases through putting crude pressure on individual “false shaykhs” by summoning them to a DUMSK interrogation that ended with the signing of a paper by the “culprit”. The document also tells us about one official DUMSK representative who was obviously involved in “illicit” practices, showing that the above-mentioned dichotomy between “officials” and “unofficials” was rather blurred.

The text will be followed by our analysis as to terminology, styles and specific contents. After this block we offer the 1986 fatwa and an analysis of the changes between the two.

First document:⁷

Mufti Kurbanov’s fatwa against shrine veneration, 1959/1960

[page 121:]

Protocol

On May 28, 1960 a meeting was held in Buinaksk, Ordzhonikidze Street 28, in the house of the Spiritual Administration, which was attended by the members of the Spiritual Administration, the city and village cadres (*gorodskie i sel’skie kadry*) – altogether 36 persons. The Qadi of the mosque of Botlikh, Mirzoev Sakhratula, was elected chairman of the conference (*soveshchanie*), and the deputy chairman of the Spiritual Administration Abdulaev Shamsutdin was elected secretary.

The conference stipulated unanimously:

- 1) To support the lecture of the Spiritual Administration by Kurbanov M.G.
- 2) To conduct a decisive fight against false shaykhs (*lzheshkeikhi*) and to achieve the closing-down of the so-called “holy places” and to stop the pilgrimage to the “holy places”.
- 3) Schoolchildren and women are not to be allowed to go to the mosque.
- 4) To unmask the false shaykhs, to not allow them to deceive the believing people (*veruiushchie liudy*) and to take precious things from them.

⁷ Central State Archive of the Republic of Daghestan (TsGA RD), Fond upolnomochennogo po delam religioznykh kul'tov pri Sovete Ministrov DASSR (fond 1234), inventory 4, document 35, folios 120-130.

- 5) To struggle with the old customs (*starye obriady*) on weddings and funerals.
- 6) Fortune-tellers (*gadaiushchie*) without education as medical doctors are not to be allowed to deceive people. They deceive people and take their gold, silver and precious things, in order to improve their own business (*khoziaistvo*).
- 7) The lecture of Kurbanov with an explanation about the “holy places” and with the draft law (*zakonopolozhenie*) are to be [explained] on the occasion of every religious feast and on Fridays, in the mosque.

Chairman – Mirzoev

Secretary - Abdullaev

[Page 122:]

Speech of the Mufti of the Muslims of the North Caucasus on the Topic of “Ziyarats”

Dear and respected spiritual comrades (*dorogie uvazhaemye dukhovnye tovarishchi*), respected members of the Spiritual Administration and Qadis who work in the village and city mosques, who have followed the call of the Spiritual Administration to come here, we welcome [you] in the context of the discussion about a question which needs to be resolved with your participation.

Today I want to explain to you the following questions that are related to the “Ziyarat”.⁸

You all know that there are “Ziyarats” in Daghestan, where “Faithful” (*Pravovednye*) scholars-saints are buried.

In the village Nizhnee Kazanishche of Buinaksk raion there is a “Ziyarat” where Abdurahman Hajji Sughuri is buried.⁹ This ziyarat is visited by men and

⁸ [In Arabic, *ziyara* means ‘visit’; in the North Caucasus and in many other areas the term *ziyarat* (in Russian texts: *ziyarat*) has become synonymous with “holy place of a Muslim saint”. In the text above it is also used interchangeably with *mazar*, Arabic “place of visit”, here: Sufi shrine/mausoleum. In the Mufti’s texts, the term ziyarat is mostly written with a capital letter and in quotation marks, as if it was a book title].

women from all ends of Daghestan, together, like in a wedding, at one special time, that is, on 15 Sha‘ban¹⁰ of each year.

In the village of Paraul in Karabudakhkent raion there is a Ziyarat where Makhmudov Ilyas from Tsudakhar is buried,¹¹ and he is also visited at that time of the year.

In the village Utamysh¹² of Kaiakent raion there is also a Ziyarat, where, on the farmstead “Khapsha”,¹³ [the saints] Bagatyr Ada and Minatulla Ada¹⁴ are buried, and it is also visited by many people each year in the midst of the winter. It needs to be added that there are specific self-styled shaykhs (*samozvannye sheikhi*) and their subordinates (*podchinennye*) who continue to visit the Ziyarat.

As an example one needs to note that citizen Arslan Aliev Ganapi from the village of Geli in Karabudakhkent raion, who is now residing in Makhachkala and working as a master in the Tarki Road Sector, has opened, on his own initiative, for his personal interests and without the consent or knowledge of the government and of the Spiritual Administration, the Ziyarat in Utamysh which had been closed since the moment of the Revolution. In so doing he collected from the people donations worth 20.000 Roubles. Also, he constructed a house at the Ziyarat of Kazi Magoma Shaikh in Utamysh¹⁵ on the farmstead of “Khapsha”,

⁹ [Shaykh ‘Abdarrahman al-Sughuri (d. 1882), a famous shaykh of the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya in Avaria].

¹⁰ [Here and in the following spelled as: Shakhban].

¹¹ [Shaykh Ilyas al-Tsudaqari (d. 1904), a famous shaykh of the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya in Dargin and Kumyk territories, a murid of al-Sughuri; on the disputes about his successorship of Sughuri see also the chapter on Said-Afandi in this volume.]

¹² [This village – called Utamysh in Russian, Ütemish in Kumyk – is rendered in several forms in the course of the document, as Utemysh and Otemysh’].

¹³ [This farmstead is called Gasha in Russian, and Hasha in Kumyk; in the text the name is mistakenly spelled Khapsha or Khapasha. Also, the ziyarat is not close to Utamysh, as claimed in the text; rather, it is located about 3 km from Alkhodzkhakent in the Kaiakent raion. In 2000 the shrine was renovated by the descendents of those whom the Mufti here attacked].

¹⁴ [These names of ziyarats are rendered in varying forms in this document; we reproduce them as in the text.]

¹⁵ [This ziyarat (which is indeed located in Utamysh) is revered as the shrines of seventeen shaykhs. Kazi Magoma here is not the first Imam of the jihad period, Ghazi-Muhammad (ruled ca. 1828-1832) but another person, Ghazi Muhammad al-Utamishi. On him see *Muslim Culture in Russia*

and also [the shrines of] Bagatyr-Ada Mina Tula Ada. Comrade Arslanaliev had contact with self-proclaimed shaykhs and also with the Qadis who work on petitions [from the Muslim communities] in the countryside. So that they would recommend the visit of Ziyarat [to their communities]. Thus several thousand people were gathered, and were taken away from the kolkhoz work, and the religious service continued for ten days, during which more than 20.000 Roubles were collected as donations (*pozbertvovaniia*) in addition to some 70 pieces of sheep and goats, all sorts of income was organized without any inventory (*uchet*). Comrade Arslanaliev presented himself as if he had been sent onto this mission (*kommandirovan*) by the Mufti for the performance of the Ziyarat (*dlia provedeniia Ziiarata*).

All of these actions were motivated by the personal interests [of those individuals] [123:] against the shariat and for the deception (*obman*) of ignorant people (*temnye liudy*). Another person who took part in this deception with Arslanaliev was a certain self-proclaimed shaykh (*nekii samozvannyi sheikh*) citizen Magomed Amin¹⁶ who resides in the village Kaiakent, as well as citizen Rakhimov Abdula who resides in Tabasaran raion.¹⁷ The citizens Magomed Amin and Rakhimov Abdula were summoned by the Spiritual Administration and were demanded to stop further illegal actions, since their work is not

and Central Asia, vol. 4: Die Islamgelehrten Daghestans und ihre arabischen Werke. Naḍīr ad-Durgilis (st. 1935) Nuzhat al-adhān fī tarāḡīm ‘ulamā’ Dāḡistān, herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert von Michael Kemper und Amri R. Šixsaidov (Berlin, 2004), 99.]

¹⁶ [This is Muhammad-Amin (1915-1995), a shaykh of the Khalidiyya branch who obtained an ijaza from the Sufi line that goes back to Shaykh Jamaladdin al-Ghazighumuqi, but not via ‘Abdarrahman al-Sughuri (on these silsila issues see below, chapter on Said-Afandi). Muhammad-Amin had several khalifas (deputies/successors), including the highly respected Magomed-Mukhtar Babatov (b. 1954), Il’asov (b. 1947) and his own son, M.-G. Gadzhiev (b. 1956). See Shamil’ Shikhaliev, “Sufiiskii sheikh segodnia”, *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* (Moscow), 2006, No. 2, 24-34.]

¹⁷ [Abdullah Rakhimov represents the third line of the Khalidiyya branch in Dagestan. His successor in the Sufi line was Siradzhusdin Israfilov (Khurikskii), who was killed in 2011. See Shamil’ Shikhaliev, “Sufiiskie virdy Nakshbandiia i Shaziliia v Dagestane”, *Vestnik Evrazii* (Moscow), 2007, No. 3 (37), 2007, 137-152. See also Kimitaka Matsuzato and Magomed-Rasul Ibragimov, “Islamic Politics and the Sub-Regional Level in Dagestan: Tariqa Brotherhoods, Ethnicities, Localism and the Spiritual Board”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 57,5 (2005), 753-779.]

compatible with shariat. In spite of all this both citizens continue with their work to this day.

As all these actions are not compatible with Islam, because it is not allowed that men and women visit Ziyarats together, and also because the above-mentioned self-proclaimed shaykhs exploit the backwardness of the believing citizens (*otstalost' grazhdan veruiushchikh*), and use their valuable donations, when seeing all these actions the Spiritual Administration took the responsibility to remove all these pretenders (*samozvantsy*) from their bad activities and to make an end to it, and it explained to the believers which sorts of visits to the Ziyarat are allowed (*razreshaetsia*), and which are not allowed according to the explanations of the Quran and the hadith [*Koran i khadis*].

In the light of what has been said above, in 1959 the Spiritual Administration sent its co-workers (*komandirovala svoikh liudei*) to the open mosques (*po otkrytym mechetiam*) in order to explain the ban on visiting the Ziyarats, and they obliged the Qadis (*Kadii*) to forbid the visitation of Ziyarats [as it is] against the shariat.

It is known to all that in the beginning of the month of Rajab and in the middle of the month Sha'ban men visit the Ziyarats together with women. These visits are not foreseen by the Quran, but to the contrary, they are forbidden. All of these above-mentioned activities were carried out by false shaykhs exclusively in their own interests. Such visits have also been rejected by the prominent scholars of the shariat, and also by the learned ustadhes of the "Tariqat" (*uchenye ustazy "Tarikaty"*).

In particular it needs to be mentioned that the famous Imam and scholar "Ibnu Gadzharihgaitami"¹⁸ gave an exhaustive answer to the question of visits to a mosque by the name of "Dzhunaydi" in the beginning of the month of Rajab in the night of Friday, and also on the question of the visits of holy graves, and how the shariat looks at this: with his answer the scholar Ibn-khadzhar rejected any visitation of holy graves at a specific time and he added that all of these religious rituals of visiting Ziyarats by the backward-minded and ignorant-believers

¹⁸ [Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (d. 1565), a famous and prolific Egyptian scholar of the Shafii school of law.]

(*otstalye temno-veruiushchie*) are not mentioned in the Quran, and all of these self-proclaimed phenomena must be liquidated by the shariat authorities, for the visits [of Ziyarats] in the months of Rajab and Sha'ban have no basis (*iavliaetsia ne osnovatel'nyy*).

The wife of the Prophet Muhammad [here: Magomed] – Allah bless him – Aishat – Allah be content with her – said that the prophet Muhammad said that those should be cursed who turned the graves of their prophets into praying centers (*molel'nye ochagi*), and she added that I forbid to turn my grave into a center/praying house (*ochag molitvennyi dom*), and she also said to not visit a Ziyarat as a custom [during the] “bayram” feast. [Source is] *Sahih al-Bukhari*,¹⁹ page 358.

The prominent scholar and heir to the prophet, Imam Shafi,²⁰ Allah be content with him, also said in his book “Um-mu” that the visits to Ziyarats are forbidden.

In 1959 the Spiritual Administration published a Fetva/ban [here: *Fetva-zapret*] against the abnormal and unauthorized visits of Ziyarats by backwards believers. [124:] In addition we gave instructions (*ukazaniia*) to explain the lack of permissibility of the visits of Ziyarats, on the basis of the “Fetva”, on the spot [that is, in the regions].

In spite of this “Fetva”, and in spite of the bans of the shariat, the visitation of Ziyarats continued, led by the self-proclaimed shaykhs and with participation of the backwards-believing [Muslim population].

As a result of the continuous and steadfast explanatory work done by the Spiritual Administration, the bad activities decreased significantly, but they have not been completely eliminated.

On the general meetings of the kolkhozes in villages (*auly*) like Utamysh, Gapsh, Paraul and Nizhnee Kazanishche it was unanimously decided to close down the Ziyarats and to forbid any visits to them.

¹⁹ [*Sahih Bukhari*, one of the six major Sunni hadith collections, compiled by Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 870).]

²⁰ [Imam Shafi'i (d. 820), eponym of the Shafii school of law, author of the legal work *Kitab al-Umm*].

It is also known to us that Ziyarats may not be opened or visited without the knowledge of the government, and it is also not allowed to open mosques without authorization (*samovol'no*), in the adverse case we can be deprived of the religious rights that we currently enjoy.

And we are also obliged to love our Fatherland (*Rodina*), and to submit ourselves to its laws.

We have been informed that citizen Magomedov Magomed Rasul from the village of Uruta in the Khunzakh raion worked as deputy Qadi in the mosque of Buinaksk, worked honorably, traveled to Moscow to a festival and there he began to busy himself with things that are not necessary, for which he was judged and put into prison.²¹

As you see in the Quran: "Allah said and called upon everybody to submit to Allah, the prophet and one's government".

Dear brothers, we have to behave with a pure heart, like a shining mirror, an example for all people. We should not deceive the credulous people. Enrich ourselves by fraudulent (*nechestnymi*) actions. Also we should not mock the people, as [representatives of] a religion that is perverted by self-proclaimed shaykhs.

²¹ [This is Magomed-Rasul Mugumaev. Born in 1932 in the Avar village Orota (Khunzakh raion), Mugumaev first studied Islam in his native village and then at the Mir-i Arab madrasa in Bukhara. In the archive there is a note saying that he was excluded from the madrasa for misbehavior. In the 1950s he worked as an assistant of the imam of Buinaksk, but entered into a sharp confrontation with Mufti Kurbanov. In 1957 Mugumaev wrote an "Appeal to the Muslims of the Whole World" revealing the "subjugation of the USSR Muslims" and the pressure that the Soviet state exerts on Muslims. At the Youth and Student Festival in Moscow he hid this paper in a walking stick and attempted to smuggle it out of the USSR to the Middle East with the help of an Iraqi student. This student, however, had been hired by the KGB and handed the document over to the organs. Mugumaev was arrested on 9 August 1957, and was convicted by the Moscow City Court (according to the well-known paragraph 58-10, part 1 "Propaganda or agitation that contains a call for toppling, undermining or weakening Soviet power, or a call for committing individual counterrevolutionary crimes, and also the spread or production or keeping of literature") to seven years of prison labor camp. After his release he worked in the Sector for Oriental Studies in the Daghestani Branch of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In the 1990s Mugumaev was elected "informal Mufti" of the "United Congress of the Peoples of Daghestan and Chechnya". Mugumaev died in 2000. Interview with Prof. Dr. Amri R. Shikhsaidov, Makhachkala, June 2011].

As an example for a self-proclaimed shaykh we can say this. Citizen Aliev Radzhab from the village of Ansalta in Botlikh raion was in the beginning of the October Revolution a member of the Party and [was even] a Party organizer (*partorg*). Subsequently he became crazy (*on soshel s uma*). When the Spiritual Administration was opened he proclaimed that he was allegedly an assistant (*pomoshchnik*) of the former Konto Shaikh²² and he began to give the “Tariqat” to men and women. This is how the organization of prayer circles continues even today. He himself is not a scholar, he is not even able to read the “Koran” in a human manner (*po-chelovecheskii*).

When the Spiritual Administration observed these abnormal (*nenormal'nye*) actions of his, it summoned the above-mentioned citizen and demanded that he stop his false politics against the Muslim belief (*prekratit' svoiu lozhnuiu politiku protiv musul'manskoi very*), and as an exit statement [from the meeting] a signed document (*pis'mennaia podpiska*) was taken from him. Then his illegal activities were repeatedly unmasked (*razoblacheny*) on the pages of newspapers, [125:] and in spite of the brochure that the Spiritual Administration published, the above-mentioned citizen still continues to work, to deceive people.

Such abnormal sorties are still being observed, deceiving people, insulting the faith, and even strongly disturbing the work of the Spiritual Administration.

You [all] know that the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus, in its basic instruction (*osnovnym svoim rasporiazheniem*), in

²² [This is Kunta Hajji Kishiev from Inkho (Daghestan) but living in Iliskhan-Iurt (Chechnya), who in the late 1850s started a new Sufi movement in Chechnya which introduced public *dhikr* dances and was hence called ‘zikrists’ in Russians reports; the *shaykh* claimed to have been initiated, during a travel to Mecca, into the Qadiriyya. This was during the jihad imamate of Shamil, who prohibited music, and Kunta Hajji left for another *haji*; after his return in 1861 or 1862 he managed to attract followers and placed his deputies (*na'ibs* and *wakils*) in several Chechen communities, especially in the plains. Reportedly, Kunta Hajji preached not only hard work and abstention from blood feuds, theft and alcohol but also a pacifist attitude that appealed to the Chechens who were exhausted by decades of war; however some of his proclamations indicate that he expected a divine sign to start another *jihad*. Early the following year he was sent into exile to Novgorod province (where he died in 1867). Today there are several branches (called *virds*) of the Kunta-Hajji brotherhood in Chechnya and Ingushetia, and some groups in Daghestan. For their branches and tombs see Mairbek Vachagaev, *Sheikhi i ziiaraty Chechni* (Moscow, 2009).]

accordance with the facts of the shariat that are based on the “Quran and Hadith” (*osnovannym na “Koran i Khadis”*), explained [and demanded] that you prohibit [women]²³ from going to the mosque for prayers and for prayers on Fridays, and to pronounce the “Paternoster” (*“otchinashе”*)²⁴ in the month of Ramadan.

Comrades: Do not think that I am telling you things that have recently been invented (*novye vydumki*). Do not think that women are not allowed to pray and [that women are not allowed] to be righteous [or orthodox, *pravovernnye*] and that they do not have to serve god (*bog*), and also do not think that women are humiliated by the prohibition to go to the mosque. This does not mean that women are forbidden from taking part in the divine service (*bogosluzhenie*).

The Prophet Muhammad, Allah bless and greet him. He always instructed [his followers] that they should treat women with gentleness and respect, and that they, women, are just like men people of one sort. Allah said in the holy book “Quran”: Oh people, fear god, who created you from a united substance (*iz ob”edinennogo veshchestva*). From this substance he created his [i.e., Adam’s] wife and from both [genders] he spread men and women, in order that they treat each other friendly. Allah said in the most eloquent way: Righteous men and righteous women are relatives who push each other to good deeds and who push each other away from bad actions. The Messenger of Allah Muhammad [Magomed] said: “Nobody will humiliate a women except if he is a person without consciousness. Whoever has a conscience will honor the women.”

²³[This word is missing but the context in what follows makes it clear that women are meant.]

²⁴[The term referred to here, *otche nash* (“Our father”), is an Orthodox Christian prayer and has nothing to do with Ramadan; in Islam Allah is not addressed as “father”. What is meant here is the *tarawih* prayers in Ramadan, which are also performed by women. Usually the mosques have a “women part” which is segregated from the “male part” by a curtain; or the women pray on the upper floor. The *tarawih* prayer begins after the night prayer (the fifth mandatory namaz of the day), and it consists of five prayers with two prostrations each plus one more with only one prostration. In the breaks between the *tarawih* parts the imam reads other prayers and appeals to Allah, repeating *Allahumma inna nas’aluka al-tawba wa-na’udhu bika min al-nar*, “Our Lord, we ask you to make us repent and we take refuge with you from the fire.” The choice of the word “Paternoster” was obviously informed by this expression.]

But before the October Revolution women were like slaves, under the yoke of the customs (*pod gnetom obychaev*). They were deprived of equal rights. After the October Revolution the Soviet government and the Party gave women equal rights and liberated them from the yoke. The party paid special attention to elevating the role and authority of women – they educated some of them to teachers, doctors, agronomists and to specialists in other fields. In Daghestan we see many women as directors in institutions, in factories, even as pilots and drivers. We have to thank the Party and the government for providing women with all rights and with the necessary conditions for their everyday lives and for their cultural life.

To ban women from the mosques for prayers is not a form of suppression (*ugnetenie*) and humiliation. You know that in the past prominent scholars of Islam have refused women [the right] to go to the mosque, on the basis of factual [in the sense of ‘true’, ‘reliable’?] “hadiths” (*na osnovanii fakticheskikh “khadisov”*). [A hadith says:] Yahya transmitted from Urwat: I heard that the wife of the prophet, Aishat, said, if the prophet had seen that women go decorated (*nariazhennymi*) into the mosque [126:] then he would have forbidden them to go and pray, as it was forbidden to the women of “Banu Izrail”. When I asked Urwat, were the Izraili women really prohibited from going to the mosque, he replied: “Yes it was prohibited to them”. Volume I, page 193 of *Musnadul Islam*.²⁵

The Prophet Muhammad, Allah bless him, [said:] It is better for women to pray at home than to go to the mosque.

There are many examples like this, but I confine myself [here] to these.

For this reason the former scholars of Daghestan, and also the prominent scholars of the Islamic states, did not allow women to go into the mosques. Also the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus banned (*vospretilo*) women from going into the mosques and ordered the Qadis of the cities and settlements that they also forbade [women to go to the mosques] in their localities.

²⁵ [A *musnad* is a hadith collection not according to topics but to the *sanad*, the names in the chains of transmission. The most famous collection entitled *Musnad* is that of Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855).]

As you know, for each mosque there is a contract (*dogovor*) that is signed by twenty persons, in which there is one paragraph according to which schoolchildren (*shkol'niki*) are forbidden to go to the mosques. On this basis the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus ordered the Qadis of each mosque to forbid schoolchildren to go to the mosques, and also to explain to parents that their children should learn well at school, not letting go one single minute, and then, that they become teachers, doctors, pilots, engineers, that they become patriots of their Fatherland (*patrioty svoei Rodiny*) and serve the welfare of the Fatherland and of the people.

Ali, the companion (*sputnik*) of the prophet Muhammad, said to the people that they teach their children the modern sciences (*sovremennye nauki*) and that their children are born in a period that is different from ours.

The eighth paragraph of the statutes of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus calls for the strengthening of the friendship of the peoples of the USSR (*druzhba narodov SSSR*), for the unconditional love of one's glorious Fatherland, and also for submitting to the law of the USSR. We have to thank the Party, the government for the fact that they care about our children. We have to submit to the state law because "Shariat" forbids us to act against the law.

In the holy book "Quran" Allah Almighty said: "To obey Allah and also those who stand on top (*vyshestoiashchie*)". Therefore we have to forbid schoolchildren to go to the mosques and to study the "Quran". On this topic every Qadi is obliged to give explanations to the people on Fridays.

Dear brothers, honored comrades! Allah Almighty created man on earth [and gave him a position] of honor. Allah Almighty said in the holy book "Quran" [that he] created man on earth [and gave him a position] of honor, "I gave him reason so that he can reflect, [I gave him] hands to work, eyes to see, a nose to smell, legs to walk. I created the world so that it is obedient (*pokornyi*) for man". Allah Almighty also said: "Oh people, I created you in couples: man and wife [.....] as peoples for the purpose that you get acquainted with each other and that you establish mutual relations with each other. I did not create you for the purpose of being hostile to each other".

In spite of these directives (*direktivny*) of Allah, some people deceive their brothers with inventions, searching for themselves a rich life without labor. To these belong the shaykhs, the talisman people (*talismanchiki*), fraudulent doctors (*lozhnye doktora*), “partners of the devils” (*soiuzniki chertov*).

The false shaykhs order [their followers] to do the *vird* [*poruchaiut vird*]²⁶ They oblige the murids to give [them] their property, their conscience and their goods so that the shaykh has it at his disposal. The ignorant murid (*temnyi murid*) trusts his shaykh and gives all his life to the shaykh, and the latter enriches himself at the expense of the murid.

False doctors without any education and not having any knowledge about diseases deceive the people and do not let the sick people go to the doctor, and in result they kill people. And on top of that he takes money from the sick person for his “healing” (*lechenie*). One of these is Magomedov Dzhamalutdin, a person from the settlement of Salta in Gunib raion. He was summoned by the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus and they explained to him that he acts not honestly and that he deceives his comrades, and they took his promise (*slovo*) that he would not do these things any more. And yet, he continues to busy himself with vile things. The damage from such persons is great. They prevent the development of a national culture (*narodnaia kul'tura*) and stupefy the illiterate people (*odurmanivaiut bezgramotnykh liudei*).

In 1953 the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus spread 1.600 copies of the brochure “Famous Scholars of Daghestan” (*Izvestnye uchenye Dagestana*)²⁷ in the cities, which include the unmasking of shaykhs,

²⁶ [*Vird* here refers to Sufi litanies, “tasks” that a shaykh gives to his individual murid to repeat every day for a certain number of times. For details see below our chapter on the Sufi shaykh Said-Afandi].

²⁷ [What is meant in the text is the circular of fatwas *Daghistandaghi bari da muslimanlagha Muraja'atname* (“Appeal to all Brothers and Sisters in Daghestan”, lithograph in the Kumyk language in Arabic script), signed by Mufti Muhammad-Hajji Qurbanov and several other dignitaries of the Spiritual Administration of the North Caucasus (Buinaksk 1953). Above this text is confused with another document that is indeed entitled “The Famous Scholars of Daghestan”, but that was produced only for internal DUMSK purposes and as a report to the Authorized Representative for Religious Cults of the Daghestani Council of Ministers. This latter text was never published. Copies of both documents are kept in the private archive of Shamil' Shikhaliev, Makhachkala].

talismanchiki and “partners of the devils”. These brochures were published in the Avar, Dargin and Kumyk languages and were distributed in all cities and villages of Daghestan via the authorized representatives [of the Spiritual Administration] who explained to the people which damage is being done by those deceivers. Thus the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus undertook significant actions (*meropriiatiia*) against the deceivers of the people, and it gave them a hard blow (*tiazhelyi udar*), although [the phenomenon] is not yet fully liquidated.

So there are still remnants of old vestiges (*ostatki starykh perezhitkov*). For example [among these we find] shaykh Magomed Amin, residing in Kaiakent, and also Shaykh Abdula, residing in the village of Kurakh in Tabasaran raion, although the Spiritual Administration repeatedly explained to them the damage of their unworthy behavior.

Dear brothers, these harmful elements (*vrednye elementy*) who deceive the people can also be found among our believers, even where there are [official] mosques. They deceive not only the people but also themselves. Not only humanity (*chelovechestvo*) rejects such a relation to people, but also Allah Almighty curses such people. Allah Almighty²⁸ forbids to reach out to the goods of others.

But there are people who have lost their conscience, irrespective of their high position. For example: the believer Saiputdinov Magomed from the village of Miaso in Botlikh raion handed over 1.200 Roubles to the Qadi Shapiev Ibragim from the village of Munib [128:] so that he distribute the money among ten persons who would read the “Zikri”²⁹ for the peace of his soul. But Ibragim does not ask anyone to read the “Zikri” for the peace of Saiputdinov’s soul and keeps the money. After a while Saiputdinov demands an answer from Ibragimov about the performance of the “Zikri” by those ten persons, and asked him to tell him their names. But Ibragimov gives the names of several persons [who obviously had nothing to do with the affair]. Having understood that he was deceived,

²⁸[In the text: *Vseveruiushchii allakh*, a lapsus.]

²⁹ [The Arabic term *dhikr* (“remembrance of Allah”) is usually employed in the context of Sufi rituals; here the context is not very clear.]

Saiputdinov demands the money back from Ibragim Dibir,³⁰ and as he did not get it back he brought the case before a court (*sud*). By the decision of the court the money was returned to Saiputdinov.

When the Spiritual Administration learned about this affair, Ibragimov was removed from the position of Qadi, as he violated the rules of the shariat. According to paragraph 10, [points] “S” and “Zh” from the statutes of DUMSK: the violation of Islam (here: *Islam*), the negligence of carrying out instructions of the statutes, and unauthorized actions by Qadis (*samovolnichestvo kadiyev*) [lead to their] removal from work. [Furthermore,] point “Zh” postulates: a religious worker (*religioznyi rabotnik*) who does not prove himself worthy of the high rank and who opposes the instructions of the Fatherland, [will be] removed from his high post.

Chairman of the DUM³¹

M. Kurbanov

[129:]

“Fatva”

The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus and Daghestan [sic!] took this “Fatva” from the Quran, the Hadith and from the correct spiritual books, for explaining to the people the evil harm (*zlovrednost'*) and the superstition of several persons who proclaim themselves as shaykhs, but who in reality are false shaykhs (*lzhe-shaykhi*) and who damage religion, damage Islam.

The Qadis who work in the registered mosques (*zaregistrirovannye mecheti*) under the leadership of the Spiritual Administration perform their work strictly in accordance with the laws of shariat. But in spite of their correct sermons, when [controlling] their advices (*nastavleniia*) some persons were found who, for their own profit and benefit, did not take into account that they perform sins and blasphemy (*bogokhul'stvo*) and who opened mazars (ziyارات), although they did not have any right to do so. They, these people, repair mazars, construct houses

³⁰[Dibir is an Avar term for imam, mulla of a mosque.]

³¹[In the original mistakenly “VUM”.]

around them for themselves and for the people from the community (*prikhozhane*), and illegally collect money and foodstuff from the people.

Men, women and girls from far-away places and from near-by leave their work and their urgent affairs and come to the mazars, they ask the dead shaykhs for health, for a long life, for cure from diseases, for a return onto the path or religion, for a good work place etc.

We say that except for Allah's anger, from all this there is nothing useful to expect.

Therefore, with reference to the Quran, the shariat and other spiritual books, and giving the exact facts to our people for sermons in the Friday mosques we found it was necessary to publish the following fatva (interpretation) [*fatvu (tolkovanie)*] in order to unmask the false trend (*lozhnoe napravlenie*) in the population:

Question: Is it allowed according to shariat to gather on graves, to meet [there] for divine service in the form of a feast (*v vide prazdnika*)?

Answer: It is not allowed. Our Prophet says that such people commit a sin. He says that in the pre-Islamic ignorant period (*v doislamskoi nevezhestvennoi epokhe*),³² when a person died, they gave him big honors, built a house and prayed to a drawing of his (*ego risunku*) and therefore they will face a frightening trial [when they stand] before Allah. [130:]

He also said: "When I will die, do not gather on my grave in the form of a feast. Wherever you perform the prayer, this is enough for me." In the books "Zavadzhir" and "Ibnu-Khadzhar" it is said:³³ To turn graves into mosques where people would meet, to walk around a grave [in ritual circambulation], to burn [candles] – this is a big sin."([pages] 93, 94, 95, 96). Imam Shapi in his book "Ummu" (vol. 1, p. 256) says: "I do not want that people elevate a living person, and I fear that after his death they will honor him on [his] grave."

³²[Obviously a literary translation of the Arabic term Jahiliyya].

³³[Ibn Hajar (1565) is the author of *al-Zawajir 'an iktiraf al-kaba'ir*. The other book, here simply entitled "Ibn Hajar", seems to refer to *Tuhfat al-muhtaj sharh al-Minhaj*, Ibn Hajar's four-volume commentary on Muhyiddin al-Nawawi's *Minhaj al-talibin*. Both books belonged to the "mandatory" program of Shafi'i law as it was taught in Daghestani madrasas.]

Question: Is it allowed to ask those who have died for cure [from a disease]?

Answer: No. Except for a sin nothing is to be expected from this. In the chapter “Akrab” of the Quran it is said: “Nobody can give help except god.” The same is said in the “Suratul-Kakhbi”.³⁴ The Prophet said: “With his death everything ceases of a person, it is not possible to receive help from him [after his death].”

Question: Is it allowed to burn [candles] on a grave and stay there over night?

Answer: This is not allowed. This question is answered by Ibn-Khadzhar in his book “Patava-Kubra”³⁵ (vol. 1, p. 184): “The gathering of ignorant people of this kind on the graveyard stands in opposition to Islam”. “For women it is an even bigger sin to be present on mazars” – this is said in his book “Zavadzhir” (p. 123).

On the question of visiting mazars from far-away places the prophet said: “You can visit only three holy places: my mosque in Medina, the mosque of the Ka’ba and the mosque al-Aqsa, do not go to other places!”

Question: Is it allowed to make offerings (*zhertvoprinosheniia*) on the mazars in the name of the shaykhs [that are buried there]?

Answer: No. The scholar of Islam Pakhrutdin-Razi in his book “Tabsirul-Kabir”³⁶ (vol. 1, p. 121) and also Ismail-Khaki in the book “Rokholbaia”³⁷ (p. 188) said: “Muslims commit a great sin if they slaughter cattle on the mazars with this aim.” Ibn-Khadzhar in his book “Patava-Kubra” (vol. 3, p. 284) wrote the following: “At these places offerings are forbidden”.

And still there are people who in spite of all this, for their own benefit, welfare, money, fame, want to open mazars, not understanding [their wrongdoing] or purposefully leading Muslims astray from the path of Islam.

Which mazars are there in Daghestan?

³⁴ [These are obviously the Suras ‘*Anqabut* (Quran 29, here: verse 22) and *al-Kahf* (18, verses 26, 27, 43).]

³⁵ [*al-Fatawa al-kubra*, a fatwa collection by Ibn Hajar.]

³⁶ [Fakhraddin ar-Razi (d. 1209 in Herat) is the author of a Quran commentary, *al-Tafsir al-kabir*.]

³⁷ [The Quran commentary of the Ottoman scholar Isma’il Haqqi al-Bursawi (d. 1711), *Ruh al-bayan fi tafsir al-Qur’an*.]

- 1) In the Buinaksk raion in the village of Nizhnee Kazanishche: the Ziyarat of Abdurakhman-Khadzhi from the village of Sogratl of Gunib raion. Up to 200 people gather there in the middle of the month Sha‘ban.
- 2) In Karabudakhkent raion, in the village of Paraul, there is the Ziyarat of Il’ias-Shaykh where 500 to 700 people gather. The Ziyarats in Kazanishche and Paraul were opened in the time when comrade Zakar’iaev was the authorized representative [for religious cults at the DASSR Council of Ministers?], and they are still functioning.
- 3) In the Kaiakent raion, in the village of Utamysh: the Ziyarat of Kazamagomed-sheikh. In the middle [of Sha‘ban] from 500 to one thousand persons gather there. These people live there for 9 days, and on the tenth day they go to the village Khusha to the ziyarats of Bagatud-Adam and Minatulla-adam.³⁸ There they stay for two nights. Over the ten days they cut 60 pieces of cattle. These ziyarats were opened without authorization by Arslanaliyev Khanapi, who is registered in Geli (Karabudakhkent raion) (and now lives permanently in the Makhachkala). He does not lead this all alone.
- 4) In Agach-Aul (close to Makhachkala) there is the ziyarat of Valigazi. It is not known what woman that is.³⁹ A number of people come from the neighboring villages and, asking for cure from diseases, they cut cattle.
- 5) In the Kazbekovskii raion, not far away from Miatly,⁴⁰ on a camp, there is the ziyarat of Mussa-shaykh. The people that use to be present there come for [water from] medical springs.
- 6) The Ziyarat of Abdul-Muslim in Khunzakh.⁴¹ Closed with the help of our Qadi.

³⁸ [Unfortunately, we could not identify these saints by the names of Bagatur-Ata and Minatullah-Ata. “Ata” means “father” in the Kumyk language, and is also used more generally for expressing respect to a man; the alternative form given in the document, “Adam” (“man”), is less probable.]

³⁹ [This is in fact no “Vali-Ghazi” (which would be a male “Saintly Warrior”) but Valiqiz, “Holy Girl”. According to local tradition she was the daughter of the ruler of Tarki, the Shamkhal Baghdad-‘Ali. This shrine close to Makhachkala is very popular among women.]

⁴⁰ [Misspelled Miatny in the text. Miatly (today Saryi Miatly) is located in the Kazbekovskii raion of Daghestan.]

- 7) The Ziyarat in Akhul'go. In the month of Sha'ban up to 100 persons go there, asking help from the dead murids of Shamil.
- 8) In Checheno-Ingushetia, in the Saianskii raion, there is the Ziyarat of Tashav-Gadzhi.⁴² At times Chechens gather on that place.
- 9) In the village of Gadzhi-Utar (Vedeno raion) there is the Ziyarat of the mother of Kunta-shaykh.⁴³ In the middle of the month of Sha'ban this place is also visited by Chechens.

We issued the instruction that our Qadis, from the day of receipt of this fatva, explain the contents of this document on the mazars, and that they then report to the Spiritual Administration about the results of the work they performed and on its impact on the believers.

Chairman of DUMSK (Kurbanov)

Deputy Chairman (Abdullaev)

The 1959 fatwa: analysis of terminology, style and contents

While being part of a thoroughly Islamic discourse, these documents stand out for their jargon of a Soviet official administrative organization. Thus in the documents of 1960 that accompany the 1959 fatwa the Qadis and imams are addressed as "city and village cadres" (*gorodskie i sel'skie kadry*), leaving no doubt that the mullahs were brought together not as specialists of Islam but as Soviet

⁴¹ [This is the Khunzakh mazar of the mythical Abu Muslim, who is regarded in the Daghestani Islamic tradition as a major Islamizer of the country. The historical Abu Muslim al-Khurasani (d. 755) was never in Daghestan. See V.O. Bobrovnikov, "Abu Muslim", in: *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi Imperii: Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, ed. by Stanislav M. Prozorov, vol. I (Moscow, 2006), 15-19.]

⁴² [Tashav-Hajji, a famous jihad leader in Chechnya and Northern Daghestan, competing and cooperating with the Daghestani Imams Ghazi-Muhammad and Shamil. On him see Kemper, "Einige Notizen zur arabischsprachigen Literatur der *ghibad*-Bewegung in Dagestan und Tschetschenien in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts", in: Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, Allen J. Frank (eds.), *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1998), 63-100.]

⁴³ [On Kunta-Hajji see footnote above. Vedeno was located in Checheno-Ingushetiia; when the Chechens and Ingush were deported in 1944, the area of Vedeno was attached to Daghestan (until 1957, when Chechnya-Ingushetia was re-established).]

functionaries. The term “clerics” (*dukhovenstvo*) – a very widespread borrowing from the Christian context that can be found in many other Islamic texts of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods – does not occur here; instead, imams and DUMSK officials are referred to, in administrative language, as “religious workers” (*religioznye rabotniki*). The absurdity of the combination of being a Communist official and at the same time a religious dignitary is best expressed in the Mufti addressing his audience as “spiritual comrades” (*dukhovnye tovarishchi*); *tovarishch* here implies they all were members of the Communist Party (non-members being referred to simply as “citizens” throughout the text).

The quality of the Spiritual Administration as an administrative body is further stressed when the local representatives are referred to as “Qadis” – a rather complimentary designation for imams who have no jurisdictional authority. Even more striking is that the fatwa (which, by all definitions, has the character of a non-binding legal advice) is being regarded as a legal act; consequently, the fatwa text that was discussed and approved at the DUMSK “conference” is called a “draft law” (*zakonopolozhenie*). Previous fatwas are similarly raised to the status of legal prohibitions, as *Fetva-zapret*, “a prohibition by fatwa”. In this semantic field the official terminology is also obvious in terms like “instruction” (*ukazanie*); even Allah gave not only a “law” (*zakon*, i.e. the shariat) but also “directives” (*direktivny*). Similarly, there is repeated reference to the statutes of the DUMSK and even to the legal documents for mosque registration (the “contracts” that a mosque community is obliged to fulfill in return for the license to open a prayer house). The fatwa thus makes a clear distinction between “official” and “non-official” or even “illegal” ways of Islam in Daghestan.

The fatwa does not openly admit that Soviet legal regulations on mosques and religious service are an impediment to Islamic practice; in fact, no Soviet laws are directly referred to. Yet the state’s policy on Islam is an important sub-text of the fatwa, most obviously when the Mufti reminds his audience that “we can be deprived of the religious rights that we currently enjoy” if state regulations against “unofficial” mosques and ziyarats are violated (a statement that clearly reflects the experience of the Mufti under Stalinism, and perhaps also the renewed anti-religious campaigns under Khrushchev). The necessity to obey and respect the

state, and “to love the Fatherland”, is couched in Islamic terms: it is the shariat, and particularly the Quran, that demands obedience to the government. The Quranic quotes used to support this line of argumentation are, needless to say, quite distorted. References to Soviet slogans about the “friendship of the USSR peoples” and the necessity to develop “national culture” in Daghestan seem to be added for decoration purposes only, since neither ethnic tensions nor national cultures are otherwise discussed in this fatwa.

As mentioned above, the Soviet authorities had imposed a number of serious limitations on Islamic communities, including that schoolchildren were not allowed to mosque service; the obvious goal being here that if children are not exposed to Islam, they will become secular citizens. The fatwa seemingly defends this regulation wholeheartedly, and also adopts the official reasoning that children have to concentrate on their (secular) education. No Islamic source could be referred to for this regulation; for the traditional Muslim society this law must have been very disturbing.

Equally outrageous and ambiguous is the Mufti’s “regulation” that also women should not attend mosque service. To our knowledge, there was no Soviet law that would have required this; as women are regarded as the most important transmitter of traditional values and worldviews to the following generation, one might assume that state organs would not have been against their elimination from the Islamic community. Still, it is remarkable that the Mufti’s argumentation is only based on Islamic sources, while at the same time maintaining that the exclusion of women does not contradict the Soviet policy of female emancipation. (We will come back to the Islamic justification for patriarchic gender relations in Daghestan in chapter 5 on Sufism in Daghestan).

The major issue of the fatwa is of course the struggle against ziyarats, that is, the widespread practice of shrine veneration in Daghestan. The individual arguments – and sometimes whole phrases – have been recycled over the decades; ultimately they seem to go back to the writings of Daghestani authors of the Jadid movement who already fiercely attacked shrine veneration and Sufism. Some of the first (Arabic-language) Islamic newspapers from Daghestan from the early 20th

century, like *Jaridat Daghistan* and *Bayan al-haqā'iq*,⁴⁴ were full of such attacks on the Sufis for their alleged lack of adherence to the Sharia; and also in Jadidi writings we find accusations of “false shaykhs” and “ignoramus” who deceive the people for their own material benefit. The Soviet authorities probably borrowed from the Jadidi rhetorics through a number of Jadidi scholars and teachers who were actively involved in the project of socialist development in the 1920s. As the Soviets urgently needed local cadres in those years, they made use of the Jadids, whose rational critique of the traditional system of education was regarded as compatible with Soviet goals (as opposed to the Sufis, whom the authorities persecuted in the first place, and the “Qadimis”, that is, the adherents of the “old” (Arabic *qadim*) educational methods in the system of the traditional schools, who had supported the anti-Soviet activities of Najmaddin Gotsinskii, 1859-1925). Once the Party had trained enough secular teachers and administrators, the Jadids were no longer needed, and in the 1930s they were purged, persecuted and killed or exiled alongside other Muslim authorities and writers. As to our fatwas, it is possible that parts of the phrasing goes back to DUMSK officials who had enjoyed a Jadidi education, as for example the deputy chairman Shamsuddin Abdullaev (who also signed the fatwa), or even some Sufi-oriented officials like Khafiz Omarov or T. Karabudagov. The final redaction was then probably done by personnel from the KGB and by the Authorized Representative for Religious Cults in Daghestan (who was usually a retired KGB officer),⁴⁵ who introduced even more “Soviet-speak” elements into the fatwas. Especially the lists of ziyarats, with the numbers of visitors for each place, reads as if it had been copied from some SDRK report (and at one place the text even mentions the former Authorized Representative [“comrade Zakar’iaev”], blaming him for allowing one ziyarat to reopen while he was in charge).

The most prominent ziyarats that are being attacked – the tombs of Shaykh ‘Abdarrahman al-Sughuri (d. 1882) and his disciple, Shaykh Ilyas al-Tsudaqari (d.

⁴⁴ Amir R. Navruzov, *Gazeta ‘Dzharidat Dagistan’ (1913-1918) kak istoriko-kul’turnyi istochnik* (Makhachkala, 2007).

⁴⁵ From 1977 to 1989 this function was held by Sultan-Akhmed Dervishbekov, b. 1920.

1904)⁴⁶ – belong to leading shaykhs of the Khalidiyya branch of the Naqshbandiyya. While the Sufi brotherhood is not mentioned by name, it is obvious that this fatwa against shrine veneration is also a specific attack on the Naqshbandiyya Khalidiyya in Daghestan. By contrast, the Mahmudiyya branch of the Naqshbandiyya – today dominant in Daghestan, see below – is not represented in these lists, which seems to reflect the circumstance that the Mahmudiyya was not yet wide spread in the mountains in the 1950s and 1960s.⁴⁷ It should be noted here that a previous circular of the Muftiate of 1953 had bluntly stated that there are no “real” Sufi shaykhs anymore in Daghestan⁴⁸ (and we will later see that this claim had wide currency in Daghestan); Kurbanov’s 1959 fatwa does not repeat this claim, thus leaving open the possibility that there were also “good” Sufi masters (and in one instance the Mufti even claims that also the masters of the tariqat were outspoken against shrine veneration!).

So instead of openly attacking Sufism as an organization, individual places of worship are singled out, and are represented as products of individual trouble-making “citizens”. The designations for these shrine activists borrow clearly from the vocabulary of Soviet anti-religious propaganda: “false” or “self-proclaimed shaykhs”, that is, imposters. Their motives are primarily explained as greed (self-enrichment through the extraction of offerings), plus obvious meanness. In the

⁴⁶ Al-Tsudaqari was exiled to Samara guberniia for “spreading the tariqa”, as he himself wrote in a manuscript copy of his major work *Kifayat al-murid*; see Shamil’ Shikhaliev, “Kifaiat al-murid Il”iasa al-Tsudakari kak pamiatnik po istorii sufizma v Dagestane”, *Pax Islamica* No. 2 (7), 6-17; Shikhaliev, “Sochinenie Il”iasa al-Tsudakari ‘Kifaiat al-murid’ na kumykskom iazyke v sisteme trudov po sufizmu dagestanskikh avtorov”, *Arabskii mir ot Khalifata do nashikh dnei. Materialy III Vserossiiskoi mezhvuzovskoi prepodovatel’sko-studencheskoi konferentsii* (Makhachkala 2010), 19-29.

⁴⁷ In the 1960s to 1980s the Mahmudiyya was influential only in some villages of the Shamil’skii and Gumbetovskii raions. The number of their students was “so small that we knew all murids personally”, as one disciple of Said-Afandi once told us. The rise of the Mahmudiyya and its spread were connected to the creation of the “Avar” Daghestani Spiritual Administration in the mid-1990s (on which see below), and through the broad presence of the Mahmudiyya shaykhs in the Islamic media in Daghestan.

⁴⁸ Mufti Kurbanov, *Daghistandaghi barī da muslimanlagha Muraja’atname* (“Appeal to all Brothers and Sisters in Daghestan” (Buinaksk 1953), page 28 (archive Shamil Shikhaliev; publication is in preparation).

best case they are mentally ill; in the worst case the Soviet authorities put them into prison for political crimes (as alluded to in the case of Magomedov/Mugumaeu, the unlucky author of the anti-Soviet pamphlet mentioned above).

There is no indication suggesting the Mufti (or his ghostwriters) had any inclination to understand rural religiosity as a feature of the living tradition of Islam – the fatwa treats Islamic practice beyond the state's (and the Mufti's) purview simply as a legal offense that needs to be purged. How closely the attack on shrine veneration is linked to the authority of the Muftiate can be seen from the references in the fatwa that “graves can turn into mosques” where “divine service” is carried out. Hundreds if not thousands of shrines in Daghestan are treated as, potentially, alternative mosques, especially on the occasion of Islamic feasts when, we can assume, the meager network of “official” mosques could not accommodate the demands of the Muslim population; in this light the Mufti's attack on shrines is also an attempt to prevent shrines from becoming alternative mosques (called *ochagi* at one instance, literally “hearths”, “centers” of prayer).

The success of the imposters is attributed to their stubbornness and shrewdness, but above all to the credulousness of the “backwards” and “ignorant” Muslim population. The fatwa is clearly meant as enlightenment of the dumb (*temnye liudy*, lit. the “dark people”; and “illiterates”). What is striking here is the authorities' open contempt for the level of religious knowledge in the Daghestani rural areas, given the fact that dozens of Daghestani villages had a strong tradition of Islamic scholarship and learning, and produced, up until the 1920s, a remarkable amount of ‘ulama’ who taught and wrote in the Arabic language on all kinds of Islamic topics, from theology and law over Sufism to historiography, linguistics, astronomy and medicine,⁴⁹ in addition to the Jadid movement that also had, as we now know, a number of prominent representatives in Daghestan

⁴⁹ For a desperate attempt to collect the still available information about the classical Arabic tradition of Islamic learning in Daghestan in the early Soviet period, when it was already under attack, see *Die Islamgelehrten Daghestans und ihre arabischen Werke. Naḍīr ad-Durgilīs (st. 1935) Nuzḥat al-aḍḥān fī tarāğīm ‘ulamā’ Dāğistān*, herausgegeben, übersetzt und kommentiert von Michael Kemper und Amri R. Šixsaidov (Berlin, 2004).

up until the 1930s.⁵⁰ Soviet publications used to understand shrine veneration as remnants of a pre-Islamic layer, as “remnants of the past”; that such attributions are more than questionable has recently been demonstrated by Devin DeWeese.⁵¹ The same phraseology also occurs in the 1959 fatwa, where shrine veneration is decried as “remnants of old vestiges” (*ostatki starykh perezhitkov*), with a clear attribution to the pre-Islamic period of Jahiliyya; to “bow down” before a tomb is equivalent to paganism.

What we see here is that Soviet anti-religious propaganda and politicized Soviet anthropological work seems to be in harmony with an Islamic “fundamentalist” trend in the Muftiate, a trend directed against the “traditional” Islamic practice in the countryside. The many references to Quran and Sunna seem to reinforce this impression. It thus seems that the Soviet system encouraged “fundamentalism” among its official representatives of Islam, directed against the “traditionalism” of their unregistered competitors in the countryside.

Several scholars have already noted the similarities between Soviet views of religiosity and Salafism.⁵² What Soviet ideology and Soviet Islamic official statements share is a modernist struggle for “enlightenment” and against “superstition” and “ignorance”; both rejected rural practitioners of Islam as charlatans, from which Islam must be purified in order to obtain a sober form of ethics that is compatible with Soviet values, especially with a socialist work ethos.

⁵⁰ M. Kemper, Sh. Shikhaliev, “Musul'manskoe reformatorstvo v Dagestane kak raznovidnost' dzhadidizma”, in: Gasan M.-R. Orazhev (ed.), *Abusufian Akaev: epokha, zhizn'deiatel'nost' (sbornik statei i materialov)* (Makhachkala, 2012, in print).

⁵¹ Devin DeWeese, “Survival Strategies: Reflections in the Notion of Religious ‘Survivals’ in Soviet Ethnographic Studies of Muslim Religious Life in Central Asia”, Florian Mühlfried, Sergey Sokolovskiy (eds.), *Exploring the Edge of Empire: Soviet Era Anthropology in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Berlin, 2012), 35-58.

⁵² Ashirbek Muminov, “Fundamentalist Challenges to Local Islamic Traditions in Soviet and Post-Soviet Central Asia”, *Empire, Islam and Politics in Central Eurasia*, ed. Uyama Tomohiko (Sapporo: Slavic Eurasian Studies No. 14, 2007), 249-262; Vladimir Bobrovnikov, “The Contribution of Oriental Scholarship to the Soviet anti-Islamic Discourse: From the Militant Godless to the Knowledge Society”, in: Michael Kemper and Stephan Conermann (eds.), *The Heritage of Soviet Oriental Studies* (London, 2011), 66-85.

In the Daghestani case the situation is however more complex and ambiguous. In spite of the Mufti's harsh attacks on ziyarats we have good reason to assume that from the 1940s to the mid-1970s, the Muftiate was not interested in closing down the shrines: in fact, shrines meant money, also for DUMSK. A huge part of all donations that were collected at the ziyarats was used for the needs of DUMSK. Here we can refer to another archive document, namely a 1959 complaint of the Paraul mosque community to the Authorized Representative for Religious Cults of the DASSR government. In his letter the Paraul community (who exactly is not said) claim that over the years 1946 to 1959 a huge amount of money was collected for the maintenance of two major Naqshbandiyya shrines (in fact those of the above-mentioned 'Abdarrahman al-Sughuri in Nizhnee Kazanishche and Ilyas al-Tsudaqari in Paraul), but that Mufti Kurbanov had taken the money and not used it for the purpose of the shrines. We can conclude that to close down the shrines would deprive the Muftiate of a huge part of its income (and perhaps also that the state-supported fatwas gave the Mufti a pretext for appropriating the shrine funds).

What is more, there is good reason to assume that the Mufti and almost all other DUMSK members were in fact loyal to Sufism. This can be seen from an Arabic book written by Khafiz-Khadzhi Omarov (Okhlinskii, 1912-2000) in defense of Sufism against attacks by Jadidi and "Wahhabi" views. The book has not been published and is preserved only in manuscript form. Attached to the manuscript volume are several panegyrics lauding the author and his work, almost all written by scholars who worked in DUMSK or in registered mosques.⁵³ Omarov, at that time secretary of DUMSK, was a murid of the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya line that goes back to Sharafaddin al-Kikuni (1875-1936), and it is reported that he used to maintain his Sufi activities by performing the *virid* (Sufi litany). In 1975 Omarov even became Mufti, succeeding Kurbanov when the latter retired. Consequently, it cannot be said that the major Daghestani DUMSK officials were Salafists. The only adversary of Sufism in DUMSK was the deputy

⁵³ Sh. Shikhaliev, "Al-Dzhavab as-salikh li l-akh al-musallakh 'Abd al-Khafiza Okhlinskogo", in: A.K. Alikberov, V.O. Bobrovnikov (eds.), *Dagestan i musul'manskii Vostok. Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 2010), 324-340.

Mufti Shamsuddin Abdullaev, who in the early Soviet period studied with the Jadid ‘Abdarrahim Aimakinskii (from the village of Aimaki) and then, from the early 1930s to 1937, with the well-known Jadid scholar Ali Kaiaev.⁵⁴

Thus almost the whole DUMSK was pro-Sufi. At one point M.-R. Mugumaev (the graduate of the Mir-i Arab madrasa in Bukhara who is also vilified in the text) denounced the Sufi affiliations of the DUMSK personnel to the Daghestani Authorized Representative for Religious Cults, but obviously with no success; seemingly on Kurbanov’s initiative the community of Buinaksk complained in turn about Mugumaev, and Kurbanov also arranged that the Mir-i Arab madrasa sent a negative characterization of Mugumaev.⁵⁵

If we accept that the Muftiate was, until 1975, in the hands of Sufis or scholars of pro-Sufi inclinations, then we must conclude that the Mufti’s 1959 fatwa against shrine veneration was produced not on his own initiative but under pressure of the KGB and Party organs. The heavy usage of Soviet anti-religious jargon cannot be seen as a testimony to Salafi, anti-Sufi inclinations of the Mufti.

Lastly, a technical note on the Islamic terminology and phraseology in the text. The common eulogies are rarely used; the name of Allah is usually accompanied by “Almighty” but not by the standard formula “He be exalted”, and the only case where the Prophet obtained a eulogy (and also his wife) seems to be a direct quotation from a hadith collection. Also apparent is the insecurity in how to render Islamic names in Russian; thus in one and the same paragraph Ibn Hajar al-Haithami is given as “Ibnu Gadzharilgaitami” and as “Ibn-khadzhar”, which demonstrates the lack of a method how to divide Arabic personal names from *nisbas* plus an insecurity in how to render the Arabic letter [ḥ] ح in Russian, as a [g] or [kh]. (But also contemporary persons and place names are often given in varying forms, showing a general lack of attention to systematic transcription). A companion of the prophet (that is, a representative of the *sahaba* generation) is

⁵⁴ This information is taken from Abdullaev’s autobiography, preserved in the Central State Archive of the Republic of Daghestan. On Kaiaev see V.O. Bobrovnikov, “Kaiaev, Ali”, *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi Imperii: Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, ed. by Stanislav M. Prozorov, vol. I (Moscow, 2006), 192-194.

⁵⁵ Copies of this correspondence in the archive of Shamil Shikhaliev, Makhachkala.

not called *spodvizhnik* (“associate”, “comrade-in-arms”), as would be common in Russian texts of academic Islamic studies, but *sputnik*, which comes closer to “travelling companion”. There are many instances where “god” is used for “Allah”, also in compounds like “divine service” (*bogoslužhenie*).

In the 1959 fatwa there are clear interferences from the Kumyk language, especially the [p] in places where Arabic would have an [f]: thus the Arabic work *al-Fatawa al-kubra* by Ibn Hajar is rendered as “Patava-Kubra”, and Fakhraddin Razi becomes “Pakhrutdin-Razi”. This [f]/[p] relation even seems to be at work in the book title “Tabsirul-Kabir” (in the Arabic original *al-Tafsir al-kabir*, “the big commentary on the Quran”) where the [f] was changed into [b]. The overall impression is that the author – or the editing scribe – had no secure command of Islamic terminology, and the texts do not reflect academic training in Islamic studies. Seemingly the text was first drafted in the Kumyk language and then translated and edited in Russian.

Second document:⁵⁶

Mufti Gekkiev’s 1986 fatwa against shrine veneration

In the name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate
Fatwa of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus
[on the question of] visiting holy places

20 June 1986, Makhachkala

Praise be to the Almighty Allah, honor and respect to His messenger Muhammed [here: Mukhammed] (peace be upon him), who is and remains the leader (*predvoditel’*) of all godfearing servants of God (*bogoboiaznennye raby bozh’i*).

Respected brothers in faith!

In the past years, as a result of controls conducted by the muhtasibs of the Spiritual Administration [and] co-workers of DUMSK who were dispatched

⁵⁶ A copy of this fatwa is in the private archives of Shamil’ Shikhaliev (Makhachkala) and of Vladimir Bobrovnikov (Moscow). The DUMSK archive was destroyed in 1989.

(*komandirovannye*) to the [individual] places, it was found that a significant number of men, women and girls gather on ziyarats that function officially or unofficially (*ofitsial'no i ne ofitsial'no*).⁵⁷

Those who visited the ziyarats bowed before their corpses (*prakhi*), ask for help for the fulfillment of their wishes and goals, for the healing of the sick and for the birth of children.

The belief in ziyarats and the bowing before them (*poklonenie pered nimi*) completely contradict the fundamental teachings (*osnovnye ucheniia*) of the Quran, of the hadith of the prophet and the interpretations of the scholars-ulema.

In the context of data that were obtained about the illegal activities (*nezakonnye deistviia*) that are directed against the teaching of Islam, the members of the presidium of the Spiritual Administration discussed these activities and found it necessary to warn in the first place the believing Muslims that in spite of the instructions of the Spiritual Administration about the incorrectness of the convictions about the holiness (*sviatost'*) of ziyarats and of the bowing before them, they continue to be visited, and in some places of the N. Caucasus these visits began to obtain an even growing character, impacting even people of a clean conscience (*liudi chistoi sovesti*). It was found that certain persons open ziyarats at their own discretion, or renovate them, and gather people there. These ziyarats are led by ignorant superstitious shaykhs (*nevezhestvennye suevernye sheikhi*) who only follow their own personal interests and who teach false suggestions (*lozhnye vnusheniia*) to the believers that are completely incompatible with the teachings of Islam, and in result some people are being disrupted from their work.

In order to unmask (*razoblachenie*) the superstitious shaykhs and murids and their damaging activities that they spread among the believers, the Spiritual Administration decided to publish the following fetva (explanation) [*fetvu (tolkovanie)*]:

First Question: Does the shariat recommend the travel from faraway places (*iz dalekikh mest*) to ziyarats of the prophets and saints in order to bow before them?

⁵⁷ [One is left wondering which ziyarats functioned "officially" in 1986.]

Answer: The travel from faraway places to the ziyarats of the saints is not allowed (*ne pozvolima*), and according to a saying (hadith) [*izrechenie (khadis)*] of the prophet it is even forbidden.

The messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him, says in his saying: Except for three mosques, the mosque that belongs to me, the mosque of the Kaaba and the mosque Aqsa, do not travel to other places for service (*poklonenie*) and for the carrying out of prayers (*dlia soversheniia molitvy*).

Shah Vali Allah in his book *Khudzhati Allakh al'-Balagat*⁵⁸ writes that in the pre-Islamic ignorant epoch people conducted service in a number of places, which they preferred [and regarded] as holy [places], and there they performed mistaken and evil things (*porochnye i zlovednye dela*). The Prophet, may Allah bless him, forbade the visitation of places that were regarded as holy and ordered to only pray to Allah alone. He saved Islam from superstitious convictions. To the holy places [also] belong the ziyarats of the saints (*awliya'*) [*sviatykh (auliia)*], which it is not allowed to visit from faraway places for service.

Second Question: Is it allowed to go to ziyarats for service and to ask help from the dead, for the healing of a disease or for the fulfillment of a wish or necessity, for the easing of difficulties that one experiences?

Answer: In the book "Fatvi Azizi"⁵⁹ it is demonstrated on this issue that to ask help from the dead when being in front of their graves is, from the viewpoint of the shariat, a heresy and excess (*eres' i izlishestvo*).

Such a position [*polozhenie*; i.e. that tombs are visited] has not been mentioned [in the sources] for the time of the companions (*spodvizhniki*) of Muhammad [here: Mokhammad] and the following generation. Many experts of the laws of shariat (*fukaha'*) have rejected these excesses. They say that graves may only be visited for saying prayers for the peace of the soul of the deceased and for asking God's mercy on it [i.e., the soul], but in no case is it permitted to ask help for oneself. In one book it is written that to visit the graves of saints in order to ask

⁵⁸ [Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi from India (d. 1762), *Hujjat Allah al-baligha*, a legal work in the Hanafi tradition but arguing for the use of *ijtihad*.]

⁵⁹ [This is a reference to *Fatawa 'aziziyya*, a work of the Indian Hanafi scholar Shah 'Abdal'aziz (d. 1824), a son of the above-mentioned Shah Wali Allah, also in the reformist tradition.]

them for help and to make vows (*obety*) to them is forbidden (*haram*) [*iavliaetsia zapretom (kharam)*]. Some of these rites (*obriady*) can lead to paganism (*iazychestvo*). In the book "Miaty Masail"⁶⁰ there is the instruction (*ukazanie*) that bowing down in front of the graves of the saints, reaching out to them with one's hands, to ask help from those who are buried in these graves, all these activities are regarded as anti-shariat deeds (*protivoshariatskie postupki*) and as *haram* (forbidden). When visiting graves, mazars, saints, to ask for a positive beneficial solution of your problems, for instance the birth of children, the healing of a disease, [to obtain] wealth, to avert calamities and accidents, and when being convinced that these demands will be satisfied by those who are buried in the mazars, or by his intercession through Allah, then this will without doubt lead to a departure from the true belief (*otstuplenie ot istinnoi very*), i.e., to paganism (*iazychestvo*).

It has been ascertained [by the control mission] that the anti-shariat activities and the damaging issues continue in these mazars which are functioning unofficially, and which are not known to history.

People come here who suffer from a disease – people with herpes, the mentally ill, paralyzed persons and others, hoping that if they bow to the ziyarats then they will obtain cure, although these sicknesses can only be healed with the help of medicine. It has been reported that a number of seriously sick persons died during their visits to these ziyarats.

To these places they also bring children with a fever of 40 degrees, or children who suffer from various defects. Such cases are clearly in contradiction to the teachings of the shariat and they are absolutely unacceptable not only from the position of human reason but also from the point of view of medicine. To the contrary, such cases can lead to a further contamination of healthy persons.

⁶⁰ [The Hanafi law book in the Persian language *Mi'at al-masa'il fi tabsil al-fada'il* was compiled in 1829 by Ahmad Allah ibn Dalil Allah Siddiqi al-Adnami. It comprises answers given by his own teacher, Shaykh Muhammad Ishaq ibn al-Shaykh Muhammad Afdal al-Faruqi al-Muhaddith al-Dihlawi, who in turn was a disciple of the above-mentioned Shah Wali Allah from Delhi.]

[Third] Question: Would it be correct from the viewpoint of the shariat to devote living or not living items to a ziyarat in the form of a vow (*obet*), in the assumption that this is one of the religious prescriptions?

Answer: It is demonstrated in the book “Fatvi Aziz” that the offering (*zhertvoprinoshenie*) (the slaughtering of cattle) in the name of another than Allah, and to devote the offering not to Allah but to a prophet, to saintly martyrs (*sviatye mucheniki*) or somebody else, is forbidden. If the person who slaughters the animal hopes for a godly recompense (*bozh'e vozdaianie*), then it is absolutely not allowed for him to use this cattle, and the person who cut the cattle will be an apostate (*otstupnik ot religii*), he has to repent (*priniat' pokaianie*).

A number of commentaries of the Quran, in particular “Tafsir-Kabir” and “Tafsir-Nishapuri”,⁶¹ contain notes to the effect that if a Muslim slaughters cattle in the name of somebody else than Allah, then he is already not a Muslim anymore, and the cattle that he slaughtered is forbidden (*haram*) for him. In the same book it is shown that there are vows that the common people make when they bow before the grave of a saint, saying: “O my protector, shaykh, if you fulfill my wish then I will make an offer in your name and will give this amount of [monetary] means or of bread.” The book “Bakhr-ar-raik”⁶² regards such a vow as not valid (*batal*),⁶³ since it would be not correct (*nepravil'nyi*) to devote a vow to something that is created (*sozdannyi*).

In the book “Fatavi Indiiia”⁶⁴ it is written: “Money and other vows sent to the graves of saints with the intention to be close to them is without doubt *haram*, that is, forbidden. On people who make incorrect vows there are also instructions in the books “Nakhri-al'-Faik” and “Bakhr al'-raik”.

Such vows are indisputably *haram* (forbidden), and it is not allowed that shaykhs or other saints that are present at the graves of the saints accept them. In

⁶¹ [This is the Arabic Quran commentary *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-wajiz* by Abu l-Hasan 'Ali al-Wahidi al-Nisaburi (d. 1035), a book representing a Central Asian (here: Khorasanian/Iranian) tradition.]

⁶² [*al-Bahr al-ra'iq fi sharh Kanz al-daqa'iq* was written by Ibn Najim (d. 1563), a commentary on a work by al-Nasafi.]

⁶³ [i.e., Arabic *batil*, “null and void”].

⁶⁴ [The *Fatawa Hindiyya* (“Indian Fatwas”), or *Fatawa 'Alamgiray*, were compiled in Muslim India under the Moghul ruler Awrangzib (1658-1707), again in the Hanafi tradition.]

the book “Assaram”⁶⁵ there is an instruction (*ukazanie*) that if somebody takes a vow to visit the ziyarat of a prophet or saint, then all ulema say that one may not believe this person.

[Fourth] Question: Is it correct from the viewpoint of the shariat that this or that person goes, together with members of his family or with the people close to him, to the ziyarats of saints, in the belief that they [i.e., those saints or ziyarats] belong to him by inheritance and with the goal to collect (all kinds of) vows, and also is it correct to own a ziyarat under the pretext of being a sheikh (*pod vidom sheikh vladet' ziiaratom*), demonstrating one's belonging to the descendants (*potomstvo*) of the person who is buried on that ziyarat?

Answer: [This is] not correct, for the lands of the graves and graveyards mostly belong to a vaqf [here: *vakf*, that is, pious foundation]: it is not allowed to turn them into private use [i.e., property]. It is possible to announce one's belonging to the descendants of the person who is buried in the grave; according to a saying (*izrechenie*) of the prophet, may Allah bless him, his [i.e., the saint's] attraction will drag him [i.e., his descendant] into paradise. But even if he really belongs to the descendants of the person who is buried in that grave he may not own the grave as his own [property]. The continuing presence of these or other persons on the graves and ziyarats lead to cases when they are defiled, and to other unworthy activities.

In the book “Miati-Pasail”⁶⁶ it is written that it is categorically forbidden to laugh, sleep, eat, drink and to burn candles on graveyards and ziyarats. It is forbidden that individual persons appropriate for themselves the right to accept vows and other gifts, for these [i.e., the gifts and vows] must be used for the maintenance of the graveyards and ziyarats.

There are ziyarats that the government has handed over to the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. These are the following ziyarats: Kaffal-Shapi in Tashkent, Khoja-Bahauddin and ‘Abdulkhaliq Ghijduvani in Bukhara, Shoh-i Zinda, Imam Bukhari and Khoja Ahrar Vali in

⁶⁵ [Not identified.]

⁶⁶ [Obviously referring to the above-mentioned *Mi'at masa'il*.]

Samarkand, Hakim al-Tirmizi, Palvan-Ata in Khorezm, Sultan-Baba in Karakalpakia, Mawlana Ya'qub Charkhi in Tajikistan.⁶⁷ The persons buried in these ziyarats are outstanding scholars (*uchenye*), whose works were written into history in various languages. Their works are still being published and distributed in the countries of the Muslim East, they are used as textbooks in the madrasas (*v medresse*) – the spiritual teaching institutions of these countries.

[These above-mentioned persons] are not only scholars who are known to the whole people of Central Asia through their works devoted to religion and science (*religiia i nauka*), but these dear persons also educated the people in moral solidity (*moral'naia ustoichivost'*), in impeccable behavior, they recommended to work honestly for one's living (*chestno trudit'sia*), to honor one's fatherland (*uvazhat' svoiu rodinu*) and its leaders (*rukovoditeli*). People who valued their work [and who respected their burial places] as monuments for the people, erected on their graves the wonderful constructions, the cupolas, portals and other buildings that have been implemented according to the best rules of arts and handicraft of those times. When all these monuments were still under the direct authority of the government they were repaired and restored from time to time. In recent times they were transferred to the Spiritual Administration [of Central Asia and Kazakhstan] under the condition that the necessary maintenance works must be continued.

In view of the fact that the Spiritual Administration [of the Northern Caucasus] does not have enough means in its budget to maintain and repair the precious monuments [of this kind in the North Caucasus], [the Spiritual Administration] followed the old custom and arranged a system for the acceptance of vows and gifts (*sistema obetov i podarkov*) that are being brought to the mazars. All of these means are being used for restoration works of the monuments in question. In addition, the Spiritual Administration removed from

⁶⁷ [Several of these names refer to major Central Asian Naqshbandiyya shaykhs: Baha'addin Naqshband (d. 1389), who is regarded as the founder of the Naqshbandiyya; 'Abdulkhalik Ghijduvani (d. ca. 1217); Khwaja Ahrar (d. 1490), Mawlana Ya'qub Charkhi (d. 1447). Hakim-i Tirmidhi (9th century) was one of the earliest Sufi writers, in a time when there were no Sufi brotherhoods yet. Shah-i Zinda is a major burial complex in Samarkand.]

the ziyarats those persons who appropriated for themselves the titles of sayyids and shaykhs and who claim for themselves to belong to the descendants of those who are buried in the ziyarats. Equally the Spiritual Administration removed from the ziyarats the poor and the idle people (*bezdel'niki*) as well as children that were given shelter there after having escaped from educational institutions, and who were busy with collecting offerings and alms.

On the basis of the interpretations given above the Spiritual Administration warned the ziyarat visitors of all actions that are not compatible with the laws of the shariat, and it has shown them the correct ways (*pravil'nye puti*).

On the territory of Daghestan and the whole North Caucasus there are numerous non-registered but functioning ziyarats, places where shaykhs, murids and others are present who for the sake of their personal interest break the laws of the shariat and who live on [the pilgrims].

Taking into account this situation, DUMSK considers the visits of ziyarats as *haram*-sinful and forbids to visit these places.

[The order to the religious personnel is that] from the day of the receipt of this fetva its contents are to be explained in the ziyarats to the believing Muslims, and that the Spiritual Administration is informed about the results of the implementation of the explanation [campaign] and about its influence on the believers, whereby the required documents are to be attached.

Peace be with you, the favor of Allah and His blessing. Amin!

[Signatures:]

Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus Gekkiev

Vice-Chairman DUMSK Magomedov

Presidium Member DUMSK Omarov Kh.G.

Analysis of the 1986 Fatwa

In the 1970s the Soviet administration began to place more persons in DUMSK that had obtained the "Soviet official Islamic education" provided by the only two functioning Islamic schools in the USSR, namely the Mir-i Arab *madrassa* in

Bukhara and the Barakkhan (later: al-Bukhari) Islamic Institute in Tashkent, both in Soviet Uzbekistan. These teaching institutions used to accept only a minimal number of students (30 and 60, respectively, from all parts of the USSR), who were trained to work as “religious personnel” in the newly-opened mosques and in the four Soviet Spiritual Administrations. They soon formed something like a small Soviet Islamic elite, and some of the major Muftis in contemporary Russia, including Ravil’ Gainutdin in Moscow and Talgat Tadzhuddin in Ufa, come from this school. Also DUMSK chairman and Mufti Makhmud Gekkiev (1935-2010, in office 1978-1989) was a *Mir-i Arab* graduate.

In the North Caucasus, however, the own Islamic tradition was still alive, and the “Soviet Central Asian school of Islam” met with opposition. DUMSK Mufti Kurbanov (1888-1975, in office 1950-1975) did his best to keep *Mir-i Arab* graduates out of his apparatus (see his conflict with Mugumaev referred to above). When Kurbanov was about to resign from the Muftiate in 1975, however, Gekkiev was already considered for the position of DUMSK Mufti, probably because he had high-positioned relatives who worked in the Party. Still, in 1975 the choice was made for a Daghestani, the above-mentioned Avar⁶⁸ scholar Khafiz-Khadzhi Omarov (Okhlinskii, Mufti 1975-1978). Omarov was however released from his position in 1978, reportedly because he was not “diplomatic” enough (read: because he was a scholar not a politician). At this point the government appointed Gekkiev as DUMSK Mufti.

Makhmud Gekkiev (1935-2010) was an ethnic Balkar, born in Kabardino-Balkaria, and thus adhered to the Hanafi legal school, not to the Shafi’i tradition that is dominant in Daghestan. Before he was transferred to Daghestan he had worked in the Central Asian Spiritual Administration (SADUM) in Tashkent.

⁶⁸ Omarov was an ethnic Avar, from the Avar village of Okhli, and he was a scholar of Islam in the eighth generation. His mother however was a Kumyk lady from the village of Nizhnee Dzhengutai (and herself a sister of the mother of the notorious Najmaddin Gotsinskii), so Omarov knew Kumyk perfectly. Field notes of Shamil Shikhaliev, taken in March 2009 from Magomed Guseinov (b. 1932) and Abdulmadzhid Suleimanov (b. 1940), residents of Okhli.

Under Mufti Gekkiev also other important positions in DUMSK and in the regions were filled by graduates from the Central Asian Soviet school of Islam.⁶⁹

Compared with Kurbanov's 1959 fatwa, the fatwa of 1986 by Mufti Gekkiev makes a much more professional impression, reflecting his education at the Mir-i Arab: references to Allah and the Prophet are equipped with eulogies, the sahaba are rendered as *spodvizhniki*, and in some cases Russian terms are followed by the specific Arabic terms: thus we find "a saying (*izrechenie*) of the Prophet" explained as "hadith", the word "saints" is explained as, in brackets, "avliia" (Arabic, *awliya*), "experts of the laws of shariat" are explained as "(fukakha)" (Arabic, *fuqaha*), and the term "forbidden" always appears in conjunction with the Arabic term *haram*. Such Arabic terms accompanying Russian words are obviously meant to display the author's knowledge of legal categories and academic terminology, in addition to his Arabic language skills. Most probably the text was right from the start drafted in Russian, not in a Caucasian vernacular. Professionalism is also apparent in the construction of Russian neologisms like "anti-Sharia deeds" (*protivoshariatskie postupki*). Most importantly, the fatwa itself is no longer being sold as a "law", as was the case in 1960, but merely as an "explanation" (*tolkovanie*). Book titles are spelled in a more readable form, not in numerous variants where the reader has to guess what is meant.

And where Kurbanov looked only at "activities" of shrine veneration, Gekkiev in 1986 also reflects on the "convictions about the holiness (*sviatost*) of ziyarats", that is, on the question what people *believe* when they bow before shrines. In the field of the Soviet jargon of anti-Islamic propaganda we now also find the expression "to unmask" (*razoblachit*) the charlatans. The accusation of "heresy" (*eres*) has replaced the attack on "blasphemy" (*bogokhul'stvo*), thus remaining within the lexicon of the Orthodox Church. As mentioned above, the 1986 fatwa is harsher on those who perform these acts; here the term "departure from the true belief" (*otstuplenie ot istinnoi very*) is introduced, and shrine venerators are depicted as falling back into paganism (*iazichestvo*).

⁶⁹ These Mir-i Arab graduates were the secretary of DUMSK, I. Magomedov (1933-2000), the Qadi of the Buinaksk mosque I. Il'iasov (as well as his secretary), the Qadi for the Sunnis of Derbent M. Netifov (as well as his deputy), as well as the Qadis of Akusha T. Khalikov and A. El'derkhanov.

What is most striking is that all works of Islamic authors that Mufti Gekkiev mentions in this fatwa (as well as in other fatwas against Muridism, against the *qalym* [“bride money”], or on divorce) do not belong to the classical curriculum of Daghestani madrasas.

Where Mufti Kurbanov, in his 1959 fatwa, referred to the Egyptian Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (d. 1565), a prominent traditional scholar of the Shafii school whose works belonged to the core of what Daghestani students of Islam read with their teachers, Gekkiev’s 1986 fatwa is full of references to Islamic authors of the Hanafi school. Even more, from within the Hanafi school he does not quote from the standard works of Islamic law that were written and followed in *taqlid* (often denounced as “blind obedience”) in pre-revolutionary Russia and in what would later become Soviet Central Asia,⁷⁰ but to a very specific Hanafi school from India, that of the scholar Shah Waliullah al-Dihlawi (d. 1762). Shah Waliullah was a provocative author who called for *ijtihad* (the right of Islamic scholars to go back directly to the Quran and Sunna in order to find an answer to a legal problem; in fact the opposite of *taqlid*). His work can be seen as part of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Islamic reformist trends that eventually produced modern-day “fundamentalism”.⁷¹ By contrast to Ibn Hajar’s books, works of Shah Waliullah, of his son Shah ‘Abdal‘aziz and of their followers in India were completely unknown in Daghestan; they appear to be an “import” from the Central Asian Soviet school of Islam. Either Gekkiev consciously avoided the Daghestani tradition, and thus opposed the “traditionalists”, or he was simply not acquainted with the Daghestani curriculum; or both. At any event, it is here, in 1986, where we indeed find the synthesis of Soviet anti-religious rhetoric and a form of Salafism. In a way, the 1986 fatwa also gives the verdict on

⁷⁰ Among the most widely used Hanafi books of the Central Asian school that were used by Tatars in pre-revolutionary Russia were, for example, Ahmad al-Quduri’s (d. 1037) *Mukhtasar* and many commentaries and glosses on this work, including al-Marghinani’s (d. 1197) *Hidaya*, Burhanaddin Sadr al-Shari’a al-Awwal’s *Wiqaya* and the *Niqaya* of Sadr al-Shari’a al-Thani (d. 1346), plus other titles. See Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien. Der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft* (Berlin, 1998), 214-217.

⁷¹ See Rudolph Peters, “Ijtihad and Taqlid in 18th and 19th Century Islam”, *Welt des Islams* 20 (1984), 131-145.

shrine veneration a harsher dimension: while the 1959/60 document strongly condemns shrine practices as un-Islamic because they do harm, the 1986 fatwa contains a statement according to which anybody who goes to shrines becomes a pagan, that is, an unbeliever. This is a Soviet form of *takfir* (Arabic, “to declare another person as an unbeliever”). Overall, these fatwas (and many others of the same kind that were circulating not only in the North Caucasus but also in Central Asia and the Volga-Urals) thus clearly prepared the ground for the present-day confrontations between the Salafis (often summarily, and mistakenly, labelled “Wahhabists”) and Sufis, with the fine difference that today the Salafists are the declared enemies of the state and the Sufis are the major religious pillar of the Republic of Daghestan. At the same time, as Gekkiev referred to more book titles, direct quotes from the Quran and hadith are still frequent but less prominent than in Kurbanov’s text of 1959. Soviet laws and regulations on Islam are no longer alluded to in the 1986 fatwa; rather, the central argument is that the veneration of shrines is “against shariat”, or “against Islam”. The position that children and women should be excluded from the mosques is not mentioned any more.

When referring to the structure and activities of the Spiritual Administration we find similar patterns as in the 1959 fatwa (campaigns to “explain” the vices of shrine veneration to the population, and demanding reports to the Administration). In the meantime the “*qadis*” of DUMSK have obviously been renamed, more modestly, to *muhtasibs*; this term (in classical Arabic texts referring to the market overseer) had already been in use in the Volga-Urals in the 19th century, denoting a senior imam who reported to the Mufti in Ufa about the situation in a number of mosques.

Contentwise, the argumentation is basically the same as in 1959, but there are some new elements. First, the author refrains from denigrating the rural population as ignorant and superstitious; superstitious are now only those self-made shaykhs. Second, there is no list of shrines in the 1986 fatwa, meaning the fatwa is more general in tone (although it was probably directed against the same prominent shrines). What is more, the target of the attack is no longer exemplified by individual names of perpetrators, who, in the 1959 fatwa,

personified the evil deeds, but rather by phenomena: first, the phenomenon that certain persons claim that they have a right to control a certain mazar because they are descendents of the deceased shaykh, and second, the phenomenon of vows (*obety*) that are made at the shrines and holy places. The first is rejected with the remark that mazars are no personal property but in fact *waqfs*, spiritual foundations (which, in Daghestan of 1986, was certainly a widespread opinion out of respect for the saints but no legal reality, since the Soviet law did not provide any room for religious foundations). The second phenomenon, the vows (of the type “If by the help of the saint I succeed in doing this and that, then I will make a donation to the shrine of this amount of money”) is subjected to a longer argumentation, which culminates in the argument that vows and donations should be made to the Spiritual Administration, not to self-appointed caretakers of tombs. What Kurbanov had practiced ever since is now frankly defined as DUMSK practice. So also here, in 1986, we find that the DUMSK policy towards shrines is somehow ambiguous: the donations made at shrines belong to the Muftiate.

In this context it is interesting to see that Mufti Gekkiev refers to the positive example of the Spiritual Administration of Central Asia (SADUM), which had taken some of the major Central Asian tombs under its wings; interesting here is also that most of the Central Asian Islamic authorities whose tombs are mentioned are well-known shaykhs of the Naqshbandiyya Sufi brotherhood. Yet here again, any reference to the Naqshbandiyya is avoided; instead, Gekkiev emphasizes that the persons buried in those major monuments in Bukhara and Samarkand were “scholars” who produced books of “religion and sciences”, and who taught “moral solidity” and “love for one’s homeland”, i.e. patriotism – and in other Mufti texts from Soviet and post-Soviet Russia we often find the famous saying, attributed to the Prophet, that “love for one’s homeland is part of the religious belief” (*hubb al-watan min al-iman*). The reference to the model of the Central Asian Spiritual Administration might reflect Gekkiev’s study and work experience in Soviet Uzbekistan; and it might reveal his ambitions to also receive major Daghestani architectural monuments under DUMSK’s control. On a sidenote, also in present-day Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan historical authorities

of Sufism are often displayed as “scholars” and “scientists”, and also as “patriots”, not as Sufis.

Epilogue: The Split of DUMSK and the Split of DUMD⁷²

Three years later, in the midst of Perestroika turmoil, Gekkiev was driven out of office. Open opposition against him started in March 1989 when leaflets began to circulate in the Daghestani mosques demanding his elimination from the Mufti office. Gekkiev was accused of violating the DUMSK statutes (according to which every five years a Mufti needed to give account of his activities, in order to be reconfirmed), of having shamelessly raised his own salary, of having spent a third of the DUMSK income on private houses and automobiles, and of not having built a new mosque in Makhachkala. The major point on the list of complaints against him was, however, that he was a Hanafi and did not follow the Shafi'i school of law. The group in opposition to him, led by Zaidulla Alibekov supported by imams of other areas, organized a Conference of the North Caucasus Muslims in Buinaksk (13 May 1989), in which the prominent Khalidiyya shaykh and imam of the village of Tarki, the Kumyk Magomed-Mukhtar Babatov (b. 1954), was elected Mufti. The conference also occupied the DUMSK building, driving out the sitting staff.

Babatov accepted to function only as interim Mufti, for one month; after this term he simply left to Uzbekistan for a pilgrimage to the shrine of Baha'addin Naqshband. In the meantime tensions broke out in the new DUMSK Council, between Alibekov and others who were accused of “Wahhabism”. In June, a Conference of the Scholars of the North Caucasus (*S"ezd alimov Severnogo Kavkaza*), attended by imams from Daghestan and Checheno-Ingushetia, elected another interim Mufti, the Dargin Abdulla Aligadzhiev (b. 1927 - 2006), a grandson of the well-known Khalidiyya sheikh 'Ali-Hajji Akushinskii (d. 1928). Ethnic tensions between the Daghestani imams became strongly visible. In October another Conference was held, where also the DUMSK qadis of

⁷² The following account is largely based on Shamil' Shikhaliev's interviews with Abdkhalim Abdulgalimov (Tarki), who worked in DUMD as the official for economic affairs in 1992, and who was an eyewitness to the events.

Checheno-Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and Stavropol Region were present; at this event the representatives from Stavropol region declared to leave DUMSK and to create their own Islamic administration – the first step towards the split-up of the North Caucasus Islamic administration into national entities. In October Mufti Aligadzhiev resigned from office and appointed the Dargin Akhmed Magomedov (b. 1955) as interim Mufti. On a new Conference of 27 January 1990, after some political games, the Kumyk Bagautdin Isaev, imam of the Makhachkala Central mosque, was elected Mufti, flanked by two Avars, Magomed Aliev (as Chairman of the Council of Alims) and Akhmed Dibirov (as chairman of a Revision Committee). Since January 1990, DUMSK was running under the name DUMD, Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan.⁷³

In late May 1991 there were long street demonstrations in Makhachkala protesting against the DUMSK handling of hajj affairs; reportedly, among the instigators were the so-called “Wahhabists” Akhmedkadi Akhtaev (who also participated in the setting up of the Islamic Revival Party of the USSR in Astrakhan in late 1990), Abbas Kebedov and his brother Bagautdin Magomedov (now calling himself Baha’addin Muhammad, one of the main Salafi ideologists in contemporary Dagestan) as well as Akhmed Dibirov from Kudali. After 12 days of protests there was an attempt to storm the government building, and one protester died.

In October 1991 the Kumyk national organization *Tenglik*, led by Salav Aliev, started a blockade of several railroad lines, and in Makhachkala the leader of another Kumyk national organization, *Vatan*, Bagautdin Takhtarov, together with DUMD Mufti Bagautdin Isaev gathered 50 imams from the Kumyk people to discuss the establishment of a new, Kumyk Muslim Spiritual Administration, with the argument that the majority of the Council of Alims of DUMD and one Mufti deputy were Avars who made the work of the Kumyk Mufti Isaev impossible. While Isaev and many others argued for a national Kumyk Muftiate, others, including Babatov, argued against a split of the Daghestani Muslim

⁷³ The official registration of DUMD however occurred only in March 1992.

community. The plans were shelved, but it was obvious that DUMD had already disintegrated along ethnic lines.

In January 1992 the conflict between the Avar chairman of the Council of Alims, Magomedkhadzhi Aliev, and the ethnic Kumyk Mufti Isaev escalated once more; the Mufti travelled to Saudi Arabia ignoring Aliev's request to report to the Council on his work of the previous year. In the Mufti's absence, and without informing his deputies, Aliev convened a meeting of the Council of Alims. They stormed the DUMD building and sealed it. When on 15 February the convention was continued, the Kumyk and Dargin imams, and some Avars, left the meeting in protest, arguing that one would have to wait for the return of Mufti Isaev. The remaining participants were Avars, and mostly murids of the Naqshbandiyya Mahmudiyya shaykh Said-Afandi Atsaev (Chirkeevskii). They announced the convention of a Conference of the Muslims of Daghestan, which indeed took place on 29 February 1992 but was not attended by the Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgins, Tabasaranis and Laks, and by a part of the Avar imams. The conference (in Makhachkala's Russian Drama theatre), attended by more than 150 delegates, elected Abdurakhimkhadzhi Magomedov (the director of a new madrasa in Sositli, Khasaviurt region) as chairman of the Council of Alims, and asked the Council to elect a new Mufti. The first Council meeting then took place on 2 March 1992, and led to the election of Said-Akhmedkhadzhi Darbishgadzhiyev, an Avar from Mekhel'ta who lived in Endirei, Khasaviurt raion.

This chain of events thus resulted in an Avar takeover of DUMD, and it put the disciples of Sufi shaykh Said-Afandi Atsaev (Chirkeevskii) into key positions. This in turn triggered the establishment of other national muftiates in Daghestan. On 12 March 1993 the Laks established their "Society for the Support of the Spiritual Renaissance of the Lak People", led by Gasan Gasanov, a medical doctor from Buinaksk. On 25 April a conference of the Kumyk people resulted in the establishment of a Kumyk Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan (KDUMD), headed by former DUMD Mufti Isaev. A year later, on 3 April 1993, the Dargins followed with a Dargin DUMD, and elected Abdulla-Khadzhi Aligadzhiyev as Mufti. Finally, by the end of the year a Conference of the Muslims

of South Daghestan (mainly Lezgis) elected Mavledin Latinov as their Mufti, the imam of the mosque in the town of Dagestanskie Ogni.

In September 1994 the Daghestani government attempted to unite all Daghestani Spiritual Administrations under DUMD. This plan envisaged that the four newly-emerged national Muftis would henceforth be regarded as deputies of the (“central”, yet in fact Avar) DUMD. This agreement was however not implemented; instead, DUMD continued to be dominated by Avars, mainly by murids of Said-Afandi.

PART II:
MUFTISM AND MODERNISM

MUFTI RAVIL' GAINUTDIN: THE TRANSLATION OF ISLAM INTO A LANGUAGE OF PATRIOTISM AND HUMANISM

Michael Kemper

While in the post-war period there were only four official Muftiates (spiritual administrations) for the whole of the Soviet Union (in Ufa, Tashkent, Baku and Buinaksk/Makhachkala, respectively), many more have appeared in the 1990s; today not only the new independent states have own “republican” Muftis but also almost every republic, region and major city within the Russian Federation where Muslims reside maintain Muslim spiritual administrations.

“Muftism”, in the post-Soviet version, is more than just the minimal administrative representation of Islam that we have analysed in the preceding chapter; rather, since 1991 Muftis have become public figures, and are playing a growing political role. “Muftism”, in our definition, is thus the combination of the Soviet-style administrative authority (which is now much more decentralized and competitive) and the building-up of public Islamic authority, the attempt to convince the believers of the necessity of a “turbaned” elite to guide the Muslim communities and to represent them vis-à-vis the Russian state, to protect the Muslims from xenophobic tendencies in society, and to arrange cooperation with other faith institutions in Russia and abroad. “Muftism” is therefore very much linked to the production of “loyal images of Islam”, especially against the background of the fight against Islamic terrorism, globally and at home. At the same time “Muftism” is also supposed to be inclusive, that is, to transcend communal boundaries between Muslims of various backgrounds in order to give Islam a strong position in mainstream society. And finally, while in Soviet times the administrative territory of each Muftiate was neatly defined, today most Muftis are in competition with each other for mosque communities in Central Russia; individual mosques can easily switch their loyalties from one Mufti to another, leading to a very complicated picture of loyalties especially in Tatarstan

and the Volga region. And since the end of the USSR, the Muftis are also much more involved in the transmission of Islamic knowledge through education and publication.

At present there are two major Muftiates in the Russian Federation. The first one is the old “Soviet” Spiritual Administration of the Central European Part of the USSR and Siberia (*Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Evropeiskoi chasti SSSR i Sibiri*), since 1992 called the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia (TsDUM, in the beginning with the ambitious attachment “and of the European countries of the CIS”). This spiritual administration is chaired by Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, a Tatar born in Kazan in 1948. Mufti Tadzhuiddin has been in office since 1982, that is, since Soviet times; he thus survived the major challenge of newly emerging Islamic authorities that led to the downfall of other Soviet Muftis in, for example, Daghestan and Tashkent – but not in Baku, where the last Soviet Shii Shaykh ul-Islam Allahshükür Pashazade [b. 1949] is still in office, since 1980. Tadzhuiddin and Allahshükür Pashazade’s longevity is also remarkable since both are officials from the time before Perestroika; they thus represent a continuity with the Brezhnev period, which is today often looked back at with nostalgia.

Yet in 1994 another major Muftiate emerged in Moscow, basically as a split-off of the Ufa Muftiate; this is the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Central-European Region of Russia (*Dukhovnoe upravlenie Musul'man tsentral'no-evropeiskogo regiona Rossii*, DUMER), led by a former disciple and co-worker of Tadzhuiddin, the Tatar Ravil' Gainutdin.

Ranking below these two big personalities in status and influence, but also enjoying a more or less strong home basis, are the “republican” Muftiates, that is, spiritual administrations that have been protected and supported by the governments of the republican subjects of the Russian Federation. These include the Muftiate for the Republic of Tatarstan in Kazan, the one for the Republic of Bashkortostan in Ufa (in the same city where Mufti Tadzhuiddin has his office!), and in Grozny (for Chechnya), Makhachkala (for Daghestan) and in other republics like Kabardino-Balkaria, Ingushetia, Karachaevo-Cherkessia and others. And below this level there are more Muftiates on oblast' or city level, as for

example the Muftiate of Nizhnii Novgorod (which is very prominent for its large publication program) and others in Penza, Riazan', Astrakhan, Omsk, Tiumen' and many other cities of European Russia and Siberia. Since this major proliferation of Muftiates/Spiritual Administrations in the 1990s, their mutual relations are characterized by competition and, to a lesser degree, by attempts at cooperation.

For our case study we selected a number of text fragments from speeches and publications by Mufti Ravil' Gainutdin, chairman of the Moscow-based DUMER.

Born in 1959 in a village of the Tatar Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic, Ravil' Gainutdin received his Islamic education at the Soviet Mir-i Arab Islamic institute in Bukhara (Uzbekistan), where he became a student in 1979; just like his former mentor Talgat Tadzhuiddin (who studied at Mir-i Arab from 1966 to 1973) he thus belongs to the Soviet-educated turbaned elite of the new Russian Federation. After graduation Gainutdin worked as imam at a mosque in Kazan before he transferred, in 1985, to work at the Soviet Muftiate in Ufa in the apparatus of Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin. In 1987 Gainutdin became imam of the Moscow Friday mosque, where, in the turmoil of Perestroika and the Yeltsin years, he established his power base. In January 1994 Gainutdin became Mufti and Chairman of the newly-created Moscow Muftiate (DUMER), a post that he holds until the present day. Gainutdin's Muftiate in Moscow has at times been regarded as close to the Kremlin, and in 1996 Gainutdin also became chairman of a newly created "Council of the Muftis of Russia" (*Sovet Muftiev Rossii*), an umbrella organization that was meant to represent the Islamic authority of all Muftis of the RF; but personal relations and political fortunes have changed several times. In April 2003 the conflict between Gainutdin and Tadzhuiddin escalated when the latter, during a street demonstration of students (and of the local United Russia party branch) in Ufa against the US military intervention in Iraq, made very emotional statements that could be read as a declaration of jihad against the United States; in response Gainutdin's Council of Muftis of Russia strongly objected and declared Tadzhuiddin "persona non-grata in Islam". At the same time Tadzhuiddin also appointed his son Mukhammad Tadzhuiddinov as

Mufti of Bashkortostan, against the sitting Mufti of Bashkortostan Nigmatullin (who worked with the Council of Muftis), raising the number of Muftis in the city of Ufa to three.¹ Yet over the past years also Gainutdin has been repeatedly under attack by the media for independent statements (for example his support for an intervention in Libya),² while Putin has several times shown favors to Tadzhuiddin in Ufa. Also, competing umbrella organizations have been set up to counterbalance Gainutdin and Tadzhuiddin's "Tatar" claims to represent all Muslims of the RF, including an organization of the Muftis of the North Caucasus (which however seems to be in crisis since the Chechen Mufti has recently stepped out) and the Russian Association of Islamic Consent (*Rossiiskaia assotsiatsiia Islamskogo soglasiia*, RAIS). All of these Muftiates and umbrellas are under heavy scrutiny by the Russian media at large, and the overall picture is one of hopeless fragmentation; as all Muftis depend on state or republican support (e.g. for mosque construction and for the establishment and registration of Islamic educational institutes), they have limited space for developing an independent line. Also, in recent years a number of Islamic books have been prohibited by lower-level courts (in Moscow and elsewhere), sometimes including rather standard titles of the Islamic tradition that make one wonder how they got on a list of banned literature together with open jihadi titles. All this increases the pressure on the official Islamic authorities, in addition to the pressure coming from the Salafis. Militant Salafis are held responsible for many assassinations of "traditionalist" Islamic authorities, especially in the North Caucasus, where violence has been rampant; and most recently, on 19 July 2012, also the Mufti of Tatarstan, Ildus Faizov, barely survived a terrorist attack in Kazan. Reportedly, Faizov had been trying to eliminate "Wahhabis" from the Tatar Islamic institutions. On the same day Faizov's deputy Valiullah Iakupov was killed in a separate assassination; the latter was widely regarded as an Islamic authority who combined Islamic theology with secular knowledge of Islam, and as the grey eminence in the Muftiate who also ran the Iman publishing house and

¹ "Sovet muftiev Rossii priznal deiatel'nost' Talgata Tadzhuiddina 'otsupnichestvom ot osnov islama'", *SOVA Informatsionno-analiticheskii tsentr*, 14 April 2003.

² "Head of Mufti Council Backs Up Military Operation Against Gaddafi", *Interfax*, 23 March 2011.

coordinated issues of Islamic education. The Russian authorities responded to these acts of violence with a large-scale wave of arrests in what they see as the “Salafi” environment.³

All major Muftis in Russia subscribe to the position that Islam is, next to the Russian Orthodox Church, Judaism and Buddhism, one of the four “traditional” religions of Russia. This categorization goes back to the Yeltsin period when official public discourse began to make a difference between Russia’s “own”, so-called “traditional” religions, on the one hand, and religious confessions, sects and trends (from Hare Krishna over US evangelicals to Islamist trends from Iran and the Arab world) that were allegedly only “imported” from abroad during and shortly after the collapse of the USSR, and that had indeed been doing successful missionary work in the 1990s. “Traditional” Islam thus needed to be protected against foreign intruders that fished in their ponds. Yet within their state-supported “traditionalism”, the public image is that Talgat Tadzhuiddin in Ufa is even more “traditional” than the Moscow-based Ravil’ Gainutdin, and this in two respects; first, Tadzhuiddin is more “Soviet” in style (in his speeches he can easily refer to Hegel and the Quran at the same time), and second, he is also traditional in the sense that he has no problems with the centuries-old legends about Islam in Russia (e.g. the hagiographies about companions of the Prophet Muhammad who, reportedly, already during Muhammad’s lifetime came to Bulghar in the Volga region to spread Islam by miracles); already in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century many “modernist” Islamic scholars (like Shihabaddin Marjani, d. 1889) and the Jadids criticized these hagiographies as contradictory to historical facts, but the Bulghar legends still enjoy popularity, and the place of Bulghar itself has become a space for popular Tatar and Muslim celebrations.⁴ By

³ See Ian Gordeev, “Moskovskie sledovateli ochen’ toporno rabotaiut v Kazani”, 30 July 2012 [an interview with Ruslan Aisin, leader of the World Forum of the Tatar Youth], *Kazanweek.ru*, at: <http://kavpolit.com/moskovskie-sledovateli-ochen-toporno-rabotayut-v-kazani/>

⁴ For the Hegel quote: welcoming speech of Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin, Ufa 24 March 2011, at the conference *Rossiia i islamskii mir: istoriia i perspektiva tsivilizatsionnogo vzaimodeistviia. Mezhdunarodnaia nauchno-prakticheskaia konferentsiia, posviashchennaia 120-letiiu Karima Khakimova, 24-26 marta 2011 goda*; for the Bulghar reference: welcoming speech of Tadzhuiddin,

contrast, Gainutdin has the image of being more of a “modernist”, striving for an open-minded modernization of Islamic education in Russia and being less bound to the particularities of the Muslim traditions of the Volga region.

The text fragments we analyze here are taken from two volumes of Mufti Gainutdin’s collected speeches, sermons, letters and articles from the period 1995-2008 that were republished in book form in 2011, entitled *Islam: Milost’ dlia mira* (“Islam: A Favor for the World [or: for Peace]”, comprising 654 pages), and *Islam: Otvet na vyzovy vremeni* (“Islam: Answers to the Challenges of the Time”, of no less than 746 pages). While most contributions to these volumes are signed by Gainutdin himself, the books also contain resolutions or letters produced collectively (under Gainutdin’s chairmanship) by the Council of Russia’s Muftis. In both volumes the topics range from Islamic ethics (though, as far as I can see, nothing directly on the Sufi tradition) and issues of theology over history to contemporary issues, including Christian-Islamic interfaith relations and the problem of anti-Islamic xenophobia in Russia. Also of interest are articles in which the Mufti demonstrates that Islam demands equal rights for women,⁵ and that the migration of Central Asian Muslims to Russia is justified from the Islamic point of view because Islam demands that Muslims work, and if they find no jobs at home it is good if they emigrate to places where they make enough money to sustain their families at home; according to a word of the Prophet, poverty just brings people away from Islam.⁶ This kind of “Islamic work ethos” is characteristic for Gainutdin’s style (and also for that of his deputy Shamil’ Aliautdinov whose style we discuss in the following chapter). That the immigration discourse is central in some of the Mufti’s sermons is also a reflection of the circumstance that immigrants now seem to constitute the majority of those who attend the the Moscow mosques.

25 March 2011, at the Spiritual Administration in Ufa, for the participants of the conference. For the Bulghar tradition among the Tatars see Allen J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and “Bulghar” Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden; Boston, 1998).

⁵ Muftii Ravil’ Gainutdin, “O ravnopravii zhenshchiny i muzhchiny v islame” (in two parts), in Gainutdin, *Islam: Milost’ dlia mira* (Moscow, 2011), 271-281 and 282-292.

⁶ Muftii Ravil’ Gainutdin, “Allakh obogatit togo, kto ne budet nuzhdat’sia v drugikh’. ‘Nishcheta – put’ k neveriiu”’, in Gainutdin, *Islam: Milost’ dlia mira* (Moscow, 2011), 259-270.

Both volumes mention that the editorial work was done by the late Talib S. Saidbaev (a Soviet academic Orientalist writing about Islam and society from an official position who after 1991 positioned himself as a Muslim expert on Islam) and R.Z. Glazkova. Accordingly, the edition is solidly academic, while the style of the speeches and sermons is in general quite personal. For most articles in these volumes the editors mention at which occasion the speech or sermon was held, and where it was first published (which is, in most cases, the “Herald” of DUMER, *Islam minbäre* [“The Pulpit of Islam”], which publishes in Russian). As Mufti Tadzhuiddin has not yet edited his “Selected Works”, Gainutdin’s two volumes give him an advantage over his major rival.

For our analysis we selected text fragments that we believe are characteristic for the Mufti’s style and for his views on four important issues: (1) the history of Islam in Russia, (2) the unity of Islam, (3) interfaith relations, and (4) relations between Islam and the Russian state. In each fragment a different audience is addressed.

First Text: Mufti Gainutdin on the History of Islam in Moscow (1994)

Our first text fragment for analysis is from Gainutdin’s 1994 speech at the occasion of the 90-years anniversary of the Moscow Friday mosque (inaugurated in 1904); Gainutdin’s DUMER office was situated right across the old mosque, and most of his sermons published in the 2011 volumes were first given at that mosque. This text is thus one of the oldest dated speeches in these volumes. The speech is entitled “The House of Peace, Good Deeds and Compassion. Pages from the History of the Moscow Congregational Mosque”.⁷

Gainutdin starts with a reference to the first mosques of Islam in Medina and Mecca, and provides several Quranic references that testify to Allah’s intentional creation of different faith communities; these references thus support the legitimacy of religious diversity in Russia. Here and in many other speeches published in the two volumes, the Mufti’s Russian translations of the Quranic

⁷ Muftii Ravil’ Gainutdin, “Dom mira, dobra i miloserdii: Stranitsy istorii Moskovskoi sobornoj mecheti”, in Gainutdin, *Islam: Otvet za vyzovy vremeni* (Moscow, 2011), 16-32.

verses are accompanied by the Arabic original, in Arabic script. “In the whole world”, so the Mufti, “mosques do the same good deed: to spread the light of Islam among the believers and unbelievers, they serve as the place for the supreme communication (*vysokoe obshchenie*) with Allah. Also our Moscow mosque makes a strong contribution to the common holy cause (*obshchee sviatoe delo*).”

In what follows (pages 18-20) Gainutdin gives a brief survey of the history of “Tatar-Muslims” (*tatary-musul'mane*) in Moscow, where first mosques were established in 1782 and 1832; he emphasizes the role of Tatar merchants as petitioners to the Imperial government for the opening of a “Mohammedan mosque” (*magometanskaia mechet*), and as sponsors for the construction and maintenance of the mosques. Gainutdin then dwells on the importance of the daily prayer (*namaz*) in Islam and of the mosque as a place for collective remembrance of God (p. 21), and he emphasizes the importance of mercifulness and charity in Islam as part of the broader Islamic ethics.

Islam is translated in humanistic and universal terms: At one instance (pp. 23-24) the Mufti defines “the core of Islam” (*sut'islama*) as piety (*blagochestie*, Arabic *barr*), daily prayer (*namaz*, for Arabic *salat*), Islamic almsgiving (*zakiat*/Arabic *zakat*), to preserve concluded contracts, and patience (*terpenie*). This list (introduced through verse 2:177 of the Quran) includes only two of the so-called personal duties of Islam (*zakat* and prayer), leaving out the personal duties of *shahada* (the testimony of God’s unity and of Muhammad’s status as God’s messenger), *hajj*, and *sawm* (the fasting in Ramadan). The Mufti argues that a significant part of the Quranic prescriptions pertains to the relations between human beings, and that these are in fact “moral norms also demanded by secular morality” (*svetskaiia moral'*). Islam does not make a distinction between “religious (holy) and secular (worldly, human)” prescriptions; Islam is therefore more than just following the “cultic prescriptions” (*kul'tovye predpisaniia*) of Islam (p. 24).

Gainutdin then proceeds with the history of the Moscow mosque and its congregation in the Soviet era. It is this second half of the speech (pp. 25-32) that we present here in translation:

Translation of text fragment:

[...][p. 25:]

Together with the whole people

In the long history of the Moscow Friday mosque there are many pages that tell us about the believing Muslim's civic duty and his responsibility towards the fate of the Fatherland (*Otechestvo*).

...⁸ on 22 June 1941 the Great Fatherland War started. Many male members of the community went to the front. Immediately the composition of the parishioners (*prikhozhane*) changed: [26:] more women, children and elderly people came, and with the time also invalids appeared who had returned from the front. The life of Muslims was as difficult as that of all other inhabitants of the city, as that of the whole people. But in spite of all this, in accordance with their faith and convictions they found ways to give support to others. In the community clothing and foodstuffs were collected for the front, support was given to families whose breadwinners were in the war or had been killed. As was mentioned in one of the sermons [from the war period], the imams were guided by the instruction (*ukazanie*) of the Prophet Muhammad (Allah bless and greet him): [in Arabic and in Arabic script]: *Hubb al-watan min al-iman* – [in Arabic in Cyrillic transliteration:] *Khubb ul'-vatan min al'-iman* – [in Russian:] “Love for the Fatherland is a testimony of the faith” (“*Liubov k Rodine iavliaetsia svidedel'stvom very*”). To support the war [effort] and those who go to the front, through [the production/delivering of] weapons, is equal to taking part in the battle. Even the peaceful labor of men and women who took over the places of those who went to the front is equal to taking part in the fight. The Muslims of Moscow were especially proud of their contribution to the creation of a tank column that was started on the initiative of the chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the European Part of the USSR and Siberia, Gabdrakhman Rasulev.⁹ For this achievement a telegram was sent to the Muslims

⁸ [Three dots in the Mufti's text (here and below) are probably a stylistic means, not an indicator of an omission in the 2011 publication of the 1994 speech.]

⁹ [Gabderrakhman Rasulev (1889-1950), son and disciple of the famous Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya shaykh Zaynullah Rasuli (1833-1917); Mufti of the Ufa Spiritual Administration 1936-1950. In

of our city: “I thank for the engagement for the armored tank forces of the Red Army. Accept my greetings and the thankfulness of the Red Army. I. Stalin.” To remember this is especially gratifying in our days as preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Victory [over Nazi Germany] are under way.

... The Great Fatherland war had ended. In the Soviet Union and beyond its borders the movement for peace was getting stronger, and it embraced all continents. To maintain and strengthen the peace became the leading topic of the sermons that were read in the mosque. As was underlined by the Prophet Muhammad [27:] (Allah bless and greet him), one of the names of Allah is *al-Salam* [here: *As-Saliām*] – “peace”, meaning that Allah is peace. The first word that He addressed to Adam after his creation was [Arabic:] *al-salam ‘alaykum*, [Cyrillic:] *as-saliāmu ‘aleikum*, “peace be with you”. With these words Adam spoke to the two angels that the Creator had pointed out to him. And the angels in turn replied to the first man: [Arabic:] *al-salam ‘alayka wa-rahmat Allah* – [Cyrillic:] *as-saliāmu ‘aleika va rakhmatullakhi* – “Peace to you, and the mercy of Allah be with you”. The highest happiness for a person whom Allah deems worthy of [entering] Paradise is that he continuously hears the word *salam, salam* – “peace, peace”. The Holy Quran contains Allah’s instructions, and when taking them as our guideline we can successfully maintain peace and agreement in our society. There are many of them [i.e., of Allah’s instructions], and I will underline only some of them which are the most important in our days.

Patience. “Patience is the best”, as the Quran says. According to the Quran, “Allah loves the patient persons” (3:146). He is with those who “commanded each other to be patient” (103:3). Let me also emphasize that the word “patience” is one of the words that are used most in the Holy Writ (*Sviashchennoe pisanie*).

The ability to forgive. Allah Himself, as the Quran testifies, is “the Best of all forgivers, the Excusing and Forgiving, the Forgiving and the Merciful”. He demands the same from all Muslims, including from persons active in religious and state affairs.

1942, when the Ufa Muftiate was reinvigorated and other Muftiates were about to be set up, Rasulev publicly proclaimed a jihad of Russia’s Muslims against Nazi Germany, with reference to the above-mentioned hadith that patriotism is part of Islam.]

Those who are fighting against each other, says the Lord (*Gospod'*), have to remember that the killing of one innocent person is equal to the killing of the entire mankind (5:32). When I write these words I bitterly deplore that exactly the ability to be patient and to patiently resolve conflicts, to forgive [28:] the opponent, to value the human life, was what our leaders (*nashi lidery*) lacked when they were called to resolve the Chechen crisis that had unfolded by their own fault. True to the testament of Allah (*zavet Allakha*), we wrote in our Appeal to the President of Russia of 2 December 1994: "Taking into account the national character of the Chechens and their unconditional following of the Islamic precepts (*predpisaniia*), one can expect that all mountaineers will be mobilized by the principle of the shariat [that says:]: **'If somebody encroaches upon you, then you should encroach upon them – just like they encroached upon you'** (Sura 2 "The Cow", Ayat 194)".

Unfortunately, our word was not heard. We have always been convinced that the problems of Chechnya have to be resolved peacefully, and that if democracy [coming] from Russia will be installed [in Chechnya] out of the blue sky, and not from the negotiation table, if the national-religious feelings will not be taken into account, then also other Muslim peoples of Russia and the CIS might find themselves drawn into the conflict.

From the Community to a Religious Center

Above I wrote about the unity of the Muslims in the world. Our community (*obshchina*) also feels that it is an unalienable part of the Muslim community (*obshchina*) of the whole world, of the CIS and Russia. Every day we become witnesses of how this unity appears. If I wanted to describe all facts, then whole newspaper pages would not be sufficient to mention them all. I will just speak about some of them.

Our mosque, which became the basis of our Spiritual Administration, is constantly attracting the attention of international Islamic organizations, of the communities (*obshchiny*) of a number of [29:] Muslim countries. Thanks to these contacts, for example, the number of our parishioners (*prikhozhane*) who performed the hajj – the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina – is higher than in all

years of Soviet rule taken together. We [now] have enough copies of the Quran to satisfy the needs of the believers, and we also have religious literature that was published abroad. Representatives of our community follow studies at Muslim universities in a number of foreign countries, and representatives [of Muslim universities in other countries] teach theology (*bogoslovie*) to Muslims in our religious teaching institutions. Moscow Muslims now regularly take part in international Islamic conferences, meetings, discussions. In turn, each of our own events attracts the attention of foreign religious workers (*religioznye deiateli*), of ambassadors and co-workers of the embassies of Muslim countries, of representatives of the media. The Muslims of Moscow obtain a lot of information about the life of their foreign brothers; they know the concerns and interests of the Muslims of the whole world, and how they are doing.

Praise be to Allah, with this list [of achievements] you cannot surprise anybody today, as [in the new Russia] all religious organizations have received the same opportunities for developing a fully-fledged religious life. But when I go through the mosque documents of the past years I think about something else. The situation in which we are now has only emerged a couple of years ago. Up until the end of the 1980s the situation was fundamentally different. Contacts between the Muslims of the USSR and those of foreign countries were not of such an encompassing character; they were carried out only through the religious centers, and mosques were excluded from such contacts. The USSR Muslims knew very little about the life [30:] of their brothers (*sobrat'ia*), did not have the opportunity to travel and visit them, or to host them here. Yes and how could it have been otherwise, since a country with more than sixty million Muslims, one of the biggest Muslim countries in the world, had all together only around four hundred mosques, that is, a little more than 1% of the number [of functioning mosques] from before the October Revolution. And for the believers it was not without dangers to show an above-average interest in the life of their brothers beyond the borders.

Under these circumstances the Moscow mosque functioned as a peculiar mosque that connected the Muslims of a significant part of Russia with the rest of the Muslim world. I will discuss this below, but now let us talk about something

else. I remember that in its uninterrupted work, in its successful service to Allah, our mosque was very much obliged to its location in the capital.

There is no need to demonstrate that under the conditions of the dominance of antireligious propaganda the arrival of foreign delegations broke the domestic propagandistic stereotypes (*otechestvennye propagandistskie shtampy*) about the situation of religion at home and abroad; foreign delegations made our citizens proud that they belonged to Islam. One can imagine how our Muslims felt when they were informed that some of the most important politicians of the Afro-Asiatic countries visited the Moscow mosque to perform their prayer there: Gamal Abdel-Nasser, Sukarno, Muammar Gaddafi and others.¹⁰

The public resonance of the facts that I listed above was still increased by one peculiarity of the Moscow congregational mosque. This is the fact that on the huge territory from Moscow to Leningrad and to Gor'kii [Nizhnii Novgorod] and Penza there simply were no other mosques. [31:] This territory was inhabited by a significant number of Tatars and of representatives of other Muslim peoples who maintained contacts with the Moscow mosque: they travelled to the capital for Friday and Feast services (*bogosluzheniia*), they obtained the consultations that they needed, and they handed over the donations (*pozhtertvovaniia*) that had been collected in their places of residence. When they visited the Moscow mosque they had the opportunity to see and listen to scholars from abroad, and also to prominent religious workers from Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the Volga area, the North Caucasus and the Transcaucasus, and from other parts of our country. In turn, Moscow Muslims learned from them about the life of their co-religionists (*edinoverstsy*), and for the visitors the existence of the mosque in Moscow became a testimony for the solidity (*prochnost'*) of their religion, of the fact that in spite of the repressions and the atheist activities Islam continued to exist.

Thus the continuous links between our mosque and the secretly functioning (*taino deistvuiushchie*) Muslim communities in Central Russia have deep historical roots. These Muslims regarded the Moscow congregational mosque as

¹⁰ [The Indonesian President Sukarno visited the Moscow mosque in 1955; Egypt's President Nasser in 1957; and the Leader of the Libyan revolution Gaddafi in 1969.]

their center, they always felt its help and support. And it is very logical (*vpolne zakonomerno*) that when they began to function openly (*otkryto deistvovat'*) under the new conditions they again came to us for setting up close contacts. And it is also completely logical that the Moscow congregational mosque became the basis for the establishment of a new religious center – the Spiritual Administration for the Muslims of the Central-European Region of Russia. But this is already another story.

Recently specialists conducted a research into the technical condition of the structure of the Moscow congregational mosque. “Due to the fact that the Moscow congregational mosque not for one single day changed its original functions and that the service in its walls [32:] continued without interruptions”, they wrote, “its building has come down to us practically in unchanged form.” In my opinion, this appraisal is a testimony not so much to the solidity of the building than to the necessity of the faith of those who constitute the community of this mosque. Thanks to the fact that the young generation of Moscow’s Muslims has always been educated in the spirit of the moral norms of our religion, also the building of the mosque has been preserved. Peace, the favour (*milost'*) of Allah and His blessings (*blagosloveniiia*) be upon them!

Peace, the favour of Allah and His blessings be upon those who were so generous to spend their means on the construction of the mosque, and upon the imams who served in the mosque, and who, from generation to generation, told the parishioners that it is necessary to preserve the Islamic customs (*islamskie obychai*), the feasts and traditions. Here are their names: the merchant Salekh Iusupovich Erzin, the Moscow *meshchanin* [“middle-class entrepreneur”] S. Bakirov, the merchant from the town of Kasimov Kh. Akbulatov, the imams Badriddin Alimov, Safa Khazrat, Abdul’vadud Fattakhiddin (repressed), Musa Khazrat, Khalil Nasriddinov, Kamaretdin Salikhov, Ismail Mushtarii, Akhmedzian Mustafin, Rizauidin Basyrov.

I ask peace, the favour of Allah, and His blessings for the parishioners of today and for the servants (*sluzhiteli*) of the Moscow congregational mosque, and for all those who support it in its activities.

[End of the text].

Analysis of the fragment

a) Content analysis

The text is a mixture of an Islamic sermon (with Quranic admonitions), a historical survey stressing the Muslims' loyalty to the state (from the 18th century over the Stalin and Khrushchev eras to the present), and to a certain degree also an exposition of Gainutdin's own achievements in the early post-Soviet years.

In its historical part the Mufti's speech combines aspects of continuity and change. Continuity we see above all in the demonstrations that Tatar Muslims have lived in Moscow since the medieval period, and that wealthy Tatar merchants have always supported the construction of mosques in Russia's capital; this is of course important since we may assume that the celebration of the Moscow Congregational mosque's 90th anniversary was certainly also something like DUMER's fund-raising activity for the preservation of this building. But continuity is also clearly visible in the Mufti's account of the fate of the mosque community in the Soviet period, especially when he points out that Muslims wholeheartedly supported the defense of the USSR against Nazi Germany. Here Gainutdin walks clearly in the footsteps of the Soviet Mufti Rasulev, whom he refers to by name, and where he even makes a positive reference to Stalin. Continuity is also patent in the treatment of the post-war period: The Mufti's emphasis on the "movement for peace" that encompassed all continents is a clear reference to Khrushchev's anti-colonial rhetoric from the 1950s and 1960s when the USSR posed as the Third World's protector against aggressive US and Western imperialism, and as a supporter of the national liberation movements from European colonialism. The Soviet Union's strife for peace, as well as Soviet patriotism, are depicted as being in conformity with Islamic calls for patriotism and peace; in the Mufti's words, Allah Himself *is* peace.

On the other side, the Mufti also mentions the repression of Islam in the Soviet Union; we find this in his statements about the minuscule amount of functioning mosques in the Soviet Union, and in the mentioning of anti-religious propaganda. The fact that an enormous amount of Muslim authorities were killed, especially in the 1930s, appears only in his very last paragraph, where he

mentions that one of the Moscow imams had been “repressed”; he does not say “killed”, though, and with his use of the term “repression” he remains within the post-Stalinist official discourse. As to the Moscow mosque, the Mufti demonstrates that even in the Soviet period it remained important for a huge territory of central Russia (and it is no accident that the region he circumscribes – from Leningrad in the West over Moscow to Penza in the East – largely coincides with the self-ascribed “administrative” territory of his newly created DUMER). Here the Mufti describes what we have mentioned already in the previous case study, namely a collaboration between the “official” mosque structure (in Moscow) and the “secretly operating” communities in the larger area that defies black-and-white dichotomies. Interesting to note is that also here, like in the Daghestani fatwas, we see that the (on paper, unofficial, “illegal”) Islamic communities made financial donations to the “official” mosque.

Also interesting to note is the focus on international contacts. This was obviously the main benefit of the Moscow mosque: while only few international guests found their way to Ufa to visit the Mufti there, many state guests visiting the Kremlin came to the simple mosque in Moscow (where, since 1985, Ravil’ Gainutdin himself was serving as imam). International recognition is depicted as important to give Moscow’s Muslims a feeling of Islamic identity. After all, so the Mufti, the USSR was “one of the biggest Muslim countries in the world”!

And this international integration, finally, is also a leitmotif in the Mufti’s account of the years since the end of the Soviet Union. Here the focus is on support from abroad, arriving through state and non-government organizations, in the form of charity, but also in the transfer of Islamic knowledge – Russian Muslims study abroad, and foreign teachers of Islam work in Russia, and books from abroad fill the gaps in the Islamic libraries. Here we should remember that we are in the year 1994; from the late 1990s onwards, the state restricted these exchanges, and also in the Muftism discourse the emphasis shifted to defending the “own” Islam against that of Turkey, Iran or the Arab states.

From today’s perspective this 1994 speech is curious because on September 11, 2011, the mosque was razed to the ground, to make room for a new mosque construction – which, however, is far from being realized. In 2011 Gainutdin

defended the demolition of the mosque, arguing that the old building was beyond repair, and even claiming that it did not represent any historical value; for this position he was heavily attacked by Tadzhuddin and other Islamic authorities in Russia.¹¹ In Moscow each mosque building project results in a paralyzing political game between city authorities, Islamic organizations, and lobby groups claiming to represent the Russian population. The result is that the capital of Russia, with a Muslim population of at least several hundreds of thousands (if not more than a million), has today not more than five official mosques; by comparison, tiny Amsterdam has slightly less than thirty.

b) Language analysis

The text begins with the traditional *basmala*, "In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate",¹² and of course Allah is omnipresent. The text contains no less than thirteen quotes from the Quran, with exact references to the particular Suras and Ayas of the book. It is difficult to trace back where the Russian translations are taken from – they are not from Krachkovskii's well-known Russian Quran translation (or paraphrase) but might be the work of Gainutdin's own experts. In six cases the Russian translation of the Quranic verses is accompanied by the original Quranic text in Arabic, in Arabic script. *Hadiths* (traditions of the prophet) are quoted in only three instances, and without references to the Islamic source books where they are taken from. The name of the prophet Muhammad is always accompanied by the traditional eulogy *salla Allah 'alayhi wa-sallama*, which is given in Russian as (*da blagoslovit ego Allakh i privetstvuet*), "(may Allah bless and greet him)". This is a widespread but questionable translation; that Allah should "greet" the Prophet makes no sense. A better translation would be "may Allah bless him and keep him safe", since the Arabic verb *sallama* can mean both "greeting" and "providing peace".

Quran and Sunna are the only Islamic sources mentioned; the Mufti does not refer to any Islamic scholar, neither of the classical Hanafi legal tradition (to

¹¹ "V Moskve snesli istoricheskuiu sobornuiu mechet", *Interfax*, 12 September 2011.

¹² Not included in the fragment that we translated here.

which he belongs) nor of Jadidi or other modernist trends. Gainutdin thus positions himself as the direct translator of the fundamental sources of Islam.

God is referred to either as Allah (*Allakh*) or as “Lord” (*Gospod’*, in a Quranic translation), and often by some of Allah’s Quranic epithets, especially those that reflect his compassionate nature (*Milostivyi, Miloserdnyi, Proshchaiushchii*). The Quran is referred to as “Allah’s Word” (*Slovo Allakha*) or as “The Holy Quran” (*Sviashchennyi Koran*), and even as “Holy Writ” (*Sviashchennoe pisanie*) or as the “testament of Allah” (*zavet Allakha*). The use of variations of *sviatoi* (“holy”; also in *Sviatyny islama*, “The Holy Places of Islam”, for Mekka and Medina) seems to build bridges to Christian Orthodox concepts, yet it also has an equivalent in Tatar (cf. Tatar *Kitap-i muqaddäs*, “The Holy Book”, for the Quran). Muhammad is referred to as “Prophet” (*Prorok*) or “Allah’s Messenger” (*Poslannik Allakha*), always fully translated into Russian terminology.

The Mufti is obviously presenting the core of Islam as a strife for encompassing human values, and this is also reflected in his usage of language: most Arabic terms are translated into literary Russian. Thus what Islam demands from the believers are “principles” (*printsipy*), “prescriptions” (*predpisaniia, ukazaniia*) and “duties” (*ob’iazannosti*), seemingly corresponding to Arabic *arkan* (“pillars of faith”) and *fard* (individual duty). “Orthodoxy” is in one instance translated as *pravovernost’*, just like in Russian Orthodox Church contexts. While God is always referred to as Allah, the Russian “God” (*bog*) reappears in composite terms: Islamic “theology” is translated as *bogoslovie* (literally, “the word about God”), not by more complex concepts of the Islamic tradition like *kalam* (“discourse about religion”) or *‘aqida* (“Islamic dogma”); and “divine service” is *bogosluzhenie*, just like in Christian contexts. The “common holy duty” (*obshchee sviatoe delo*) of Muslims is to spread the light of Islam among both believers and unbelievers (*veruiushchie i neveruiushchie*), stressing that Islam is open to speak to non-Muslims and atheists. This corresponds to his statement, mentioned above, that Islam’s moral norms are also shared by “secular morality” (p. 24).

Purely dogmatic issues are not discussed; the emphasis is on morality. The text emphasizes that being a Muslim in name is not enough to be saved. What Muslims do in mosques is “to reflect about the eternal future”, and “to give

account [of one's thoughts and deeds] to Allah (*zadumyvatsia o vechnom budushchem/davat' otchet Allakhu*). This insistence that one's entry into Paradise depends on a Muslim's personal behaviour in this world and ultimately on Allah's decision is mainstream Sunni creed.

While the Mufti's historical survey is centered on Moscow's Tatars, there is only one clear "Tatar" lexic element in his speech, which is *namaz* (for Arabic *salat*, the five mandatory daily prayers), used synonymously though with Russian *molitva* ("prayer"). Knowledge of the meaning of the word is taken for granted, and also the term *imam* for the leader of the prayer (and in a broader sense for the spiritual leader of the mosque community) is rendered without translation. Imams and Muftis are "religious workers" or "activists" (*religioznye deiateli*). "We the imams" are "the servants of Allah" (*sluzhiteli Allakha*), a construction that brings to mind the Soviet coinage *sluzhiteli kul'ta* ("servants of the cult") as the administrative term for all "religious personnel", especially as the Mufti also talks about "cultic prescriptions" (p. 24). Imams lead the "Muslim rites" (*musul'manskie obriady*) and the "religious holidays" (*religioznye prazdniki*), and on Fridays they deliver the sermon (*khutba*, with *propoved'* [sermon] as an added Russian explanation to the Arabic term).

The mosque is in the speech's focus; and the historical continuity of the established mosque in Russia is a central argument for the legitimacy of the muftiates in Russia, as the caretaking organizations for mosque congregations. Again, the terminology is Russian: The Friday mosque is not called Jum'a mosque but *sobornaia mechet'* ("Congregational mosque"), and what is taking place there is the "ceremonial divine service on Fridays" (*torzhestvennoe bogosluzhenie po piatnitsam*). The Mufti even uses the term "Mohammedan mosque" (*magometanskaia mechet'*, p. 20), thus picking from a historical Russian discourse when Islam was often regarded, by non-Muslims, as "Mohammedanism" (in parallel to "Christianity"), a comparison that Muslims have often objected against. The context of the Mufti's usage of "Mohammadan" here – in his historical survey – makes it however clear that he quotes from the Imperial Orientalist discourse of the 19th century. The believers who attend the mosque are

referred to as *veruiushchie* (not with any Arabic term) or as *prikhozhane* (“members of the parish”), implying correspondence to Christian parishioners.

The language of political Islam is consistently avoided: thus the term *zalimun* in a Quranic phrase is rendered as *bezzakoniki* (“people who act against the law”, p. 18, see our footnote), instead of the alternative connotation it has, namely “oppressors/political tyrants”. Avoiding the discourse of political Islam in this highly political text, the Mufti bases his political statements on national Soviet/Russian stereotypes, especially when he talks about “the civic duty and the responsibility of the believing Muslim for the fate of the Fatherland” (*grazhdanskii dolg i otvetstvennost' veruiushchego musul'manina za sud'bu Otechestva*) in WWII. To be sure, the Mufti also stresses the unity of the Muslim community (17). Yet here, in 1994, he carefully avoids the use of the word *umma*, which could smack of international “Pan-Islamism”: this we see in the way how he translates three references to *umma* in his Arabic Quranic quotes (p. 23-24),¹³ where the Arabic term *umma* is never translated as *umma* (a word that does have currency in Russia) but rendered as *gruppa liudei* or *obshchina veruiushchikh* (“community”, “group of people”, and “community of believers”). As we will see below, in the 2000s it becomes more common to refer to the *umma* also in public, though often in the form of “Russian Umma”. A key quote is the famous statement, ascribed to the prophet, that “Love for the Fatherland (*Rodina*) is a testimony of one’s faith” (*hubb al-watan min al-iman*). This *hadith* is often used to stimulate ethno-national patriotic feelings among Muslim populations, in Tatarstan as well as in Central Asian republics like Uzbekistan. In the Mufti’s

¹³ The Quranic quotes used here are: “All living beings on Earth and the birds that fly on two wings, are like you in communities [*soobshchestva*, corresponding to the Arabic term *umam*, pl. of *umma*, “nation”, “people”, generation”, in the Arabic original of the Quranic verse]. “Let there be amongst you a group of people [Arabic *umma* in the Quranic verse] who call [others] to good deeds, who order [to do] that which is approved and who forbid the reprehensible. It is they who will be the successful” (Sura 3 ‘The Clan of Imran’, Ayat 104). “If Allah had wished so He would have created them in the form of [only] one community [for *umma wahida* (“one people, nation”) in the Quranic verse] of believers. But in His mercy He leads [on the correct path] whom He wants. But the lawless [*bezzakonniki*, corresponding to *al-zalimun* “wrongdoers, tyrants” in the Quranic verse] will not have a protector, nor a helper” (Sura 42 ‘The Advice’, Ayat 8).

discourse, however, the Arabic *watan* ("homeland") is clearly referring to multinational Russia, by the choice of *Rodina* with capital [R]. The Mufti furthermore emphasizes that "even the peaceful labor of men and women who occupied the [work] places of those who went to the front [in WWII] is equal to participating in the fight" (26). The effort of Russia's Muslims (including their civil work force) against the German invaders could of course easily be translated into Islamic language by calling it a defensive *jihad* (as Mufti Rasulev did back in 1942), but Gainutdin clearly avoids this term.

From the examples selected for this volume, Gainutdin's text is one of the most elaborate renditions of Islamic terminology into literary Russian. His use of Russian terms in ways that are similar to Church texts corresponds to his integrationist policy, that is, to making Islam the smaller brother of the ROC; this "Church translation" probably culminates in the expression "testament of Allah" (*zavet Allakha*) for the Quran, in line with the Old and New Testaments. At the same time there is a clear continuity with Soviet language practices that reflect Gainutdin's decades of experience in composing sermons and speeches of that kind, as well as his studies at the Mir-i Arab.

Second Text: Mufti Gainutdin on Unity and Diversity in Islam

The second text fragment, from a speech entitled "The Muslims are United",¹⁴ has been selected because it deals with the question of unity and diversity in Islam, and especially with the issue of diverging *madhhabs*. According to a footnote, Gainutdin's speech was read as a sermon in the Moscow Friday mosque in March 2006, and has subsequently been published in *Islam minbäre* 3/2006.

In the first part of the sermon the Mufti deals with the multinational character of Islam in Russia. According to Gainutdin, Muslims traditionally lived in compact forms only in Bashkortostan and in the Northern Caucasus, while the Tatars have been inhabiting many areas of Russia. In recent times labor migration from the North Caucasus and from the "Near Abroad" (*blizhnee zarubezh'e*) (esp.

¹⁴ "Musul'mane – ediny", in Gainutdin, *Islam: Milost' dlia mira* (Moscow, 2011), 325-336.

Central Asia and the South Caucasus) has led to the emergence of Muslim communities in areas where Islam has never existed before, in Western regions of Russia as well as in the North and Siberia. As birth rates have been plummeting among Russia's "original population" (*korennoe naselenie*, obviously also comprising Russia's Muslims), the Mufti argues that the immigrant work force is much-needed, and that the new communities will be permanent. Since labor migration leads to more contact between Muslims of various traditions, the main part of his sermon deals with differences between the schools of Islamic law in Russia, including the Shiis.

Translation of the text fragment (pp. 327-332):

(...) Dear brothers and sisters!

As a religious worker/activist (*religioznyĭ deiatel'*) I can only be glad about the augmenting number of Muslims in Russia. But I cannot just be a distanced observer. Due to my spiritual rank (*dukhovnyi san*) I am obliged to think about how my co-religionists will live and work under conditions that are new to them, how the newly emerging multinational religious communities will function, how the relations between the Muslims of various nationalities will develop, and which problems will arise in the process; and I have to look out for ways how to overcome these problems in good time. Some of my ideas on this issue I would like to share with you today, and, with you as their representatives, with all Muslims who live in Russia.

Our co-religionists from the North Caucasus, from the Central Asian states and Azerbaijan who came to live on territories that are new for them, try to keep together. The attempt to remain united with people who are close by language, customs and [328:] traditions is absolutely normal. Such a behaviour is characteristic for people who find themselves beyond their national and linguistic boundaries, in an environment (*sreda*) to which they are not used, among people of a different religion and culture. This is, let me repeat, a very natural wish. Also natural is that Muslims who arrived in areas that are new to them begin to think

about the regular performance of their religious duties, about joint prayers with co-religionists, about the visiting of mosques. For Muslims it simply must be like this. The problems begin when believers of one nationality try to unite and to establish “their own” national religious community, to build “their own” mosque, and when the local authorities do not allow for the registration of the national community and for the building of a national mosque (*natsional'naia mechet*). One can also understand their position: the authorities prefer to deal with one big Muslim community that works under the roof of one of the Muslim Spiritual Administrations which they know well, and not with a multitude of dispersed “dwarf” communities. How to get out of this situation? Is there a necessity to create “national” communities and mosques? Is it not better for the Muslims of various schools and trends to create a unified community, a mosque for all?

Dear co-religionists!

Islam is segmented into Sunnism and Shiism. Within the Sunni direction of Islam four *madhhabs* (*mazkhaby*) emerged – these are the theological and legal schools (*bogoslovsko-pravovye shkoly*) of the Hanafis, Shafi'is, Hanbalis and Malikis. They are joined by the fifth, Shii *madhhab* – that of the Imamis-Ja'faris (*imamity-dzhafarity*). In this praying hall of the Moscow Friday mosque [329:] there are representatives of Sunnism and Shiism, of the Hanafi and Shafii *madhhabs*. The emergence of trends and schools in Islam goes back to the remote history of the first Muslim state and of the Muslim states that emerged after its dissolution, to political events of a history from long ago. The presence of various schools in Islam is also linked to the fact that Islam is being followed by peoples that each have their unrepeatable history. These peoples live in different climatic circumstances, have different customs (*obychai*) and traditions. For this reason it is very understandable that there are differences between Sunnis and Shiis, between the adherents of the various *madhhabs*. What also cannot be denied is that there are points of divergence, differences in the rites and traditions of the Muslims of various peoples.

It is these differences that appear in the first place when Muslims of various nationalities meet. How should one look at this? The most important thing is: to not regard those who pray differently, who position themselves differently in the

mosque and in life, as people who act against Islam. Above all one has to pay attention to what unites all Muslims, not to what separates them. Let us look at the Holy Quran, the teaching of our religion.

I will begin with the differences in customs (*obychai*). There are more than twenty Ayats in the Quran saying that Muslims should respect the customs that this or that people had before they accepted Islam:

Allah wishes to give you explanations, to lead you on the paths of your predecessors [330:] and to accept your repentance, for Allah is the Knower, the Wise (Sura 4 “The Women”, Ayat 26) [Russian translation is accompanied by Arabic text].

There is no sin on the Prophet in what Allah has predetermined for him. Such was Allah’s determination (*ustanovlenie*) for those who lived previously. The order (*velenie*) of Allah is predetermined (Sura 22 “The Allied”, Ayat 38) [Russian translation is accompanied by Arabic text].

With the will of the Almighty, when the pagan Arabs became Muslims they preserved some of their pre-Islamic customs that did not contradict Islam. This is also how it was with other peoples who began to confess Islam at a later stage. This is where the originality [or variation, *svoeobrazie*] came from, the fact that the customs and traditions of the Muslim peoples differ from each other. This is in complete conformity with the Quran. For this reason we should not be worried about this [diversity], and understand that the customs of the Muslims next to you might not be the same as yours.

And now let us talk about the differences that concern the religious life proper. As we will see, these do not concern the understanding of the teaching of Islam but [only] its practice. Yes, there are certain variations in this field. Let us look, for example, at the question of ritual purity, which is important in Islam. In Hanafism, bleedings or [331:] vomiting destroy the ritual purity, but in Shafiism they don’t. These two schools also have different opinions about whether the accidental contact with a women violates the ritual purity. When performing the prayer the Hanafi men cover their knees [with their hands, during prostration], whereas the Shafiis think that this is not necessary. Hanafis do not agree when women perform the *adhan* [call to prayer] or the *iqamat* [the second call at the

immediate start of the prayer], while the Shafiis agree that it is not desirable that women make the *adhan* but still allow for them to read the *iqamat*. If there was a [public] *adhan* from the mosque of the neighbourhood (*makhallinskaia mechet*) then the Hanafis, when praying at home, may not do another *adhan* [for themselves], while the Shafiis do read the *adhan* also in this situation. During the morning prayer some think that a *du'a-qunut*¹⁵ is necessary while others do not. The Hanafis perform the *witr*-prayer¹⁶ with three *rak'ats* [prostrations], while the Shafiis perform a number [of prostrations] that can vary from one to eleven.

One can easily find more examples. But are they so essential and important from the viewpoint of Islam and theology (*bogoslovie*) as it sometimes seems? Do they separate the followers of the various trends (*techeniia*), directions (*napravleniia*) and *madhhabs* by an insurmountable wall? Of course not! Let me refer to the opinion of the Secretary-General of the World Organization for the Approchement of the Madhhabs, Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Taskhiri – a scholar from Iran who is well-known in the world – on the issue of the divisions into directions and *madhhabs*. He notes that the Islamic trends and schools are close to each other, that they have a solid common basis not only in the sphere of theological views (*teologicheskie vozzreniia*) but also in the sphere of practical action. Ayatollah Taskhiri demonstrated data that show that in the field of religious teachings, the common elements between the directions and schools amount to more than 90%, and in the sphere of moral values [332:] the “common ground” even reaches 100%. The founders of the Islamic *madhhabs* have always confirmed this view about the closeness [of the schools]. (...)

[In the rest of the article (pp. 332-336) Mufti Gainutdin provides statements that are reported from Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765, regarded as the sixth Imam by the Shiis of Iran), Malik ibn Anas (d. 795, founder of the Maliki school of law), al-Shafi'i (d. 820, founder of the Shafii school), and Abu Hanifa (d. 767, regarded as founder of the Hanafiyya) to the effect that they saw their own interpretations as just one of many possible views, and that they admit they might have erred in

¹⁵ [A special invocation of Allah, asking for health protection and against evil.]

¹⁶ [A special prayer performed either after the night prayer (*'isha'*) or before the morning prayer (*fajr*). It has an uneven number of prostrations.]

some opinions. Gainutdin then lists up the major tenets of the common Islamic creed (belief in one God, in the Prophet, the Angels, Judgment Day and Resurrection, the belief in the Holy Quran and the other revealed books, and the belief in predetermination), as well as the five Islamic duties (*shahada*, prayer, Ramadan fasting, *zakat* alms and *hajj* pilgrimage). The Mufti finishes his speech with a reminder that Muslims should feel united, also as Muslims now move into areas of Russia where Islam has never been spread before; and that these Muslim immigrants should respect the religion, culture, traditions and customs of the peoples whom they meet there, and that they should learn and adapt to the local conditions.]

[End of the text.]

Analysis

This article addresses the growing Muslim migration within and to Russia, and thus describes Islam in Russia as a phenomenon that is no longer to be described as compact Islamic islands in a broader Russian ocean; and here the Tatars are referred to as the forerunners of this process, since they have already for centuries been settling all over Russia, not just in the Volga area. The Mufti argues that immigrant communities should not establish “national” Islamic communities and organizations but that they should join the existing Islamic organizations (which are, in central Russia at least, dominated by Tatars and led by Tatar Muftis).

Secondly, the text is going into details with the differences between the legal traditions of Islam in Russia. Traditionally, the “Turkic” Muslims of Russia (Tatars and Bashkirs) belong, just like the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kazakhs and others, to the Hanafi school, whereas the Daghestanis are Shafiis; in other parts of the North Caucasus (Chechnya and Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and among the Cherkess) Hanafism is promulgated, but the situation is less clear. The Mufti explains the major differences in religious practice between Shafiis and Hanafis, especially with the most obvious differences connected to the daily prayer. Here his position is mainstream (in so far as he, as a Hanafi, treats the Shafii tradition as equally legitimate). What is much more controversial is his treatment of the Shiis, which he describes as “the fifth *madhhab* of Islam”, calling it the

Imamiyya/Ja'fariyya. In history, the relations between Sunnis and Shiis have always been tense (from the early history of Islam over the establishment of Twelver Shiism as Iran's state religion in the 16th century to the contemporary competition between Shii Iran and the Sunni world, and especially Saudi-Arabia); there were several attempts to bring the two branches of Islam closer to each other, e.g. during the reign of Nadir-Shah (d. 1747) in Iran, and again in the 20th century; but a unifying consensus seems still utopian. For contemporary Iran, the recognition of Shiism as a legitimate form of Islam is of course an important factor of its "pan-Islamic" foreign policy, and it is not by accident that Mufti Gainutdin here refers to the prominent Iranian Islamic scholar Muhammad 'Ali Taskhiri (b. 1948) as the mouthpiece of an international *taqrib* (Arabic "Bringing Closer", Sunni-Shii reconciliation) movement.¹⁷ Perhaps Gainutdin had just recently attended one or the other conference of this trend. In the Russian Federation, Shiism is above all represented by one million or more Muslims from Azerbaijan, which provides the connection to the immigration topic; as businessmen, petty traders and workers Azerbaijanis are very present in Russia, and there is also a sizeable Azeri community in Moscow. As we will see in chapters 8 to 10 of the present book, the Shii model of Islam is also a very controversial topic among newly-converted ethnic Russian Muslims, some of whom opt for "Khomeinism" while others virulently reject Shiism as unbelief (*kuf'r*). Gainutdin's conciliatory stance on Shiism of course also backs up his claim to represent all Muslims in European Russia; this inclusiveness is a main feature of "Muftism" in general. What needs to be noted here is that Gainutdin does not go into detail with the dogmatic and legal differences between Sunnism and Shiism, which would be more fundamental than the ritual aspects that he points out as differences between Sunni Shafiis and Hanafis.

¹⁷ On *taqrib* in the 20th century see Rainer Brunner, *Annäherung und Distanz. Schia, Azhar und die islamische Ökumene im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin, 1996); on Taskhiri, p. 294.

Third Text: Mufti Gainutdin on Inter-Faith Dialog

Our third text fragment (probably from 2000) is representative for the discourse of inter-faith consultations of the last two decades in Russia. Again, Islam is being explained as the embodiment of peace, and again the history of Muslims in multinational and multi-confessional Russia is being referred to as a model for the future; and also the spirit of patriotism is permeating this text. The text makes a direct reference to the positive contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church, and to Patriarch Aleksei II (1929-2008, in office 1990-2008) in particular; what is obvious here is that the Mufti sees himself as a partner of the Patriarch, as representing all Muslims of Russia in this dialog. This text can therefore be seen as building upon the “integrating” policy of Mufti Gainutdin towards the various trends within Islam that we have just looked at; after proclaiming the unity of Islam the next higher stage is to unite with the other three “traditional” religions of Russia to ensure the beneficial conservative influence of the religious organizations on Russian society at large, and in this case even on the level of the Commonwealth of Independent States that also includes most states of post-Soviet Central Asia and the Caucasus.

Translation of the text fragment (pp. 295-299):

Through the Peaceful Way of Agreement and Consent. Speech at the International Peace-Building Forum of Representatives of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Judaism¹⁸

Bismillahi r-rahmani r-rahim!

In the Name of Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Respected Presidium!

Let me greet you in the name of millions of Russian Muslims who live in the wide spaces of our Homeland (*Rodina*), from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka, and from Murmansk to the Caucasus. The multi-million Russian Umma prays every

¹⁸ Muftii Ravil' Gainutdin, “Putem dogovora i soglasii. Vystuplenie na Mezhrefigioznom mirotvorcheskom forume predstavitelei khristianstva, islama, buddizma i iudaizma”, in Gainutdin, *Islam: Milost' dlia mira* (Moscow, 2011), 295-299. According to a footnote the text was published in the newspaper *Islam minbäre*, 2000, No. 11.

day to the Almighty for the peace in our Fatherland (*Otechestvo*), and the word Islam itself means “peace”. To every person present here we extend our traditional greeting *as-salamu ‘alaykum*, which in Russian means “peace to you”. With these words also adherents of other traditional religions in Russia greet each other.

The Holy Quran tells us about the common origin of all people and peoples: **“O people! Truly, We created you as men and women and made you peoples and tribes so that you recognize each other, and the one amongst you whom Allah respects most is the one who is the most pious!”** (Surat 49 “The Rooms” [“Komnaty”], Ayat 13).¹⁹ [296:] Unity in diversity, mutual recognition, the strife for peace and piety – this is the will of our Creator (*Tvoretz*).

Islam’s relations to other religions, to the freedom of conscience and the freedom of confession (*veroispovedanie*) is founded on a direct statement (*ukazanie*) of the Almighty, Who told His Prophet (peace be upon him): **“If your Lord had wished so then all who live on Earth would have become believers. But would you force people to turn into believers?”** (Surat 10 “Jonas” [“Iona”], Ayat 99).

From this it can be deduced that the belief in God (*Bog*) is a voluntary choice for everybody, and for this reason we, serving the Almighty, have to try to resolve all questions exclusively through the peaceful way of agreement and consent.

Respected participants of the Forum!

After the collapse of the Soviet Union we, the representatives of various religions in the Commonwealth of Independent States, are meeting today for the first time on an interreligious forum. This Forum takes place under completely different historical and political conditions than [such meetings did] in the recent past. The relation towards religious organizations has changed fundamentally. Praise be to the Almighty, today [the religious organizations] have significant possibilities to actively participate in the spiritual life of society and in its social processes. Our Forum is called upon to discuss how and in what direction we, together, can use these opportunities for positive changes in the spiritual life of our countries. In the Holy Quran it is said: **“Allah does not change the situation**

¹⁹ [No Arabic text attached.]

of people unless they change them themselves” (Sura 13 “The Noise” [“Grom”], Ayat 11). In my opinion the most important task for Russia and the Commonwealth is to provide stability of society [297:] by strengthening the international and interreligious consent. And the states that created all necessary preconditions for our activities expect from us active measures precisely in this direction.

When remembering the past we understand that the representatives of the different religions have over many centuries lived on the territory of our multinational Russia in peace. This demonstrates the deep historical interconnections (*vzaimosviasi*) between the followers of the traditional confessions. We have a rich experience of how the cultures of the peoples adhering to different religions permeated each other (*vzaimoproniknovenie*). This interaction (*vzaimodeistvie*) supported the spiritual enrichment (*dukhovnoe obogoshchenie*) and the development of society. This process touched upon practically all aspects: language, literature, architecture, the system of the state (*gosudarstvennoe ustroistvo*), family and day-to-day relations [between people]. We can proudly say that poly-confessional Russia never saw any inter-religious wars (*mezhreligioznye voiny*). In my opinion it is exactly this historical past that created a strong basis on which the religious workers of the whole Commonwealth of Independent States can build for a fruitful and multi-faceted inter-religious dialog.

Respected participants of the Forum!

The love of peace, the wish to attain and maintain peace is the most important duty of the followers of all traditional religions of Russia. The fulfilment of this duty is only possible through inter-confessional dialog. We pray to the Almighty that He may give [literally: send down, *nisposlat*] all religious workers an understanding of the importance and necessity of this dialog.

Our Forum is in many respects a fruit of the close cooperation (*vzaimodeistvie*) between the leaders (*rukovoditeli*) of the religions that are traditional for Russia – [298:] Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism – who have united in the Inter-Religious Council of Russia (*Mezhreligiozniy sovet Rossii*). We say our prayers [and ask the Lord] that this Forum should not become

just a one-time event that does not give any concrete results for the development of interconnections and cooperation (*sotrudnichestvo*) between the followers of the various religions and between their organizations. We think that the Forum must provide a continuation of the dialog on the level of republics and oblasts, and especially those where the population comprises representatives of many peoples and religions. Thanks to our cooperation, we, the religious workers, might be able to exert a beneficial influence on the establishment of peace and consent in society, and we might make our contribution to the blossoming and welfare of our country. The Holy Quran determines the obligation of every believer in the following manner: **“Help each other in piety and God-fearing (*blagochestie i bogoboiaznennost*)”, but do not help each other in sin and infringement**” (Surat 5, “The Table” [“Trapeza”], Ayat 2).

Recently the Organization of the United Nations held a summit of religious leaders (*sammit religioznykh liderov*). I cannot say that we were satisfied with the results of this event, but such an initiative is, in our view, very topical. The Summit agreed on a declaration of peace between religions. Is it not time to accept such a declaration for Russia and the countries of the CIS? Perhaps the obligations that we accept [for ourselves] will become an active step towards the strengthening of inter-confessional peace in our Homeland!

Coming to an end of my speech I would like to express my gratitude to the highly respected Patriarch of Moscow and the Whole Rus', Aleksei II, and to the whole leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church for their cordiality and hospitality. [299:] I would like to mention the huge contribution that the Orthodox Church and our traditional religions made to the successful activity of the Inter-Religious Council, and I hope that our mutual understanding (*vzaimoponimanie*) will continue to develop and strengthen.

In the end I would like to quote the words of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who said: “The one who calls for intolerance (*neterpimost*) does not belong to us, and also does not belong to us the one who fights when he is motivated by intolerance, and also does not belong to us who dies in his intolerance”.

We, the Muslims of the Russian Federation, are ready for a brotherly dialog with the representatives of all traditional religions of Russia! We are ready not only to pray for peace and the stability of the society of the Russian Federation, but also to actively take measures, together with you, respected participants of the Forum.

We pray to Allah that he provide the work of this Forum with fruitful results, and peace and success (*blagopoluchie*) to all its participants.

As-salamu 'alaykum wa-rahmatullahi wa-barakatuhu. Peace to you and Divine favour (*Bozh'e blagovolenie*)!

[End of the text.]

Analysis:

In conformity with the purpose of the Forum, there is nothing specifically Islamic in this speech; rather, Allah is also presented as “God” (*Bog*), and the Quranic quotes are calling for religiosity and piety in general, making no differentiation between the monotheistic faiths. Even more, the Suras that the Mufti refers to deal with diversity as being the result of God’s decision to not unify all nations and beliefs; and they reject coercion in faith issues.

Again, history is being used to stress peaceful continuity; yet here the Mufti does not go into detail (and his claim that Russia has never seen religious wars could of course be challenged with many examples from the early modern as well as from the imperial periods).

Equally in accordance with the idea of dialog between the confessions is that the text contains a huge amount of terms that belong to the semantic field of “beneficial mutual relations”. Key words are “interconnections” (*vzaimosviazi*), “mutual permeation” (*vzaimoproniknovenie*), “interaction” (*vzaimodeistvie*), “mutual understanding” (*vzaimoponimanie*), “cooperation” (*sotrudnichestvo*). This all leads to “social stability” (that is, obviously, the absence of anarchy, violence and criminality), but also to a spiritual enrichment (*dukhovnoe obogoshchenie*) that is not closer defined. Also clear is that the Mufti regards this beneficial influence of various religions acting in harmony as something that is being expected by the governments of the CIS; that is, religions are supposed to

act in conformity with state goals. At the same time this discourse of mutual tolerance makes it clear that cooperation is only envisaged among the four “traditional” religions of Russia; obviously, representatives of “non-traditional” faiths were not present at the meeting.

What is also visible in the text is the top-down approach, the “administrative” logics of how to put inter-confessional dialog into practice: after the establishment of an Inter-Religious Council of Russia on highest level the next step is to set up similar councils on regional levels. Initiatives (and problems and conflicts) on local levels are not mentioned.

Fourth Text: The Council of Muftis on “Military Priests”

Of a different nature is the text below, a 2006 position statement produced by the Council of Muftis of Russia (which is chaired by Mufti Gainutdin) on a draft law that introduces the institution of “military priests” in the Russian Army. This document demonstrates another time that the Muftiates are engaged in a triangle relation with the Russian state and with the Russian Orthodox Church. Yet while our preceding text emphasized the fraternity of the “traditional religions” at the service of state and for the benefit of society, the statement below evokes a somehow different picture.

*Translation of the text fragment:*²⁰

The Position of the Council of Muftis of Russia on the Federal Law Project “On Military Priests”

Moscow, 11 March 2006

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

The Council of Muftis of Russia completely agrees with the policy of our state to strengthen the spiritual-moral foundations (*dukhovno-nravstvennye nachala*), and to improve the moral-psychological situation in the Armed Forces, to raise

²⁰“Pozitsiia Soveta muftiev Rossii po proektu Federal'nogo Zakona “O voennykh sviaschchennikakh”, in Gainutdin, *Islam: Otvet na vyzovy vremeni* (Moscow, 2011), 480–482. According to a footnote by the editors this text was first published in *Islam minbäre* 3/2006.

the military discipline and to eliminate non-statutory relations in the army environment, [including] cruelty and violence, ethnic hatred (*mezhnatsional'naia rozn'*) and xenophobia.

The Council of Muftis of Russia is in favour of a legal regulation on the participation of representatives of all officially registered religious associations (*religioznye ob"edineniia*) of Russia in the spiritual-moral education of the military personnel (*voennosluzhashchie*). But the legal project of the Russian Federation "On Military Priests" ("*O voennykh sviashchennikakh*") is not in conformity with these goals. The rude attempt to impose the institution of priests onto the army is fraught with the most heavy consequences for the fate of the Russian Army, which is poly-confessional in character, and also for society (*obshchestvo*) as a whole. Such a measure can lead to the juxtaposition of believers of various religious confessions, to the discrimination of military personnel according to their national or [481:] religious affiliation. Discussions in the barracks about whose belief (*vera*) is "more correct", who is a "heretic" or a "sectarian" ("*eretik*" ili "*sektant*"), can lead not to closing the ranks of the fighters (*splochenie boitsov*) but, on the contrary, to a transfer of the image of the "enemy" ("*vrag*") onto the room neighbour whose confession is not "that" religion. All this can undermine the fighting efficiency (*boesposobnost'*) of the Armed Forces of the country, can destroy the fragile inter-confessional and inter-religious peace (*khrupkii mezhekfessional'nyi i mezhrefligiozni mir*) in the military, can provoke confrontations among the soldiers.

Our concern is shared by all representatives of the religious directions (*religioznye napravleniia*), with the exclusion of the Russian Orthodox Church (RPTs), but including [other] Christian [directions]. They all raise their voices against a hurried introduction of the institution of military priests in the army.

The Council of Muftis of Russia, guided by the interests of society and basing itself on the current legislation and on the conclusions of a group of expert scholars, regards the introduction of "military priests" as permanent staff members, and the investment of religious workers (*religioznye deiateli*) with functions and forms of authority that are alien to them, as being in contradiction to the Principle Law of the Russian Federation (*Osnovnoi Zakon RF*). Priests can

satisfy the religious needs of soldiers and officers also without being military personnel themselves, without receiving military ranks. For this reason the Council of Muftis of Russia is worried about the project of the Federal Law "On Military Priests" as it has been elaborated by the Main Military Procurator office (*Glavnaia voennaia prokuratura*), which has not passed a transparent public expert review and which has not been agreed upon with the representatives of the main religious organizations of the country. In a number of its paragraphs the draft law contradicts the Russian Federation's Constitution, and if accepted by the Federal Assembly (*Federal'noe Sobranie*) it can provoke interreligious confrontations in the military units. [482:]

The Council of Muftis of Russia is in favour of the elaboration of a federal law that regulates the contacts of military personnel with religious workers, and for the establishment of an Inter-Confessional Council (*mezkhkonnessional'nyi sovet*) at the Main Administration of Educational Work of the Armed Forces of the RF that includes representatives of those religions that the military personnel holds on to. In this case officers-educators (*ofitsery-vospitateli*) can become mediators between military personnel and religious associations, and can provide clergymen (*sviasbchennosluzhiteli*) of various confessions the necessary access to those who serve in the military, and they can also immediately (*operativno*) react to the emergence of any kind of problematic ethno-confessional situation that requires religious action (*religioznoe vozdeistvie*). In this model the officers of education are staff members who are responsible to the state in the form of the Ministry of Defense (*Minoborona*), while the status of the religious workers remains independent from the state, as is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

The Council of Muftis of Russia expresses its hope that the principle of equality between followers of all existing religions in our country continues to be the fundament of state policies in the sphere of inter-confessional and inter-religious unity (*edinstvo*).

[End of the text].

Analysis:

This document reflects the concerns of the Muftis about the government's "preferential treatment" of the Russian Orthodox Church. On the surface, the critique is formulated not in terms of a neglect of Islam, as the ROC's smaller brother; even the term "military priests" (*voennye sviashchenniki*), clearly coming from a Christian understanding of what a "religious worker" is, is not openly criticized. Rather, what is objected is that the military priests would fall under the authority of the Ministry of Defense, and would thus no longer be independent (which means: they would be falling out of the authority of the Muftis).

Still, also the concern that the law was made above all to improve the position of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Armed Forces is obvious from the text. This is clear from the Muftis' statement that the ROC does not share their concern that the law could lead to inter-religious and inter-confessional tensions in the army; the present situation in the armed forces is described as a "fragile" peace that can easily be disrupted.

In opposing the interests of the ROC, the Muftis move away from the dichotomy between "traditional" and "non-traditional" religions in Russia; the term "traditional" does not even appear. Rather, the Muftis argue from the position of peace between "all existing religions in our country", and claim that the Constitution defends their equality and independence from the state. With other words, in this 2006 text the Protestant and Catholic communities, for example, appear as an ally of Islam against the dominating role of the ROC, and it is argued that some Christian denominations share the Muftis' complaint.

What is also striking in the text is the degree to which the Muftis adopt a military logic, and also the language of the military. Religion is to serve the "closing of the ranks of the fighters" and to safeguard the "fighting efficiency" of the Russian Army. And again we see an administrative approach: the suggested solution is to train "military educators" to work as contact persons for priests who remain outside of the barracks. This model should be facilitated by another bureaucratic structure of highest level, a proposed Inter-Confessional Council at the educational staff of the military.

According to an Interfax news message, in 2010 the Russian Federation's Defense Ministry introduced 240 positions for military priests; still, by March 2012 there were only twenty Orthodox priests and one Muslim imam working in the military, spread over various Russian Army bases not only in Russia proper but also in the Crimea, Abkhazia and Armenia. According to this 2012 news report, the military priests get their salary from the Ministry (which means they are military personnel, under a newly-created "Russian Armed Forces Directorate for Working with Religious Servicemen") but have no official military rank, and they wear uniform only when in the field.²¹

There are more long-term tensions between Gainutdin's council of Muftis and the Orthodox Church, for example on the introduction of courses of "Russian Orthodox Culture" at state schools (to which the Council of Muftis objected on the same day that the document above was published, on 11 March 2006).²² Next to legal issues that involve state legislation there are also issues in the field of Islamology; thus on 19 December 2005 Mufti Gainutdin wrote a letter to Patriarch Aleksei II in which he complained about the publication of the "insulting" book "Newest Studies of the History of the Russian Umma", published by Roman Silant'ev, the secretary of the Interreligious Council, and obviously supported by leading representatives of the ROC.²³

Finally, tensions between the faiths also rage in the context of Christian Orthodox missionary work among Muslims, especially immigrants; one of the most well-known Orthodox priests active in this field, Daniil Sysoev, was killed by an unknown assassin on 20 November 2009 in Moscow.²⁴

²¹ "21 Priests Serve in Russian Army", *Interfax*, 26 March 2012.

²² "Zaiavlenie Soveta muftiev Rossii po voprosu prepodavaniia kursa "Osnovy pravoslavnoi kul'tury" v gosudarstvennoi i munitsipal'noi shkole", in Gainutdin, *Islam: Otvet na vyzovy vremeni* (Moscow, 2011), 483-484.

²³ Mufti Ravil' Gainutdin, "Pis'mo ego sviateishestvu Patriarkhu Moskovskomu i vseia Rusi Alekseiui II", in Gainutdin, *Islam: Otvet na vyzovy vremeni* (Moscow, 2011), 457-461.

²⁴ Sysoev was a prolific writer of moralistic, church and missionary literature, including anti-Islamic polemics; see Sviashchennik Daniil Sysoev, *Brak s musul'maninom: Tserkov. Kanony. Obshchestvo* (Moscow, 2011).

BEYOND THE ETHNIC TRADITIONS: SHAMIL' ALIAUTDINOV'S MUSLIM GUIDE TO SUCCESS

Alfrid K. Bustanov

Our next case study is about a very different and innovative genre within the broader Russian Islamic discourse, something that could best be called “Islamic lifestyle advice”. This genre is closely connected to the traditional genre of Quran interpretation (*tafsir*), but it introduces a number of new elements, including borrowings from modern psychology. Probably the most successful representative of this trend in Russia is Shamil' Aliautdinov (b. 1974), a Moscow-based religious authority very close to DUMER Mufti Ravil' Gainutdin – in a way, Gainutdin's specialist for the Muslim youth in Russia. Aliautdinov wants to lead his readers to something that he calls a “transformation”; perhaps one can even speak of giving guidance for “born-again” Muslims, for discovering or re-discovering the full dimension of Islam in everyday life.

Aliautdinov had studied Islamic law at the Azhar University in Cairo when he, in 1997 at age twenty-three, became Imam of the prestigious newly-built Moscow Memorial mosque. This mosque is located at Victory Park, where also a new church and a synagogue had been erected in 1995 and 1998 respectively. Aliautdinov not only developed into a popular preacher at that mosque but also published an impressive amount of Islamic books, and he is very active in the mass-media, including on the web. His monographs cover a wide range of topics: from Quran exegesis (in four volumes) over the basics of Islamic law to the role of the family in Islam and the description of an ideal Muslim.¹ By now (2012) more

¹ Shamil' Aliautdinov's main works include: *Mir dushi* (Moscow, 2005); *Perevod smyslov Sviashchennogo Korana*. 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 2009-2012); *On i Ona. Polnaia versiia* (St. Petersburg, 2011); *Sem'ia i Islam* (St. Petersburg, 2011). Quite surprisingly, Aliautdinov's activity and writings are largely ignored in Russian Islamic studies. The same goes for Western scholarship: a recent article on Islam in Moscow does not even mention Aliautdinov. See: L. March, “Modern

than 250.000 copies of his books have been sold, and it has been announced that Aliautdinov's Russian translation of the Quran will be published in 70.000 copies. Aliautdinov also maintains his personal web-site umma.ru where he is regularly posting answers to the thousands of questions that he obtains from Russian-speaking Muslims all over the world. Since 2002 he is officially Mufti Gainutdin's deputy for religious affairs.

Aliautdinov's books are on the shelves of bookstores not only in Moscow and St. Petersburg but also in Kazan, Ufa, and Makhachkala, and certainly in many other cities; something that cannot be said of, for example, Gainutdin's books. Probably Aliautdinov's biggest success among his Russian readers, his *The World of the Soul* of 2005, has in the meantime been translated into English and Chechen, and also a Tatar translation has been produced.

The World of the Soul consists of thirty-five short essays on various characteristics and conditions of the human soul, such as fear, beauty, intuition, and so on. Some of these terms are introduced in their Arabic form, in Cyrillic, as for instance *tauba* (repentance), *sukut* (silence) and *rido* (satisfaction).² The terms are then explained in the main text. This book is intended as "an instruction for the soul which is always seeking knowledge, always growing, analyzing, taking lessons from experience in order to be ready for the great worldly life and for giving account to God."

In the following we would like to point out five general features that characterize Aliautdinov's Islamic style; these features are then demonstrated with the example of three text fragments from Aliautdinov's works.

(1) The first feature of Aliautdinov's Islamic style is its thoroughly academic character, which demonstrates his mastery of the Arabic sources and the professional skills that he obtained at al-Azhar. While other Islamic writers do not bother their audience with where they got this or that hadith from, Aliautdinov always adds a footnote saying who transmitted the hadith, from which Arabic

Moscow. Muslim Moscow?", in: R. Dannreuther, L. March (eds.), *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism* (London; New York, 2010), 84-102.

² The [o] seemingly indicates the emphatic character of the Arabic letter [d] in the Arabic word *rida*; no Persianism.

hadith collection and even from which edition he took the version he presents, and how the hadith collectors categorized the reliability of the transmission line (as *sahih*/"sound", meaning that the transmission line was uninterrupted and impeccable, or as *hasan*/"good" or *da'if* /"weak"). This makes Aliautdinov's arguments "verifiable", meaning that he invites his readers to regard the ocean of Islamic literature not as a sealed book but as a source base which can be approached scientifically.

Aliautdinov quotes not only from Quran and Sunna but also from a significant number of traditional Islamic authorities. However, there is a circle of authors whom he quotes more often than others. Aliautdinov's own commentary on the Quran is based on three major Arabic *tafsirs*: *al-Jami' li-ahkam al-Qur'an* by the Egyptian scholar Muhammad al-Qurtubi (d. 1273), *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* by the Syrian Shafi'i scholar Isma'il Ibn Kathir (1301-1373), and *al-Tafsir al-munir fi-l-'aqida wa-l-shari'a wa-l-manhaj* by Wahba az-Zuhayli (b. 1937), a Syrian scholar with Azhar education. In other works Aliautdinov also refers to the Shafi'i scholar Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti (d. 1505).³ Aliautdinov also quotes from the well-known modern Egyptian theologian Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926), and in many cases follows the latter's legal advice (*fatwa*). In addition to the Arabic-language scholarship of these authors Aliautdinov occasionally refers to some Turkish theologians; yet he never uses books of Tatar 'ulama. Once asked about Sheikh Muhammad al-Albani (1914-1999), one of the most important sources of inspiration for Salafis, Aliautdinov did not want to comment upon al-Albani's opinions.⁴ This reflects Aliautdinov's attempt to keep distance to both the Sufi and the Salafi camps, and his goal to go a very different path. Against the background of his twenty years of professional experience in Islamic theology, Aliautdinov displays a deep and broad knowledge of classical Arabic theological

³ For comprehensive bibliography used in Aliautdinov's books see: Sh. Aliautdinov, *On i Ona. Polnaia versiia* (St. Petersburg, 2011), 886-892; *Sem'ia i Islam* (St. Petersburg, 2011), 760-767; *Musul'manskoe pravo. Pervyi i vtoroi urovni. Dlia prepodavatelei* (Moscow, 2006), 453-461.

⁴ <http://www.umma.ru/vaazandhydba/imam-shamil-alyautdinov/2067-protiranie-licza-posle-dua-i-obedinenie-molitv>. Last visited: 6.6.2012.

literature, and he usually gives preference to the most tolerant and possibly liberal legal standpoints.

The downside of his academic style is that Aliautdinov's huge footnote apparatus sometimes creates a veritable "second text", especially when the footnotes provide additional Quranic references to which he adds his own paraphrases and comments, in round and square brackets.

(2) A second feature of Aliautdinov's style is that he makes frequent use of non-religious texts, especially from the fields of psychology, anthropology and sociology. Just like the Jadidis of the early 20th century, Aliautdinov perceives Western sciences through what has been made available to him and his audience in Russian translations. In his essay on "fear" for example, Aliautdinov makes two references to books by Andrew Leigh (b. 1972) and David Servan Schreiber (1961-2011).⁵ Leigh is a former professor of economics at the Australian National University, and Schreiber was a French physician. What unites these authors is that they praise the power of man's will and that they preach a healthy way of life (including regular sport activities and healthy food) and call for positive thinking. Another feature of their books is that they are targeted at a broad readership and are not written as academic monographs. From the Russian translations of these works Aliautdinov takes short quotations or even longer passages and images (see below in the text fragment on "The Executer and the Elephant") and combines them with his translations and commentaries of Quranic verses and hadiths on issues like motivation and the value of time and of hard work. In his sermons *Shamil'* Aliautdinov uses these quotes to exemplify that religious postulates are in harmony with the "most updated results of scientific research".

For Aliautdinov, the ideal person is a Muslim believer who is strong physically and psychologically, and who is successful and rich in both the spiritual and material aspects of life. Professional success thus becomes a token of Islam;

⁵ *Shamil'* Aliautdinov also recommends these authors on his web-site: <http://umma.ru/shamil-alyautdinov-rekomenduet>. Last visited: 21.05.2012.

something that might be regarded as a modern version of “Protestant Ethics”, in the sense of Max Weber.⁶

(3) The third feature of Aliautdinov’s work is a certain reduction of the complexity of the traditional Islamic theological discourse, in a manner that does not contradict his insistence on scientific standards. This can best be demonstrated with an example from his *Mir dushy*, and here we take his essay on fear (*strakh*). This essay is somehow extraordinary because Aliautdinov does not give an Arabic term for what he wants to describe as “fear”. His main argument in this chapter is that it is impossible to avoid all fear, but that one should not allow fear to destabilize one’s inner harmony. The main goals of human life – happiness in this world and satisfaction of the Lord – should have primacy over disturbances in the heart. Aliautdinov’s point of departure is a definition of the word “fear” taken from a Russian dictionary of 2000. He does not give any particular theological explanation of what fear means in the Islamic tradition, and he does not embark upon a discussion of the various types of fear of God that exist in the Arabic language. Traditional Quran exegesis and Islamic theology distinguish various dimensions of fear: *taqwa* is the fear of God and is firmly bound to piety (which would be *bogoboiaznennost’* in Russian); and *taqwa*, as well as *khashya*, are “specialized forms of religious or moral ‘fear’ which take God and his chastisements as their only proper object.” By contrast, *khawf* “seems to refer to ‘fear’ in the more generic sense of a morally neutral emotion which may take either God and his chastisements [...] or any other phenomenon [...] as its legitimate object.”⁷ Furthermore, also the term *hidhr* is mentioned in the Quran, in the sense of fear, wariness and caution; by contrast to *khawf*, *hidhr* is understood as a virtue. Finally, Sufis also refer to *hayba* as a respectful fear, the awe of God. All of these differences, peculiarities and nuances, which were central in the centuries-long Islamic tradition, are simplified in Aliautdinov’s discourse in one generic notion of *strakh*, “fear”. Thus Aliautdinov refers to Quran 2:277

⁶ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Los Angeles, 2002; first German edition: 1904 and 1905).

⁷ Scott C. Alexander, “Fear,” in: *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*. General Editor: Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden, 2012) (Brill online version used).

which promises that Muslims will not be regretful and caught by fear (in Russian “*nad nimi ne vlastvuet strakh*”), where the Arabic original has *wa-la khawfun ‘alayhim wa-la hum yabzanun* – “and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow” (in Arberry’s translation). In addition to this a hadith is given about God’s guarantee for those who are afraid in this world and God’s punishment for those who are careless in their acts. Again, in the Arabic original of this well-known hadith fear is referred to as *khawf*.

As we see, in his Quranic and Sunna references Aliautdinov used only those texts which refer to *khawf* (the root of which, kh-w-f, appears indeed no less than 124 times in 112 out of the 114 Quranic verses), and not to other Quranic terms of fear. Accordingly, the understanding of fear that Aliautdinov selected, in the sense of *khawf*, refers only to the physical state of fearing something in this world; this fear is regarded by Aliautdinov as a negative feature which however cannot be eliminated from human nature. Nothing is said about the fear of God. Aliautdinov supports these arguments also through regular quotations from the Old Testament: “Fear is nothing else but losing the help of the mind.” Aliautdinov takes examples from the Quran (verses 2:155; 20:46, 68; 41:30; 43:68; 46:13) in order to prove that fear, with this negative connotation, is part of the worldly test. As far as I can see, other definitions of fear do not appear in *Mir dushi* nor in other books by Aliautdinov.

This choice to concentrate on a single definition of fear seems to result from Shamil’ Aliautdinov’s general unwillingness to engage in a discussion of the more sophisticated Islamic terminology. His approach and narratives are mainly quite pragmatic, and his aim is to produce a manual for an Islamic way to a successful life. Recently he even gave a definition for his approach – he called it a “Muslim coaching” (*musul’anskii kouching*).⁸ From this perspective, the consumption of belles-lettres, poetry and other literature not directly connected to “everyday practice” (*povednevnaia praktika*) are almost useless pastimes. This approach also influenced Aliautdinov’s evaluation of the Tatar theological heritage: in our interview with him (in October 2010) Aliautdinov distanced himself from the

⁸ <http://umma.ru/seminar>. Last visited on 4.06.2012.

pre-revolutionary Tatar scholars, arguing that their writings are of secondary importance if compared to the original Arabic sources; even the works of the Jadids are today outdated, and not a model for emulation.⁹ Similarly, in September 2011 the Aliautdinov brothers (Shamil' and his brother Il'dar, who is also an Islamic authority in Moscow) issued a fatwa in which they legitimized the bulldozing of the Moscow Friday Mosque (built by Tatars in 1904, see our preceding chapter), stating that this old mosque was too small and too old, and adding that its *mihrab* (prayer niche) was not correctly oriented towards Mecca, as it should be.¹⁰ The old mosque had to make space for the construction of a new mosque, which is supposed to be more modern, and more spacious, in the near future. Similarly, in one of his sermons Aliautdinov mentioned a person who valued old manuscripts. Such a "hobby" he found rather obscure – something which can be read as a rather denigrating statement, given that the Tatar Muslim literary heritage has suffered greatest losses in the Soviet period.

(4) To continue, a fourth major feature in Aliautdinov's style is the good Russian literary form, including the full translation of specifically Islamic terms into Russian equivalents that the reader would know from Christian contexts. More than that, Shamil' Aliautdinov is highly inventive when it comes to finding attractive expressions for spiritual issues, one outstanding example of which being *onlainovaia osvedomlennost' Tvorsta* – "The Creator's online awareness". At the same time he uses many Russian proverbs to express accepted truisms, of the type *zhizn' prozhit' – ne pole pereiti*, "to live one's life is not [as easy] as just crossing a field", or: *vazhno ne to, chto proiskhodit, a to, kak my k etomu otnosimsia*, i.e. "it does not matter what happens, what is important is how we look at it". This shows that the book is meant to be attractive for a broad Russian-speaking and -thinking readership, and that it is also speaking to readers who might not be acquainted with specifically Islamic contexts. His "World of the Soul" is number one of a list of books that Aliautdinov recommends to his readers; and there is

⁹ Interview (Bustanov/Kemper) with Aliautdinov, Memorial'naia mosque, Moscow, October 2010.

¹⁰ <http://auth.umma.ru/fetvy-all/10449-bogoslovskoe-zaklyuchenie-o-vozmozhnosti-snosy-starogozdaniya-moskovskoj-sobornoj-mecheti-dlya-vozrozdaniya-ee-v-sostave-kompleksa-novoj-sobornoj-mecheti>. Last visited: 3 Sept. 2012.

good reason to assume that it targets above all Russian converts, who have easy access to the book because everything is translated into plain Russian, and because every special term is given one clear equivalent or explanation (as seen in the case of *strakh*). As Shamil' Aliautdinov pointed out to us in an interview, half of all e-mail questions that he receives come from persons with Russian names.¹¹

How Islamic terms are getting close to Christian contexts can be demonstrated with many examples. Almost every mentioning of the name of Allah is accompanied by the synonyms *Gospod'* (Lord, with a capital letter), *Bog* (God) and *Tvorets* (Creator). This seems to indicate that God is the same for everybody irrespective of the diversity among the monotheist confessions. Aliautdinov also "Christianizes" the names of Biblic/Quranic prophets (so that we find Avraam in place of Ibrahim), Muhammad's prophethood is rendered as a "mission", and the Quran is very often referred to as "God's Revelation" (*Bozhestvennoe Otkrovenie*). To denote a common agreement of Islamic scholars Aliautdinov uses not the Arabic term *ijma'* ("consensus", one of the four traditional pillars of Islamic law) but coins his own expression: "canonically" (*kanonicheski*); similar, he refers to what he calls "the canons" (*kanony*). This notion derived from a Christian terminological apparatus is rather problematic when applied in the field of Islamic theology where no canons were ever produced for the whole community, and where acceptance of a dogmatic point of view always depended on the support that a particular scholar's interpretation found among other scholars and their communities.

To exemplify the break in style and terminology between the pre-revolutionary Tatar Islamic experience and Aliautdinov's approach let us compare his translations of the first Quranic chapter *al-Fatiha* (published in the first volume of his *Tafsir*) with that of the Tatar theologian Musa Jaruallah Bigi (Bigiev, 1873-1949). The English Arabist Arthur J. Arberry (1905-1969) translated the verses of the first Sura as follows: "Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate, the Master of the Day of Doom. Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour. Guide us in the

¹¹ <http://umma.ru/interviews/4708-musulmanskoe-liderstvo-v-rossii>. Last visited: 21.05.2012.

straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those against whom Thou art wrathful, nor of those who are astray.”

Let us compare this now with how Aliautdinov’s translates the Arabic *Fatiha* into Russian: “The true praise belongs only to Allah, the Lord of Worlds, the mercy of Whom is eternal and has no boundaries. To the Lord of Judgement Day. We worship You and ask You for help (support, Divine blessing in our affairs). Send us onto the right path. The path of those whom you gave it (from among the prophets and messengers, pious men and martyrs, and all those others who were given this honour). But not those on whom You are angry, and not those who went out from this (way). Amen.”¹²

And now let us have a look at the Tatar/Ottoman translation (or paraphrase) of the same *Fatiha*, by Musa Jarallah Bigi:¹³ *Hamd-ü sena ‘alemleri yaratıp besleyin terbiye edip büyüden, kaffe-yi makhlûqata dünya ve akhiratta merhemet ve ‘inayet eden, din gününün (ruz-i qiyamat) sahib ve maliki bulunan Allah te‘alaya makhsusdur. Yalnız sana ‘ibadet eder ve yalnız senden mu‘avenet ve yardım dileriz. Bizi doghru yola hidayet buyur, götür. O yol kendilerine in‘am ve ihsan eylediklerin yoludur. Özlerine ghazab olanların, zelalete düşenlerin yolu deghil.*

In English this would be: “Praise and glorification to Allah (the exalted and most high) who created the Worlds, nourished and raised [them], who is merciful and caring for all creations in this world and in the last world, the Lord and Ruler of the Day of Judgement ([Persian:] The Day of Resurrection). Only to you we worship and only you we ask for help and support. Bring and guide us on the true path. This path is the path of those whom you gave your help and beneficence.

¹² «Истинное восхваление принадлежит только Аллаху, Господу миров, милость Которого вечна и безгранична, Владыке Судного Дня. Тебе поклоняемся и у Тебя просим помощи [поддержки, Божьего благословения в делах наших]. Направь нас на правильный путь. Путь тех, которым он был дарован [из числа пророков и посланников, праведников и мучеников, а также всех тех, кто удостоен был такой чести]. Не тех, на которых Ты разгневался, и не тех, которые сошли с него». Амин. {We here omit the footnotes and commentaries that Aliautdinov added to his translation.}

¹³ *Koran. Perevod na tatarskii iazyk Musy Bigi. Reprint prerevoda, podgotovlennogo k izdaniyu v 1912 godu*, ed. by N.G. Garaeva (Kazan, 2010), 2 (Arabic pagination).

This is not the path of those who received your anger and who fell into misguidance.”

We gave the Tatar original above to show that Bigi’s Tatar commentary is full of Arabic-Persian loanwords (*hamd*, *‘ibade*, *kaffē-yi makhluqat*, *merhemet*, *‘inayet*, all through the Sura up to *in‘am*, *ghadab*, *zelalet*); in fact, rather than translating the verses Bigi gives a paraphrase in which he simply puts the Arabic words of the Sura into a Turkic syntax, so that Arabic *alladhina in‘amta ‘alayhim*, “those whom Thou hast blessed”, becomes in Bigi’s Ottoman Turkic *kendilerini in‘am eyledikleri*, “those on whom you did *in‘am*” (*in‘am* being the Arabic “infinitive” of *in‘amta*). Next to this “translating of Arabic terms from an Arabic to a Turkic syntax”, a second technique of Bigi is that he gives literal translations of Arabic expressions into Turkish: Arabic *yawm al-din* → Turkish *din günü* (“the day of judgment”; explained by Bigi through also giving a Persian form!); *sirat al-mustaqim* → *doghri yol* (“the true/straight path”). In Bigi’s time, these Islamic terms obviously did not need a translation or explanation because a Tatar Muslim reader in the early 20th century simply knew what they meant. Aliautdinov, by contrast, renders these Islamic terms in Russian “Christianized” forms: *voskhvalenie* for *hamd*, *Vladyka Sudnogo Dnia* for *malik yawm ad-din*, and *pravil’nyi put’* for *sirat al-mustaqim*.

(5) Finally, Aliautdinov has a very peculiar form of engaging with his public. Next to giving sermons in the Moscow mosque he is also available globally, “online”; and since 2009 Aliatdinov regularly visits places like Kazan, Yekaterinburg, Ul’ianovsk and Naberezhnye Chelny for events and speeches. In the summer of 2012 Aliautdinov gave a series of public lectures in Almaty (Kazakhstan) using his *Trillioner* book.¹⁴ In Moscow he has established the custom of giving lectures in the Tatar restaurant *Chai-Kazan*. With his public lectures and book presentations Aliautdinov attracts crowds that the mosque simply cannot accommodate. From time to time Aliautdinov appears in first-rank Russian mass-media, such as the First Channel and *Ekho Moskvu*; he makes

¹⁴ Aliautdinov Sh. *Trillioner slushaet* (St. Petersburg, 2012).

perfect use of the interest of journalists while at the same time bashing them for their complicity in having given Islam a bad name in the 2000s.

It should also be mentioned that Aliautdinov's books have an attractive and professional design. His books *Muzhchiny i Islam* and *Zhenshchiny i Islam* ("Men and Islam" and "Women and Islam", respectively) were published with provocative covers: for example, the front side of the book on women shows a devil and a woman with a cigarette and ugly make-up, while the back side has a well-dressed pretty woman in headscarf. These pictures are meant to display the transformation of the personality that comes with the practice of Islam, and they are obviously targeted at the young generation which has an appetite for new approaches and values creativity.

As a member of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Central European Region of Russia, Aliautdinov follows the general line of the Mufti, in loyalty to state and government. Answering our question whether Russian Muslims are free in fulfilling their religious duties, Aliautdinov said that there are enough rights, but added that not many Muslims are able to contribute something of high value for the larger Russian Islamic community. During the president elections campaigns and the accompanying mass demonstrations in Moscow in winter 2012, Aliautdinov claimed in a sermon that only Putin can guarantee the progress of Islam in Russia, and condemned the public protests as harmful.¹⁵

With his disregard of the pre-revolutionary Tatar theological traditions and his generalizing explanations of specific Quranic terminology, we suggest to see Aliautdinov as a major representative of a new modernist trend in Russian Islam. Modernization (de-coupled from particular ethnic traditions, in this case: Tatar), popularization and Russification are crucial for reaching a broad Russian-speaking audience, including Russian converts and young Muslims that also ask questions about how religion relates to sciences, and that therefore appreciates the integration of scientific, especially psychological literature into the religious discourse. In combination with his purely academic way of translating and transliterating Arabic texts (obviously borrowed from the academic Oriental

¹⁵ <http://www.umma.ru/sermon-shamil-alyautdinov/11377-samim-reshat-i-dejstvovat-chast-1>. Last visited: 6.6.2012.

Studies for which he has no good words), Aliautdinov distinguishes himself from many other modernist Islamic scholars who do not write according to academic scientific standards.

To exemplify these features of Shamil' Aliautdinov's style we now offer translations from three fragments from his work. Two of them come from Aliautdinov's web-site and focus on his idea of an ideal Muslim as a "Trillionaire", a person of spiritual, intellectual and material riches who is also physically strong and beautiful. The third sample, a fragment from Aliautdinov's book *Men and Islam* (*Muzhchiny i Islam*), contains something which could be seen as his fatwa on drug consumption. This text is an example of how Aliautdinov responds to questions that he receives from the public, and how he argues.

Finally, a technical note. When citing the Quran and Sunna, Aliautdinov inserts his own comments right into the sentences of the Quran, as is traditionally done in the classical genre of Quran exegesis (*tafsir*). When offering synonyms and linguistic explanations of Arabic words Aliautdinov uses round brackets, while his more detailed commentaries are put into square brackets. To avoid confusion, in this chapter we use a third type of brackets {} for our own comments and explanations in Aliautdinov's texts. All quotations of European authors by Aliautdinov were translated here into English from the Russian.

We would like to thank Shamil' hadhrat for his kind permission to publish these texts.

Text 1: A Trillionaire¹⁶

The believer should always strive for what is the best, and relentlessly seek the Divine Mercy; he should fulfill the obligatory prayer (*molitva-namaz*), bring his body in order (through ablution), give rest to the soul (through the performance of the prayer), which takes generally about ten minutes¹⁷, and then he moves

¹⁶ {This fragment can be downloaded from: <http://ummamagazine.com/trillioner>. Last visited 4 June 2012.}

¹⁷ In total the five obligatory prayers require about one hour each day, but they are a very important element for expressing responsibility before yourself and before the Lord of the worlds (*Gospod' mirov*). [The prayer] is one of the guarantees of worldly and eternal happiness. Besides (of course if a

further to the multiple forms of expression of the Creator's Mercy: "After performing your prayer, spread on the Earth and ask for the Mercy of Allah (God, Lord) [by hard work]. Remember Him often. Maybe you will be successful." (Holy Quran, 62:10). In the Holy Quran the representatives of different cultures and religions are called upon to stop arguing and struggling with each other, but to compete with each other in performing good deeds, both in terms of quality and quantity: "Hurry on in performing good deeds (overtake each other in this regard)!" (see: Holy Quran, 5:48).

Moreover, the Highest gave us unlimited potential¹⁸ and said that He will not change the condition of a person before [this person] changes himself: "Truly, God will not change the condition of people before they do change themselves.

person is trying to work on himself), the prayer cleans you from everything foul and immoral: "Truly, prayer prevents a person from libertinism [for example, from adultery, alcohol drinking] as well as from everything foul (condemned, unacceptable, and shameful) [everything that contradicts the good sense, for example ill-mannered behavior and the absence of elementary norms of decency. An obligatory prayer inspires noble sentiments and good qualities in a person, especially if he improves himself and understands the necessity of this approach]..." (Holy Qur'an, 29:45). The Latest Divine Messenger (*Poslednii Bozhii Poslannik*) the Prophet Muhammad (may the Highest honor Him and grant Him peace) said: "When we compare a person who remembers his God [he remembers Him independently of whether he is doing fine or not, he obeys Him and thanks Him by performing a prayer] with a person who does not remember Him, the difference between them is like that between a living and a dead person." Hadith from Abu Musa; a hadith collection of Bukhari. See, for example: Al'-Bukhari M. *Sakhikh al'-Bukhari [Svod khadisov imama al'-Bukhari]*. In five volumes. Beirut: al'-Maktaba al'-asriia, 1997, vol. 4, page 2012, hadith no. 6407. In another hadith it is said: "If a prayer does not help in purging all perverse [elements] from a believer (even [if this develops] slowly, gradually), this person will only distance himself more and more from Allah (God)." Hadith from Ibn 'Abbas; a hadith collection of at-Tabarani. See, for example: As-Suiuty Dzh. *Al'-dzhami' as-sagyr [Malyyi sbornik]*. Beirut: al'-Kutub al'-il'miia, 1990, page 542, hadith no. 9014, "da'if".

¹⁸ "He (the Highest) gave you everything that you asked from Him. Gifts and goods provided to you are uncountable (if you want to count them, it will be impossible) [you will be unable to do it, there are no numbers to count it]! [However,] truly, a human being is extremely ungrateful and sticks to his sins [including the sins of doing nothing, laziness, and spending one's life in a meaningless manner]" (Holy Qur'an, 14:34). "If you [want to] count the goods and gifts that God granted you, this is impossible [you cannot comprehend, count and register all the worldly gifts]. No doubt, He is All-Forgiving and endlessly Merciful. [Though some of you have committed obvious sins and do not believe, He gives you a lot in this worldly abode (*mirskaia obitel'*)]" (Holy Qur'an, 16:18).

[When changing himself for the better from inside, changing the approach towards what is going on, changing the actions,¹⁹ a person invokes God's mercy and blessing. When sinking into spiritual stagnation and into various sins and disgrace, a person invokes – maybe not immediately but inevitably – punishment. These are the rules set up on this Earth by the Creator.]” (See: Holy Quran, 13:11).²⁰

Besides that, to master the work that one has chosen for oneself, and to demonstrate much effort on the path that one has embarked upon, belongs to the main meanings of life:²¹ “He [the Lord of the worlds] created heaven and earth... to reveal those who are best in their actions and work, letting them undergo the [worldly] exam [of life]” (See: Holy Quran, 11:7); “The Highest created death and life only to examine you: who are the best in deeds and actions” (see: Holy Quran, 67:2).

Most of you know all of this (one should seek the expressions of Divine mercy, one should implement one's unlimited potentials, should compete [with each other] in good actions, should always change for the better, improve one's skills), but you do not have a clear understanding of what the best in this life is that can be acquired with Divine approval, and you do not know the way to this [new life].

Well, where to go, what should we seek for, and how?

(...)

Tomorrow starts today.

¹⁹ “To endure is greater than to dare; to see through a hostile fate; to be daunted by no difficulty; to keep your heart when all others have lost it – who can say this is not greatness?” William Makepeace Thackeray {(1811-1863), an English novelist of the 19th century}.

²⁰ “And these [difficulties and problems] are there because the Highest does not change [the level of] human well-being [the presence, absence, or the level of their worldly prosperity and happiness] before they change themselves [for better or worse]. [It depends on the person and on the Divine blessing, acquired through personal efforts or inactivity, whether he will improve his life or degrade]. The Highest hears and knows everything” (Holy Qur'an, 8:53). See also the article “To Change Yourself Twice” in my book *The World of the Soul*, also on the website umma.ru, where also audio-sermons with the same title are placed.

²¹ In this respect I recommend to read *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement With Everyday Life* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi {(b. 1934), a US-based psychologist of Hungarian origin. His works are devoted to the study of happiness and creativity}.

Text 2: Control Yourself²²

“Have you seen a person who has chosen for himself the desires as a God [has put his wish above God] (I want – I do not want, freaks, whimsy; thoughtlessness, and unconcern) and [as a result of this choice] Allah (God, the Lord) misled him from the right path that is based on knowledge [the first possible interpretation: “His Divine knowledge that a person merits this.” Alternative: “a person who knows what is correct and necessary, but who does not show concrete and consecutive actions”]. [This is not the end of the degradation. If a person does not think about what is going on with him, and if his attachment to desires is getting stronger with the years, is getting more sophisticated, then] the Lord seals up his ear [a person does not hear the correct advice, good sermons, and useful information], [then] He [the Lord of the worlds] seals up his heart [with a seal of indifference towards the faith (*vera*) and piety (*blagochestie*), with callousness towards sins and everything depraved; a feeling of narrowness and of emptiness of the soul (*tesnota i pustota dushi*) appears in the heart], while [the next deserved problem is that God] puts a bandage (the scales) over the eyes [of this slave of desires and of his own passions, i.e. of a person who does not see the real state of affairs anymore, who loses his keen insight and his ability to look at the worldly and eternal perspectives of how he relates to life, at the perspective of his actions and deeds].

Who can guide him onto the right path if not God?! [In such a bad state of affairs nothing can help him except repenting to God, faith, deliverance from bad habits and seeking the Divine blessing for positive changes and a radical transformation]. What, will you [people] not think about it?! [Think deeply, one cannot neglect one’s condition in such a way]. (Holy Quran, 45:23).

The Prophet Muhammad (may the Highest honor Him and grant Him peace) said: “A sharp-witted (bright, penetrating) [successful] person is the one who is able to calm down his emotions (heat, passion) [knows a measure in his desires, does what is needed rather than what he wants; he can stop when necessary, knowing well what this or that lack of restraint in words and deeds can result in] and does not forget about eternity in his actions [he works to be happy not only in

²²{Taken from: <http://ummagazine.com/trillionblog/1367-rukovodit-soboyu>. Last visited: 12.05.2012}.

the worldly abode but also in eternity]. As a weak (feeble) person is the one who follows his own desires (wants) [spends his life on the satisfaction of his desires, without giving a thought to the consequences], in making his dreams come true [dreams that require painful everyday discipline, self-control, and outstanding efforts (good education, eloquence and perfect physical condition, prestigious work and career development, high financial income, everyday religious practice etc.)], this person always thinks he can simply rely on God (*nadeetsia na Boga*)” [does nothing, from time to time enthusiastically dreaming, acting only sporadically together with others; does not progress in the implementation of his dreams, enjoys his ‘comfort area’ ‘for the sake of Allah’ (*‘radi Allakha’*)]²³.

The Executive and the Elephant.²⁴ Part 1.

Many people ask how one can learn to concentrate one’s restless mind and intellectual energy on something important at this moment, how to learn to keep one’s attention on something important, and how to control oneself to live effectively for oneself and for others.

Our mind can be divided into two parts. The first one is fast and impulsive. Sometimes its restless desires are too strong to be controlled. This part needs to be satisfied immediately, it is distinguished by a short horizon of attention and by a childish obstinacy in defending its positions. It is similar to an elephant. The second part is rather slow, wise, restful, and inflexible; it cannot produce extraordinary reactions to new challenges and it plays a huge role in your mind. This is the executor.²⁵

²³ Hadith from Shaddad b. Aws; hadith collections of Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Madja and al-Hakim. See, for example: As-Suiuty Dzh. *Al’-dzhami’ as-sagyr*, page 402, hadith no. 6448, ‘sahih’.

²⁴ Individual ideas, thoughts, statistic data and life examples cited below are taken from the book *The Executive and the Elephant* {2010} by Richard Daft, professor of management at the Owen Graduate School of Management, Vanderbilt University {USA}. To him also belongs the idea that our human desires and wants, our bad habits and disorganization, can be called an elephant, and that our mind, reasonableness and self-discipline can be seen as an executor.

²⁵ Daft R. *Rukovoditel’ i slon. Kak stat’ sverkhbliderom* [“The Leader and the Elephant. How to Become a Super-Leader”] (St. Petersburg; Moscow, 2011), 9. {An English edition appeared under the title *The Executive and the Elephant* in 2010}.

A Conflict between Knowledge and Action²⁶

In 1999 *Fortune* magazine published the results of a study on thirty-eight non-effective CEOs.²⁷ It turned out that all of these managers were strong in the field of cognition: everything that has to do with visions, strategies, ideas, etc. But in most cases they could not deal with a catastrophe that happened in their practical work. The behavior of these CEOs did not correspond with their thoughts and words. Their intentions were not followed by actions.

For a successful person it is important not only to realize what should be done, but to do in practice what he thinks will bring the highest results. The problem is to learn how to force yourself to do what is needed at the time when it is needed.²⁸ Self-control allows one to adjust one's behavior and intentions, but this task is much more difficult than it seems to be.

A Universal Lack of Will

Apostle Paul said: "I can wish what is right, but I cannot implement it because I do not perform the good that I want, I am acting wrong unintentionally."²⁹

"We all have a similar discipline, namely we do not have one," says Jim Loehr.³⁰

²⁶ "It is badly hated by God when you are talking what you are not doing [when your words obviously contradict your actions]" (Holy Qur'an, 61:3).

²⁷ CEO (Chief Executive Officers) are the highest employees of a company (general director, chair of the board, leader). They define the general strategy of the company, make decisions of the highest level, and they have also representative functions.

²⁸ By the way, on the topic of fighting against the problem of putting aside important affairs I recommend the book *Eat that Frog: 21 Ways to Stop Procrastination and Get More Done in Less Time* {2001} by B. Tracy. {The title is given in its English original}.

²⁹ Daft R. *Rukovoditel' i slon. Kak stat' sverkhliderom*, page 21.

³⁰ Jim Loehr is author of such famous books as *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* {2004} and *The Power of Story: Change Your Story, Change Your Destiny in Business and in Life* {2008}. Both books were translated into Russian by the publishing house *Mann, Ivanov and Ferber*. {The titles of the books are given in their original English titles.}

In the Holy Quran it is clearly said that “man was created a weakling”.³¹ The Lord also gives, in His Writing (*Pisanie*), the words of the Satan: “O God, I swear by my loosing of the right path [because of self-seduction, following the desire to place myself in a privileged position] due to Your will [because of my wrongdoing]!”³² Truly, I will embellish for them [the people] on earth [many things: harmlessness of committing sins and crimes; useless spending of time and power; lack of courtesy and immorality] and, still, I will mislead all of them [to cause quarrels because of small and useless matters; to excite them emotionally to destroy their goals and tasks; to lead them to confusion; to deprive them of the sense of life and of concentrating on the most important things], (I will charm, seduce, tempt them) [by all means I will lead them onto the way of sins and crimes, of thoughtlessness and nonchalance]. Except those who will be honest to You [my God].”³³

³¹ “Allah (God, Lord) desires to make things easier for you, for man was created a weakling. [It is sometimes difficult for man to oppose Satan’s seduction to sins, to keep away from the temptations and desires of his soul, but there are many other human qualities that promote the improvement and development of the personality. To revive them, to wake them up and give them new life a man should make purposeful efforts and exert self-discipline]” (Holy Qur’an, 4:28). “Weakness is not a defect, but it is the sources of all defects” (Joseph Sanial-Dubay {1754-1817, a French novelist}). “To feel your weakness is natural; to correct it is reasonable; to control it is a will and well-being.” Zh. Bualo {Probably Gilles Boileau (1631-1669), French translator and member of the French Academy}.

³² “[After the creation of Adam, the ancestor of the whole humankind, the Creator ordered angels to bow before him. Satan (*Satana*) was the most clever among the jennies and he refused to bow.] God asked: “What has prevented you to perform the greeting? I have ordered you.” Satan answered: “I am better than he [Adam]. You created me from fire, and him [merely] from clay!” He [the Lord of worlds] continued: “Leave Paradise (*raiskaia obitel'*), you do not have to express your arrogance here [to imagine yourself somebody who you are not]. Go away, you are [from now on] humiliated [do not deserve any respect].” Satan cried: “O Lord, give me a postponement until the Day of Judgment [so that I will be alive until that time].” The answer was: “You are among the ones awaiting [that Day. You will live until the Last Day].” (Holy Qur’an, 7: 12-15).

³³ The full text of these verses is: “O God, I swear by my loosing of the right path [because of self-seduction, following the desire to place myself in a privileged position] due to Your will [on the basis of my wrongdoing]!”³³ Truly, I will embellish them [people] on the earth [many things: harmlessness of committing sins and crimes; useless spending of time and power; discourtesy and immorality] and, still, I will mislead all of them [to cause quarrels because of small and useless matters; excite you emotionally to destroy their goals and tasks; lead them to confusion; to deprive

It is obvious to each of us that it is not enough to only have the intention to quit bad habits and to change for good, even if, for example, they cause early death or punishment in Hell. There are numerous studies on patients who underwent a heart bypass operation and whom their doctors advised to keep a new diet and to stop the former way of life; they demonstrated that only one out of ten of these patients followed the advice. Heart surgeons suggesting a diet and physical exercises know well that the majority of their patients will not follow their advice. The patients also understand that changes can prolong their life, but still they do not fulfill the requirements of their doctors.³⁴ Many of those who are practicing religion cannot stop slandering.³⁵ A smoker can pray for years and ask God to guide him on the right path but still does nothing to free himself from the terrible and deadly habit.³⁶

“As a rule, people know what they should do and how, but very often they do not act in a proper way. Why? Because the inner desires and habits of their inner

them of the sense of life and concentration on the most important things], (I will charm, seduce, tempt them) [by all means I will lead them on the way of sins and crimes, thoughtlessness and nonchalance]. Except those who will be honest to You [my God]. Said He [the Lord of worlds]: “This [honesty, devotion] is for Me a straight path [those who walk on it will be saved from the Satan’s influence].” (Holy Qur’an, 15: 39-41). The following words are quoted in another Sura of the Holy Qur’an: “[Satan, after obtaining the postponement,] cried: “Now, by Thy glory, I shall pervert them all together, [to cause quarrels because of small and useless matters; excite you emotionally to destroy their goals and tasks; lead them to confusion; to deprive them of the sense of life and of concentrating on the most important things], (I will charm, seduce, tempt them) [by all means I will lead them on the way of sins and crimes, thoughtlessness and nonchalance]. Except those who will be honest to You, (whom You will grant sincerity,) [will help him to be strict to the faith; who will not be affected by my influence].” (Holy Qur’an, 38:82, 83).

³⁴ Daft R. *Rukovoditel’ islon. Kak stat’ sverkhliderom*, page 22.

³⁵ It is said in Qur’an: “O believers, keep away from suspicion [negative thoughts] [do not think badly about something good]. Truly, some [of your] thoughts [when you think badly about others without clear proofs, suspecting, fantasizing] are sinful! Do not snoop [do not track down somebody, do not search for shortcomings in others, do not disclose something that people are trying to keep unknown]. Do not spread dirt about each other [when somebody is not present do not say something about him that he would not like]. Would you like to eat meat of your dead brother?! Is not it disgusting?! [The same feeling should come up when slandering others!] Be afraid of Allah! Truly, the Lord is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 49:12).

³⁶ For details about the harm of smoking and about its canonical prohibition, read my book *Muzhchiny i Islam*.

elephant are too strong, and the elephant does not follow their orders. Their inner executive is not developed enough to take responsibility for what is going on. They do not know how to rule themselves. When successful people are gradually learning how to distinguish two parts of their inner ego and inner conflicts between them, they can strengthen their inner executive and they are able to train, calm down and give orders to the inner elephant in accordance with the executive's will"³⁷.

Text 3: Drugs³⁸

[102:]

Question. I am a Christian, but I read a lot about Islam and find it very interesting. My husband is a Muslim and we are living in Egypt. The thing is that many people in this country are smoking hashish. My husband is not an exception. I am leading an everyday fight with this bad habit. Besides that it is harmful for health and that it is a sin, what kind of children will we have! I have tried to do everything: conversation [with my husband] and references to religion. Nothing helps. Could you please tell me, maybe there is something that I have not tried yet? How can I persuade him? He is so dear to me. Natalia.

[Answer:]

"Drugs (old Greek: "falling to a stupor, dopey") are natural and synthetic substances causing a drug affection; there are 'light' (for example, marijuana) and 'heavy' drugs (for example, heroin)."³⁹

"Drug affection is a predilection of drugs, a morbid attraction, which leads to heavy harm of physiological and psychological functions of the organism... Drugs are toxins which are slowly destroying the human brain, the mind, and inner organs. [Sniffing] the glue *Moment* or gasoline makes people mentally [103:] defect within just three to four months, cannabis in three to four years. After two or three months of using morphine people are losing the ability to work, they stop taking care of themselves, lose their human outlook. Those who are using cocaine

³⁷ Daft R. *Rukovoditel' i slon. Kak stat' sverkhliderom*, page 29.

³⁸ Shamil' Aliautdinov. *Muzhchiny i Islam* (Moscow; St. Petersburg: Dilia, 2010), 102-105.

³⁹ See: *Noveishii slovar' inostrannykh slov i vyrazhenii* (Minsk: Sovremennyyi literator, 2007), 553.

are living no more than four years. They are dying of a heart attack, or because of a stenosis of the nasal septum *{utonchenie nosovoi peregorodki}* which leads to fatal bleeding... All narcotics users are living short lives, independent of the type of the drugs they use. They lose the instinct for survival and with approximately 60 percent of them this leads to suicide attempts in the first two years of using drugs. Many of them are successful in this.”⁴⁰

The first and the main reason for the absolute canonical ban (*kanonicheskii zapret*) on all drugs is that they cause intoxication, a change of mind, and the incapacity of a person. The Prophet Muhammad, may God bless and praise him, said: “Distance yourself from dopey! There is no doubt that this is the issue of all evil;” “Be aware of everything that makes you drunk!”⁴¹

It is said in the Holy Quran: “O believers! Truly and honestly, alcohol [everything what changes your mind], games of chance, idols [various forms of idolatry, sacrifices for idols] and divination are abomination (dirt, infamy, filth) that come from Satan. Distance yourself from it! Maybe you will succeed. Truly, Satan wants to disseminate hatred among you by using alcohol and games [104:], and he wants to turn you away from remembering God and from the prayer. Should you not stop [these ugly and vile deeds? Stop doing it]!” (Holy Quran, 5:90, 91).

The Prophet Muhammad (may God bless and praise him) said: “Everything that changes your mind {when consumed} in big amounts is also forbidden in a small amount.”⁴²

From the point of view of Islamic theology, all scholars of the past and present without any exception say that drugs of all sorts fall under the category of forbidden (*haram*). “Everything that changes your mind is forbidden,” – said ‘Umar, the second Righteous Caliph, fourteen hundred years ago, emphasizing

⁴⁰ See: “Vred narkotikov” / <http://www.bydzdorov.ru/20nark.html>. {Last visited on 21.05.2012}.

⁴¹ See: as-Suiuti Dz. *Al'-dzhami' as-sagyr* (Beirut: al-Kutub al-'ilmiia, 1990), 17, hadith no. 172, “sahih,” and page 18, hadiths no. 179, “sahih” and no. 180, “sahih.”

⁴² Hadith from Jabir and Ibn ‘Amr; the collections of hadiths by Ahmad, Abu Daud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasai and others. See, for example: As-Suiuty Dz. *Al'-Dzhami' as-sagyr* (Beirut: al'-Kutub al-'ilmiia, 1990), 478, hadith no. 7815, “hasan”.

that not only wine and [other] alcohol drinks are forbidden but also everything that is similar to them in its influence on a person.⁴³

The Prophet Muhammad (may God bless and praise him) “subsumed under the notion of forbidden (*haram*) everything that changes somebody’s mind and makes it weak.”⁴⁴

Two Quranic verses

According to the shared opinion of the world community, its rational and reasonable part, the use of drugs belongs to harmful deeds, and the dissemination of drugs is prosecuted as a crime. This fact makes drugs forbidden, as it is said in the Holy Quran: “He [105:] [the Last Divine Prophet will follow God’s revelation] and will call for good and forbid everything bad (harmful, malignant) [from the point of view of general human ethics]” (see: Holy Quran, 7:157).

It is largely accepted that drugs are dangerous for the health of an individual as well as for society in general. The use and dissemination of drugs are prosecuted by court institutions. It is said in the Holy Quran: “... Do not throw yourself (by your own will) into danger! [Do not endanger yourself intentionally and without a reason, but appreciate the life and take care of this gift of God with the appropriate attention].” (See: Holy Quran, 2:195).

(...)

⁴³ See, for example: Abu Daud S. *Sunan abi daud*. Riiaad: al’-Afkiar ad-davliia, 1999. S. 406, hadith no. 3669.

⁴⁴ See, for example: Abu Daud S. *Sunan abi daud*. S. 407, hadith no. 3686.

PART III:
SUFISM AND JIHADISM

THE DISCOURSE OF SAID-AFANDI, DAGHESTAN'S FOREMOST SUFI MASTER

Michael Kemper¹

One often reads that “historically, Daghestani Islam is Sufism”, which is a problematic statement. Sufism has indeed deep historical roots in Daghestan, going back to the medieval period.² Still, the brotherhood that is predominant today, the Naqshbandiyya, made its entry in Daghestan only in the 19th century, and it soon split into several branches. While eminent Sufi shaykhs do enjoy huge respect, by far not every Daghestani Muslim follows them, especially not in the growing cities. Furthermore, not every Muslim who pays a visit to a Sufi shaykh, or who regards the local shaykh as a saintly man, can be regarded as a member of the Sufi brotherhood. Rather, one finds a network of devoted followers who are initiated into the brotherhood and pursue the Sufi way, then a larger group of persons who passed through initiation at one point in their lives but might not have developed their Sufi identities further, and a broader population that respects the local Sufi masters as spiritual authorities but does not engage in any Sufi practices. Finally, there is a growing number of Salafi-minded people who reject Sufism as a form of idolatry. And still, in Daghestan it is very difficult to escape the sermons and media appearances of the Sufi shaykhs, and their political influence is well-known.

This chapter analyzes some texts written by Shaykh Said-Afandi Atsaev (Chirkeevskii/Chirkeiskii, 1937-2012) from the Avar village of Chirkei. Said-

¹ I would like to express my sincere gratitude for important comments and corrections provided by Dr. Shamil Shikhaliev (Makhachkala), who read a previous version of this chapter.

² For Sufism in medieval Derbend, see A.K. Alikberov, *Epokha klassicheskogo islama na Kavkaze* (Moscow, 2003).

Afandi (Said-Apandi) was widely recognized as the most important Sufi shaykh in Daghestan, and probably even in the whole of the Russian Federation.

The Naqshbandiyya in Daghestan and Jihad

There are two major Naqshbandiyya branches that compete with each other in Daghestan. Both trace their ancestry (the silsila chain of transmission) back to the eminent shaykh from Kurdistan, Mawlana Khalidi al-Baghdadi (d. 1827). Mawlana Khalid is regarded as a reformer within the Naqshbandiyya, and his followers established a successful new branch of the brotherhood, which became known as the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya. In the 1820s, the first Daghestani scholars became affiliated to the Khalidiyya. Among their disciples were two of the famous three jihad Imams of Daghestan and Chechnya, Ghazi-Muhammad (imam 1828-1832) and Shamil (imam 1834-1859), both from the Avar mountain village of Gimra. The jihad of these imams started as a movement of Avar students who set out to replace, if necessary by force, the traditional customary law in the villages by the Islamic law that they had studied in the local Islamic schools; they expelled the traditional village elites (the elders who administered customary law) and the Daghestani noble families of the local Khanates. As the Russian army used to support the local nobilities, this Sharia movement soon developed into a jihad against the Russian invaders, and an Islamic state emerged in the mountains of Central Daghestan and in the adjacent parts of Chechnya that was held together by Sharia enthusiasm and by the charisma and military skills of the Imams, especially of Shamil; and it took the Russians thirty years to destroy this jihad and Sharia state.³

In the research literature there are different interpretations of the relationship between the Imams (as war leaders) and the Sufi shaykhs (mostly seen as spiritual leaders or propagandists of jihad). Some scholars have argued that the long jihad of ca. 1828-1859 was based on the organizational networks of the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya Sufi brotherhood, and that the Imams were regarded by the population

³ Moshe Gammer, *Muslim Resistance to the Czar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* (London 1994).

as Sufi shaykhs. This interpretation is very attractive.⁴ Others argue that the jihad was not built on the Sufi brotherhood, but that the spread of jihad preceded the spread of the Sufi brotherhood, the latter entering the scene only as an additional element, and that neither the troops nor the leading officers of the Imams were Sufis. And indeed, while Ghazi-Muhammad and Shamil were very close to the Sufis there are no clear indications that the imams regarded themselves as Sufi shaykhs in their own rights; and the local literature from the jihad period implies that the paramount motive was the implementation of the Sharia, not the spread of Sufism.⁵ This strife for eliminating “man-made” customary law (*‘adat*) had its roots not in the “imported” Khalidiyya brotherhood but in a local struggle between adherents of customary law and students of Islamic law that goes back in Daghestan to at least the late 17th and early 18th centuries, long before the advent of the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya.⁶

In the last years of the long jihad a new branch of the Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya appeared, the so-called Mahmudiyya. The Mahmudiyya goes back to the teachings of Mahmud al-Almali (d. 1877), a Daghestani shaykh from the village of Almalo in what is today Northern Azerbaijan.⁷ The Mahmudiyya shaykhs did not support the jihad, which they obviously regarded as futile; and the new branch seems to have stepped into the niche that opened up when many Khalidiyya shaykhs of the jihad period were killed or exiled. The Mahmudiyya slowly gained adherents in some villages of Avaria and in the northern plains of Daghestan. The most important authorities of the Mahmudiyya were the versatile Sufi shaykh, local Islamic judge, medical doctor, and Jadid thinker, Sayfallah-Qadi

⁴ Anna Zelkina, *In Quest of God and Freedom: Sufi Responses to the Russian Advance in the North Caucasus* (London 2000).

⁵ Alexander Knysh, “Sufism as an Explanatory Paradigm: the Issue of the Motivations of Sufi Resistance Movements in Western and Russian Scholarship”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 42,2 (2002), 139-173.

⁶ Michael Kemper, “Ghazi Muhammad’s Treatise against Daghestani Customary Law”, in: Moshe Gammer (ed.), *Islam and Sufism in Daghestan* (Helsinki: Finnish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2009), 85-100.

⁷ On him see Michael Kemper, “al-Almali, Mahmud”, in: *Encyclopedia of Islam Three* (Leiden, 2011), 29-30.

Bashlarov (d. in 1919 when Denikin's White Army entered Temir-Khan Shura [today Buinaksk]),⁸ and his disciple Hasan al-Qahi (d. 1937) from the Avar village of Kakhib. Sayfallah-Qadi Bashlarov (obviously through acquaintances in Russian exile) is particularly important because he introduced the Shadhiliyya Sufi brotherhood to Daghestan. The Shadhiliyya affiliation did not supplant the Naqshbandiyya mahmudiyya but united with it, in a curious combination: since Bashlarov's time the Daghestani Naqshbandiyya mahmudiyya shaykhs use to teach Shadhiliyya practices (including the "loud", vocal *dhikr*) to the beginners on the Sufi path, as a kind of propedeuticum, and only when a murid has progressed on that path to a certain level he is initiated into the practices of the Mahmudiyya (including the techniques of the silent *dhikr*, the *rabita* and the *muraqaba*). The Shadhiliyya, with its easy and impressive techniques, is thus meant to attract the masses, while the Naqshbandiyya mahmudiyya techniques are reserved for the chosen few.⁹

In the Soviet period both branches of the Naqshbandiyya, the "older" Khalidiyya and the "newer" Mahmudiyya, suffered immensely from the political repressions (al-Qahi himself was shot in 1937), but both branches survived; and in the post-war period the networks expanded again. An important factor in this new, "Soviet" spread of the Naqshbandiyya were the massive resettlement campaigns of the 1950s to 1970s when whole village communities from the mountains were brought to the kolkhozes in the plains; with the settlers also came the religiosity and the religious traditions of the mountaineers. The Mahmudiyya branch remained quite limited to some villages, but in the early 1990s it gained a wide spread in Avaria and also in the Kumyk areas of Daghestan. Here several factors seem to have been at work.

⁸ On him see Shamil' Shikhaliev, "Saipulla-kadi", in *Islam na territorii byvsheï Rossiiskoi imperii*, ed. St. Prozorov, fascicle 4, Moscow 2003, 72-73.

⁹ Michael Kemper, "Khāliidiyya Networks in Daghestan and the Question of *Jihād*", *Die Welt des Islams* 42:1 (2002), 41-71; Shamil Shikhaliev, "Sufi Practices and Muslim Identities in Naqshibandi and Shadhili Lodges in Northern Daghestan", in: Moshe Gammer (ed.), *Islam and Sufism in Daghestan* (Helsinki, 2009), 43-56.

First, Said-Afandi managed to get his murids into the “Avarized” Muslim Spiritual Administration of Daghestan, as explained in the epilogue of the second chapter of this volume. Second, Said-Afandi found an effective deputy in the Kumyk Arslanali Gamzatov, a well-known scholar and a charismatic speaker who boosted the spread of the tariqa among the Kumyks in the Buinaksk area. Buinaksk is also close to Said-Afandi’s birthplace Chirkei, and in the mid-1990s Gamzatov also directed the new Saifullah-Qadi Islamic University in that city, producing a lot of graduates-murids. After the establishment of the “Avar” Muslim Spiritual Administration of Daghestan the Buinaksk Friday mosque became the center for the spread of the Mahmudiyya in the city, and the mosques in the area around Buinaksk were almost all equipped with imams from the Mahmudiyya, who had been educated by Gamzatov. By contrast, the Mahmudiyya has not too many adherents among the Kumyks in the North of Daghestan (Khasaviurt and Babaiurt raions); here the “old” branch of the Naqshbandiyya (which is, for purposes of simplicity, simply called Khalidiyya by the locals) as well as Salafi groups enjoy more support. The Northern Kumyks, as well as those of Karabudakhkent region (where the Khalidiyya has traditionally been strong) often regard Arslanali Gamzatov as a “traitor” to the Kumyk interests who went over to the Avar side; here it should be noted that Gamzatov had previously been a murid of the Kumyk shaykh Muhammad-Amin Gadzhiev of Paraul, who represented the Khalidiyya. According to Shamil Shikhaliev, the question where Kumyks do or do not accept the Mahmudiyya has to do with where they have traditionally been in conflict with the Avars. In the Buinaksk region relations between the two nationalities were relatively good, since there had been no resettlement campaigns in this area, so that the autochthonous Kumyks did not regard the Avars as a threat; by contrast, the northern Kumyks prefer to follow Dargin Khalidiyya shaykhs or Salafism, to distinguish themselves from the Avars who were settled in the North in the seventies, many of whom “brought with them” their Khalidiyya affiliation from their home areas in the mountains. At the same time the Mahmudiyya also spread in the very north of Daghestan, in the Noghai territories; this development results from the circumstance that many Noghai students (and a few Kumyks from the North)

studied at Gamzatov's Islamic University in Buinaksk. The distribution of the two competing branches is thus very much linked to the ethnic relations that resulted from Soviet agricultural resettlement policies. In general the local branches of the Mahmudiyya are largely characterized by ethnic exclusiveness, meaning that Kumyk shaykhs largely attract Kumyk disciples and remain at distance from Avar shaykhs of the same branch of the brotherhood. Differences between these "ethnic" groups of the Mahmudiyya are reflected in the ornament of the embroidered skullcaps of the men. Said-Afandi, in recent years increasingly fragile, seemed to hold this all together through his charisma and authority. He also gained followers in other parts of the Russian Federation, where his control was less strict, and where the ethnic situation is very different (for a case from Western Siberia see the subsequent chapter).

The Mahmudiyya under Said-Afandi

In Daghestan, Said-Afandi's rise to absolute prominence seems to have occurred in the last years of the Soviet Union. Today the quasi-official "Islamic establishment" of Daghestan, especially the Council of Islamic Scholars (*Sovet ulemov*) and the Muftiate (Muslim Spiritual Administration) in Makhachkala, but also the directors and teachers of most of the ten or twelve Islamic teaching institutes in the country, are known to be his loyal murids (Sufi disciples).¹⁰

Under his leadership the Mahmudiyya has embarked upon a large project of publishing Mahmudiyya texts; among these we find very professional academic editions of the important scholarly works and letters of Bashlarov and Hasan al-Qahi (in Arabic, but partly also in Russian translation) that reflect the emergence of the dual Shadhili-Mahmudi teaching, and also a fine Arabic collection of Sufi biographies from Daghestan, written by Shaykh Shu'ayb Afandi al-Bagini (d. 1912) from the Avar village of Baginub.¹¹ More affordable and popular are a

¹⁰ V.O. Bobrovnikov, A. Navruzov, Sh. Shikhaliev, "Islamic Education in Soviet and Post-Soviet Daghestan", *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, ed. by Michael Kemper, Raoul Motika, and Stefan Reichmuth (London: Routledge, 2009), 107-167.

¹¹ The most important of these publications are: Shu'ayb b. Idris al-Bagini, *Tabaqat al-khwajagan al-naqshbandiyya* (Damascus, 1417/1996); Mir Khalid Sayfallah b. Husayn Bashlar al-Nitsubkri al-

multitude of brochures on individual shaykhs of the Mahmudiyya, in the Avar language or in Russian. The Mahmudiyya's rivals from the Khalidiyya branch do not seem to have the resources to come up with a similar series of publications, which means that the Mahmudiyya also dominates the Islamic book market in Daghestan. The conflict between the two Naqshbandiyya branches is largely revolving around two issues, namely the proper conduct of the shaykhs and their murids in private and public and the question of their Sufi credentials, expressed in mutual accusations of not having a correct silsila, that is, of not having a proper license to teach, of being a "false shaykh" (*mutashayyikh* in Arabic, which can be translated as "somebody who claims to be a shaykh but who has not received the respective Sufi education and has never obtained a full-fledged Sufi diploma [*ijaza*] from a respected shaykh"). Also within the Mahmudiyya there are divisions and tensions, and some of the shaykhs from Said-Afandi's camp act as Shadhiliyya shaykhs only, and are not regarded as having reached the higher stage of Naqshbandiyya mahmudiyya teachings. Reportedly Shaykh Arslanali Gamzatov, the director of the Sayfullah-Qadi Bashlarov Islamic Institute in Buinaksk, has seen his Mahmudiyya license "revoked" by Said-Afandi, meaning he was humiliated and downgraded to the status of "only" a Shadhiliyya shaykh. Obviously Gamzatov was becoming too prominent in Said-Afandi's eyes.

The dominance of the Mahmudiyya over the Islamic establishment in Daghestan is to a large degree also a product of the political system in the country, which is sometimes described as a form of "consociationalism", which entails that political representation is largely linked to ethnic census; the underlying idea is that also the smallest of the twenty-five or so Daghestani ethnic groups should have "their" representatives in the parliament and in the administration. In reality the ministries and important resources are divided up between the major Daghestani nations, especially the Dargins, Avars, and Kumyks; the Laks, Lezgis, Azeris, Noghais and the many smaller groups have less of a say on republican level

Ghazi-Ghumuqi al-Daghistani, *Maktubat Khalid Sayfallah* (Damascus, 1998); Hasan Hilmi b. Muhammad al-Qahi, *Maktubat al-Qahi* (Damascus, 1998).

but have their representatives locally.¹² In this “deal”, the Avars – and Said-Afandi’s Mahmudiyya in particular – have secured for themselves control over the state-supported religious administration and the Islamic institutes, including the Islamic foundations (important for hajj, mosque construction, publications and public events, and business in general). Attempts of the Avars to establish Avar imams also in non-Avar territories have repeatedly led to conflict.¹³ In the 1990s there were attempts by other nationalities to set up their own (Kumyk, Dargin, Lak, etc.) Muftiates, but these have failed (together with respective national organizations of these nations that flirted with separatism).

Today the biggest challenge to the status quo in Daghestan, and thus also to Sufism and in particular to the prominent role of the Mahmudiyya, is political Salafism. Since the 1990s Daghestan has been caught up in several waves of violence, first in connection with the events in Chechnya but at present above all in the context of “homegrown”, Daghestani Salafi communities (*jama'ats*).¹⁴ Dissatisfied with the miserable economy, widespread corruption and clientilism, many young Muslims have turned their back on the system and joined the “Brothers in the Forests”, that is, the militant Islamic underground, which is loosely connected to the “Islamic Emirate” of Dokku Umarov (on which see chapter seven in this volume). Today, violent attacks on policemen and officials occur in Daghestan almost on a daily basis, and also many public representatives of Islam have been killed by radicals (at least this is usually the official version), , including several Muftis, Sufi masters, and professors of Islam. And on 28 August 2012 – a couple of days before this book was sent to the publisher – also the 74-year old Said-Afandi was killed in a suicide terrorist attack. According to the news reports, a Russian woman who had converted to Islam approached Said-Afandi

¹² Robert Bruce Ware and Enver Kisriev, *Dagestan: Russian Hegemony and Islamic Resistance in the Caucasus* (Armonk, New York, and London, 2010).

¹³ Kimitaka Matsuzato and Magomed-Rasul Ibragimov, “Islamic Politics and the Sub-Regional Level in Dagestan: Tariqa Brotherhoods, Ethnicities, Localism and the Spiritual Board”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 57,5 (2005), 753-779.

¹⁴ Ruslan Kurbanov, “The Information Jihad of ‘Shariat Jamaat’: Objectives, Methods and Achievements”, in: Roland Dannreuther and Luke March (eds.), *Russia and Islam: State, Society and Radicalism* (Abingdon, 2010), 155-174

during his sermon in his native Chirkei and detonated her bomb, also killing several other people. It remains to be seen which consequences this tragic event will have for the religious and political situation in Daghestan, and for the development of the Mahmudiyya in particular.

Against this background, Said-Afandi's writings, especially the two volumes from which we took our texts, had a double goal: first to defend the Mahmudiyya teachings and the position of Said-Afandi himself vis-a-vis other Sufi groups, and second to denounce the Daghestani radicals as "Wahhabis".

The Mahmudiyya therefore appears, to a degree, as a state-supporting and state-supported version of Islam; and it is no wonder that Said-Afandi refrained from sharply criticizing the republican leadership or the Kremlin in public. In their shadow Said-Afandi had much freedom for popularizing his view of Islam, and for exerting, as the grey eminence, his influence on Daghestani Islamic affairs.

Our Text Selection

The texts we offer below are taken from two works of Said-Afandi. The shaykh's major work, *Majmu'at al-fawa'id* ("Collection of Useful Advice"), was first published in 2000 in the Avar language, followed by a Russian translation in 2002 under the combined Russian and Arabic title "*Treasures of Pious Knowledge – Majmu'at al-fawa'id*". The work comprises 47 answers (plus a long epilogue) by Said-Afandi to questions that were put before him, seemingly by the population, on a wide array of Islamic topics, from Islamic dogma over prayer, marriage and other questions of Islamic law to Sufi practice. While the answers are not designated as fatwas (that is, as formal legal advice), it is nevertheless obvious that Said-Afandi here performs the function of a mufti, providing guidance to common Muslims in everyday issues of Islam, and to murids in Sufi affairs. Said-Afandi's second major volume, entitled "Collection of Speeches" (2010), comprises sermons, answers to individual questions as well as interviews to the media that Said-Afandi gave at various occasions. It should be mentioned that Said-Afandi also published a short commentary on the first Sura of the Quran, *al-Fatiha*, a "History of the Prophets" as well as a number of Islamic poems in the

Avar language (some of which have also appeared in Russian translation); and also his many interviews (most of which are circulating around the question of his personal political influence) in Daghestani journals and newspapers have been reedited as booklets.¹⁵

What one has to keep in mind when analysing these Russian texts is that they were originally written in the Avar language. While we do not speak Avar, a brief look at the corresponding parts of *Majmu'at al-fawa'id* in the Avar and Russian editions shows that the Russian version is highly brushed up: while the Avar text is full of Arabic loan words, without any attempt to explain them in the Avar language (thus taking their knowledge for granted), in the Russian edition Islamic terms have for the most part been translated into Russian equivalents, and explanations of Islamic terms have been added in the text itself but also in a number of academic footnotes. This editorial work seems to have been done by learned disciples of Said-Afandi; and his 2010 "Collection of Speeches" is officially edited by two Islamic institutes working under his wings, namely the "Said-Afandi Institute" in Chirkei and the "North Caucasian University Center of Islamic Education and Science". Accordingly, the style of the Russian version is much more academic, and more explanatory, than Said-Afandi's more traditional Avar writing that addresses an audience very familiar with Islamic terms.

Below we offer nine short text fragments in translation, grouped in four blocks:

Block 1: Said-Afandi's biographical note on his first Sufi master. This essay (text 1) is of interest for its autobiographic elements, and also for giving an idea how Sufism was "done" in the Soviet period. Also, this text nicely reflects the image of modesty that Said-Afandi maintained of himself in public.

Block 2: Sufism and ritual practice. Texts 2, 3 and 4 go into more detail with the conceptual core of Sufism, in particular with the relationship between Sufism

¹⁵ Said-afandi al-Chirkavi, *Pobuzhdenie vniat' prizyvu Korana: Tolkovanie sury Al-Fatiha ("Otkryvaiushchaia")*, (Moscow, St. Petersburg, 2008); *Sovremennost' glazami sheikh Saidafandi* (Makhachkala, 2010); Karimulla-khadzhi iz Gonoda, *Skazanie o dostopochtimom sheikhe Saide-afandi* (Makhachkala, 2007).

and Sharia and with the ritual practice within the Shadhiliyya and Naqshbandiyya brotherhoods.

Block 3: Relations between Sufi groups and disputes about their silsilas. This block contains one essay on the relationship between various Sufi shaykhs and brotherhoods in Daghestan and another fragment on Nashbandiyya and Shadhiliyya silsilas in Daghestan, containing Said-Afandi's polemics against his rivals from the Khalidiyya branch about Sufi legitimacy.

Block 4: Against "Wahhabis"; two brief texts (nos. 7 and 8).

Block 4: On Women in Islam. The last short text (no. 9) is on the position of women in Islam, reflecting Said-Afandi's very conservative standpoint in this issue.

After the nine texts we provide a brief analysis of his style and terminology, in connection with a content analysis.

We have made personal names and Islamic terms more readable by using elements of the English transcription for Arabic instead of the Russian forms of Islamic names and terms in Said-Afandi's texts; thus Mukhammadkhadzhi becomes Muhammadhajji, Abdul'-Khamid-Afandi is rendered as 'Abdulhamid-Afandi, tarikat is given as tariqat, and so forth.

Text Fragments in Translation

Block 1: Said-Afandi on his Sufi biography

Text 1:¹⁶ **About Shaykh 'Abdulhamid-Afandi (Abdul'-Khamid-Afandi)**

[Introduction by the editors:] Said-Afandi tells us about his first sheikh 'Abdulhamid-Afandi from the village of Verkhnee Inkho, and about how he entered the path of the tariqat, becoming his murid. The speech also touches upon some important issues connected to the tariqat.

[In Arabic, without Russian translation:] In the name of Allah the Merciful the Compassionate! Praise be to Allah the Lord of the worlds, and the prayer and

¹⁶ Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sbornik vystuplenii. Tom pervyi* (Chirkeiskii institut im. Saïda-Afandi – Severokavkazskii universitetskii tsentr islamskogo obrazovaniia i nauki; "Nurul' Irshad": Makhachkala, 2010), 33-43.

peace be upon his messenger Muhammad and his family and his companions altogether!

[In Russian:]

‘Abdulhamid-Afandi was my first spiritual teacher.¹⁷ I can hardly tell much about him, since back then, still being young, I still knew and understood very little. When the wife of the Prophet (*sAs*) Aishat (*radiya Alllah ‘anhu*)¹⁸ was asked about the qualities of the Messenger of Allah, she simply replied: “His qualities were akin to the Quran.” And so also I do not know what to tell about the ustadh¹⁹ except that every movement and word of his were akin to the Quran. These were astonishing persons, not similar to us, the people of today. It is [34:] impossible to describe the power of their belief and their perfection. Concerning our first meeting with the ustadh I have to say that I heard about him long before that, even long before I heard about the ustadh from Uriib.²⁰ But I did not particularly listen to these talks, since back then people often said that, allegedly, in our times, in *akhirzamane*,²¹ there are no ustadhes. When I today see those who doubt the ustadhes then I cannot blame them, because I myself went through this as well.

My late mother used to follow the tariqat (*sobliudala tarikat*) and once in a while she was in Uriib. And when I returned home from work she used to tell me about the tariqat, but I did not let this come close to my heart, repeating that in our times there are no ustadhes, since this is what I had heard from others. I tried to read the Quran and said that more than that I do not know. There were not that many people with knowledge as there are now, and what I had picked up

¹⁷ [Reportedly, ‘Abdulhamid-Afandi from Inkho (1888-1977) taught both the Naqshbandiyya and Shadhiliyya tariqats; his tomb is located in the village of Verkhnee Inkho in the Gumbet raion of Dagestan. See Magomedrasul Omarov (ed.), *Gorskaia mudrost’: Izrecheniia vydaishchikhhsia sheikhov Dagestana* (Makhachkala, 2009), 77.

¹⁸ [Here a male eulogy is used for a woman.]

¹⁹ [Sufi master, here rendered as *ustaz*.]

²⁰ [Huseynil-Muhammad (Muhammad ibn Husayn, 1862-1967) from Uriib, a disciple of Hasan al-Qahi].

²¹ [This is the Avar version of Arabic *akhir zaman*, “the end of the times”, the period of turmoil and destruction before the Mahdi comes down to fight the Antichrist and prepare Judgment Day. Note that there is no explanation of the term in the text.]

from ignoramuses, seemingly, turned my heart away from the tariqat and led me to the conviction that there is only the Quran.

In our village (*selo*) there was a person named Isahajji, I knew him well, because earlier we worked together as shepherds (*my chabanili vmeste*). It happened that he disappeared for a longer time, and then I heard that he had accepted the tariqat. In spite of everything, since my childhood there was a love for the tariqat hidden in the deepest of my heart. I was intrigued (*zaintrigovan*) when I learned that my former acquaintance was now in the tariqat, and I longed to see him. This was in spring when we cut the wool from the sheep. Isahajji had a brother called Muhammad, now deceased. As the boss of a farm in the kolkhoz he brought with him his brother Isahajji to cut the wool. I was as well on that *kutan* [pasture camp], and there I met them. I asked Isahajji whether it is true he accepted the tariqat. He confirmed. Then I started to interrogate him, what is it then, what does one have to do [35:] in the tariqat, and how. In general, we talked a lot with each other. I had my rosary (*chetki*) on me, which I used when counting what I knew [of Allah's names]. With Isahajji I exchanged my rosary, and I asked him to give mine to 'Abdulhamid-Afandi (q.s.),²² in order that he say a prayer (*dua*)²³ on them. After this we parted again, since I had to go into the mountains to the summer pastures.

Back then we had a brigadier called Muhammad-Sultan, and 'Uzaril-Mukhtar worked with us as (leading) shepherd (*chaban*). He used to get up at night, before sunrise, and I first did not know why. It turned out that in that time he used to do the dhikr (*zikru*) with the heart.²⁴ But in those days I did not particularly care.

Once Muhammad-Sultan asked me: "Mukhtar always gets up before sunrise, then looks for a long time at a photo and weeps, don't you know what photo that

²² ["k.s." here stands for *quddisa sirruhu*, "his secret be sanctified [by Allah]; this eulogy is very common for living and deceased Naqshbandiyya shaykhs.]

²³ [A *du'a* is an invocation of Allah, for a specific purpose or for the sake of another person].

²⁴ [The Sufi brotherhoods in the North Caucasus know two methods of doing the dhikr, i.e. the remembrance of Allah: the vocal dhikr (by pronouncing the names of Allah during the dhikr), which is the method of the Kunta Hajjis in Chechnya and Ingushetiya and of the Shadhiliyya in Dagestan, and the dhikr of the heart, i.e. the silent dhikr in which the names of Allah are only remembered without speaking them out, which is regarded as the core method of the Naqshbandis.]

is?" "Vallah,²⁵ I don't know", I replied. After this I was taken over by curiosity about what kind of photo that was. Sometime later, when we had already driven the flock into the mountains, at one point I said to Mukhtar: "I was informed by Muhammad-Sultan that you carry with you some kind of photo, is that true?" "Yes", he replied. "What photo is it?" "It is a photo of the ustadh from 'Urib." Having learned that Mukhtar had the photo with him I asked him to show it to me, and he took it out of his notebook and showed it. Truly, this is difficult to express in words, but in my whole life I never saw a picture that was more magnetic. It filled my heart with some amazing feeling. After this event something changes in me, [36:] my wishes and intentions changed. At that time the ustadh from 'Urib had already left this world.

The summer passed by, it was already time to move to the winter places, but on the kutan they did not accept more than 70 pieces of sheep per herdsman (*chaban*). They left me and the now late Timuruk-Hajji to pasture the remaining sheep in the mountains. We had to take care of the remaining sheep, by taking out the sick and the old for slaughter, and then to return to the kutan. On that day I went out to the *godekan* [the small central square in the village for the gatherings of the community elders] and met our co-villager Muhammadhajji. He asked me whether I said something to Isahajji. I replied that I hadn't seen him for a long time, and completely forgot what had happened in spring.

"You gave a rosary to Isahajji?", asked Muhammadhajji.

"Oh yes, that was in spring," I remembered.

"They accepted you in the tariqat," he said.

I asked what I now had to do. And he asked for a notebook to write down the task (*zadanie* [i.e., *vird*]). He declared that it was a task of the Shadhili tariqat that they gave me. This is how I entered the tariqat.

And before that something happened that I simply cannot be silent about. On the evening before the day when Timuruk-Hajji and I had to take care of our herd I went to the "Druzhba" shop in order to buy there some "Pamir" papirosy [i.e., cigarettes with cardboard mouthpieces]. For one rouble one could buy ten boxes

²⁵ I swear by Allah (translation from the Arabic).

of papirosy. In those times I smoked a lot, because I had gotten accustomed to that very early. Usually in that shop I bought 100 boxes at once, for ten roubles. But on that day there was a line of women from Chirkei in that shop, so I was ashamed and bought only five or six boxes and returned home, calculating that I would send my wife to get the rest. Coming home I threw the boxes on the table and went out again. There I met Muhammadhajji, who brought me a paper with the task of the tariqat. That gave me to think, for I was about to send my wife for the papirosy. What should I do, is it now still possible to smoke? I thought about it this way, and I did not send my wife for tobacco, and the boxes I had already bought remained lying on the table. When leaving the house in the morning I put one box into my pocket, just in case I needed it, since I was not sure of myself. My wife asked why I did not take the remaining boxes. She thought I forgot them, but I left them there and went out without saying anything. On the way I twice lighted a cigarette, but as soon as I felt the taste of the smoke I immediately became wet of sweat, as if someone had burned a fire in me, and I dropped the papirosa. After the ascent into the mountains I met our fellow villager Biyakayil-Ali, the brigadier of those who cut the hay. As the herds had already left, and the brigade needed meat, he came to me and asked me to give him one sheep. I replied that I could give him my own, but only with the understanding that he would later compensate me. Then he asked me for a cigarette, and I just had the one box where only those two papirosy were missing. And suddenly it dawned on me: "I gave up smoking, or am I not a murid?" I gave him that last box, and to be honest, he was more happy about the papirosy than about the sheep. Only this way I managed to give up smoking.

(...)²⁶ [38:]

Thus, I became a murid. I had not even seen the Ustadh from Inkho by that time. Only in winter, in January, when I went home for my regular vacation, I decided to travel to Inkho. In those times one could travel only by hitch-hiking with a truck, there were only few passenger automobiles, the roads were narrow, and each trip was a problem. In addition I did not know the way, I had to ask

²⁶ [Here we omit a part that has little extra information or stylistic features].

people that I met. I traveled on the cargo area of a truck, and asked the driver beforehand to stop in Inkho, since I myself had never been there before. We arrived at night. After climbing down from the truck I asked the locals and eventually found the way to the Ustadh. He questioned me which tasks I fulfill, and ordered me [39:] to continue with the same. Then the Ustadh asked me who sent me to him. I mentioned Muhammadhajji, and it did not come to my mind to say that it was Allah who sent me.

Now my heart was drawn to nothing else but to the tariqat, and there was already no motivation for anything else. Returning from the Ustadh I literally counted the days until our next meeting, for people visited the sheikh only once a year, and I can say that in my thoughts I was always with him. Once, when we were in the Terek River region, I fell into sleep and the Ustadh [came and] went with his hand over my head, and after this my work became hateful to me. I have never been in prison, but in custody, I think, it would not have been worse to me than there. I would not have stayed on that work for one more single day, but in wintertime it is impossible to just go and leave the sheep behind, since there was nobody to replace me. In general, the situation was hopeless. This is how I spent the winter and the spring, counting the days like in a prison. But then, when I finally went up again into the mountains, I sold or gave away my own sheep, not keeping one of them. I found employment as a watchman (*storozh*) on the Hydroelectric Power Station (GES),²⁷ and I had a lot of free time and was busy only with the tariqat. Muhammadhajji, let his sins be washed away (*da smoiutsia ego grekhi*), was then of big help to me.

At one point I learned that the Ustadh from Inkho came to Khasaviurt. I did not tell my wife that I had entered the tariqat but she guessed so by herself, seeing the changes that occurred in me. Hearing about the coming of the sheikh we both drove to Khasaviurt, she also decided to accept the tariqat. Before our parents we kept secret where we went, saying that we would arrange things for our new house, at that time I bought a house in Novyi Chirkei.²⁸

²⁷ [This is obviously the Chirkei GES, completed in 1976.]

²⁸ [Novyi Chirkei ("New Chirkei") is a new village where the villagers of "Old Chirkei" were resettled when the latter was flooded for the reservoir of the Chirkei Hydroelectric power station.]

Always accompanying the Ustadh was a murid from Almak by the name of Abdurashid, he was a person with much blessing (*ochen' barakatnyi chelovek*), or as they said, "the eldest murid" (*starshii murid*). He was in charge of receiving all visitors [40:], and he accompanied those who were let to the Ustadh, but when he could he resolved some of the problems [that people came with] by himself. All guests first went to him, and so did we. After our meeting with the Ustadh, when we intended to go home, Abdurashid guided us out of the house; he came closer to me, and whispered into my ear: "But you did not come to see your new house?" I was puzzled, and when we went out to the road I remembered what we had told our parents. Abdurashid was a person who almost reached the level of an ustadh.

On another occasion when the Ustadh was in Khasaviurt I went to him alone. Back then I was still a beginning murid, and happy to be in the tariqat. I carried out the Shadhili vird 100 times [each day] and then 5.000 dhikrs (*zikru*), and in doing so I felt a deep happiness, but not pride. And when I rode to the Ustadh and went into the courtyard, he came out to meet me, greeted me and, taking me by the arm, spoke: "It turned out Humayd-Afandi²⁹ (q.s.) did thirty thousand dhikrs, although a serious sickness and his high age had weakened him so much that when he went home from the mosque he had to sit down three times to rest." Hearing this I just came out in sweat, out of embarrassment [about the fact that I was doing only 5.000 dhikrs a day], even now I feel ashamed when I remember. This is the amazing person that he was.

In those earlier times there were not as many murids as there are now. When we heard that in Inkho they read the *khatmu-salavat*³⁰ and that the Ustadh was also present, we – the late Alil-Abdurakhman, Muhammadhajji, Isahajji and I – went there repeatedly. Once we decided that it was not ethical [i.e., not appropriate] to ride with four people [in one car], so we decided to go in two

²⁹ [Humayd-Afandi (Khumeid-afandi) (1868-1952) was reportedly a shaykh of both Naqshbandiyya and Shadhiliyya, a khalifa of Muhammad Ya'sub (d. 1942); Humayd's ziyarat is in Andyk, Shamil'skii raion.]

³⁰ [This is obviously not the *khatm-i khwajagan*, the famous litany of the Naqshbandiyya, but a litany of the Shadhiliyya, since at that time Said-Afandi was not yet initiated into the Naqshbandiyya. A *khatm* mainly consists of blessings on the masters of the spiritual chain (*silila*) of a tariqa.]

groups. Isahajji and I went via Khasaviurt, and Abdurakhman and Muhammadhajji via Buinaksk. At that time the Kharib pass (*Kharibskii pereval*) was closed, and we had [41:] to go via Shali [in Chechnya-Ingushetiia] and arrived at Inkho only with great difficulties. It was a hard time, but [people] also used to value the tariqat. And there were close connections between the murids, they helped and supported each other. [Later] the collapse of the country demoralized society, the order was no more. Also some murids showed weaknesses, there was no more the same love among them as before, they hunt after worldly affairs.

And so, this is all I can tell about the Ustadh from Inkho. I am not able to evaluate him, but one thing I knew without any doubt: the force and support of the Ustadhes is always with me, I felt them on all parameters, although they did not occur in an obvious, bodily form. [From then on] everything that I did succeeded easily, and I had no doubt that they were with me, since I felt their help. In the tariqat everything depends on the conviction (*ubezhdennost'*). Conviction and love are necessary in the first place. If both of these qualities are present, the rest already comes forth from them – this is proven, and there is no doubt about it.

Muhammadhajji first used to go to Ustadh Hamzat-Afandi from Tliakh,³¹ but later [the authorities] opened a case against Hamzat-Afandi, and people from the secret services watched his house. By contrast, the Ustadh from Inkho was left in peace and could freely travel to Khasaviurt, he did not have such problems, and for this reason Muhammadhajji began to go to Inkho. He often called me [by phone, and invited me] to visit (*navestit'*) Hamzat-Afandi, but I heard from Abdurashid that without the permission of one's ustadh one may not go to another one. Having this in mind, but at the same time too embarrassed to directly refuse [the invitation], I gave no reply to Muhammadhajji's invitation and thus never saw Hamzat-Afandi. Soon afterwards he left this world. [42:]

³¹ [Hamzat-Afandi from Tliakh (1892-1977) taught both Shadhili and Naqshbandi ways. On him see Rakhmatulla Magomedov, *Khamzat-afandi iz Tliakha* (Makhachkala, 2009)].

The ustadhes themselves used to consult Muhammad-‘Arif-Afandi (q.s.)³² in many questions. Abdurashid told me that Hamzat-Afandi once called him to come and told him: “Go to Muhammad-‘Arif and give him my words: ‘I know that a murid, who walks [the Sufi path] for the sake of Allah, will always reach his goal, in spite of everything, he will even come through the roof by making a hole in it if necessary; but you do not find [any more] those who walk for the sake of Allah, you will find that only one out of a hundred is walking for the sake of Allah. What should I do with those who come to me, should I send them back or receive them?’” This is what Hamzat-Afandi asked to transmit, adding: “Just ask, don’t demand an answer.” This is exactly how [Abdurashid] transmitted his words [to Muhammad-‘Arif], and when he came to the words “only one out of a hundred is walking for the sake of Allah”, Muhammad-‘Arif replied: “O my son, not one in a hundred but one in a thousand”.

The most important thing for a murid is the preservation of ethics (*adab*). If we take [as an example] the beginning murids of today then [we find] that a part of them knows a lot of those things that they have not reached yet in the tariqat, even including the [Sufi practice of] *muraqaba*. Of course, the more curious a person is, the more he knows, but in the tariqat it is not possible to move higher up like this. A murid may not do anything else but what the ustadh has given him [as his individual task]. Many are busy with things that they have not been taught, rushing ahead.

Already in those years when I had not yet begun to study and even did not think about this, Abdurashid gave me a booklet and said: “Copy this, perhaps it will be useful for you in the future.” So I copied it, not knowing what it was. It turned out to be the text of a *muraqaba*. Back then I was still a beginning murid. When time had passed, and when the Ustadh from Inkho had already left this world, I transferred to the Ustadh from Nechaevka,³³ and he gave me the

³² [Muhammad-‘Arif-Afandi (1900-1977) was the son of Hasan al-Qahi, and also a *khalifa* of Muhammad-Afandi from Uriib. His ziyarat is in Verkhnee Kazanishche of Buinakskii raion.]

³³ [This is Shaykh Muhammad-Afandi (1909-1987) from Khuchada; his tomb is in the settlement of Nechaevka (Kizliurt raion), where he was active. Reportedly, Said-Afandi received an *ijaza* from Muhammad-Afandi Khuchadinskii and then also from Muhammad-Afandi (or Muhammad-

Naqshbandi tariqat (*nakshubandiiskii tarikat*), led me to [the stage of] *muraqaba* and taught me [43:] the *ma'yyat*. When performing the *ma'yyat* I found that it resembled what was written in the booklet of Abdurashid, but since then I have not even had a look at that booklet, for it was not necessary to me. [Instead,] I started to become interested in what will come after the *ma'yyat*. In the moment that I once opened the booklet I suddenly thought: "Why should I look at what has not been assigned to me, this is none of my affairs", and closed it again. Yes it would have been interesting [to read the booklet], but I overcame my curiosity and did not look at it, and it turned out that this was right. The murid has to show zeal in the tasks that were given to him, but what has not been given to him he should not look at. But today even the beginners want to know about the *lataifa*³⁴ and the *muraqaba* no less than I do. One has to work on what was given as a task (*zadano*), but they should not allow themselves to go or look one single step further, for this is better for them.
[End of the chapter.]

Block 2: Sufism and Ritual Practice

Text 2:³⁵ What is tariqat and shariat? What is the difference between them?

The reason for this conversation on the tariqat is a letter from Dzhamal' Gasanov from the village of Khindakh in the raion of Khunzakh. In this letter he collected several questions.

Dzhamal', brother in faith, in order that my answer to the questions that move you be useful for all other people who strive for knowledge I will try, with Allah's help and relying on what I heard from the 'alims [scholars], to lead this conversation as good as I can. If my talk will be reliable, truthful (*dostovernym, istinnym*), then accept it, but if not, then reject it. If you detect some sort of error, then correct it and excuse me. And if additional questions come up in you

Sa'adu) from Batlukh (1915-1995), who lived in Buinaksk and is buried in Batlukh (Shamil'skii raion).]

³⁴ [Seemingly *lata'if*.]

³⁵ Sheikh Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sokrovishchina blagodatnykh znanii – Majmu'at al-fawa'id* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Ikhlas", 2002), pp. 179-181 (farwa 36).

then you can ask those, too. This way we can come to a mutual understanding, and also obtain knowledge about each other, Allah willing (*in sha' Allah*), for knowledge is what is transmitted from one to another, if this is convenient to the Almighty (*swt*).

The Sufi says: "The tariqat is a way, a special path, which is taken by the one who strives for cognition (*poznanie*) of Allah (*swt*).” In order to carry out the virids of the tariqat one needs a person who is able to teach them and who has a reliable permit (*dostovernoe razreshenie*) for it, an order [*(velenie (amr))*] and, of course, the ability to teach their correct accomplishment (*pravil'noe sovershenie*). The permission (*dozvolennost'*) to teach the tariqat thus depends on the existence of a permit and an order (*povelenie*). If they do not exist, [180:] then whatever heights the person has reached in the theological knowledge, the imams of the tariqat do not give him the right (*pravo*) to teach the virids to others. In the books about the tariqat it is said: "If a sheikh who lacks the proper permit nevertheless teaches a virid then his murid will perish" (what is meant here is perishing in the spiritual sense).

There are several ways of the tariqat. In each of them there are special tasks (virids), manners of teaching, which must correspond to what is written in the books. Every Sufi way has its imams, just as there are imams in the four *madhhabs* (*mazhaby*) of the shariat. For example, the imam of the Naqshbandi tariqat (*nakshbandiiskii tarikat*) is imam Muhammad al-Bukhari, the imam of the Shadhiliyya tariqat is Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili, the imam of the Qadiriyya tariqat is 'Abdul-Qadir Gilani, [and the imam] of the Zukhadi tariqat is Imam al-Ghazali, and so forth.³⁶

The names of the tariqats can change. For example, the Naqshbandi tariqat was originally called Siddiqi (*siddikskii*), for the first who continued this way after the Prophet (*sAs*) was Abu Bakr as-Siddiq. Then it was renamed Tayfuri

³⁶ [Muhammad Baha'addin Naqshband from Bukhara (d. 1389), godfather of the Naqshbandiyya; Abu l-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1258), eponym of the Shadhiliyya; 'Abdalqadir al-Gilani (d. 1166), central figure of the Qadiriyya; and the theologian and jurisprudent Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali (d. 1111), who is however not known for having established a Sufi brotherhood.]

(*taifuriiskii*),³⁷ but the name that it finally took is the name Naqshbandi that is popular today, although later they called it also Khalidi and Mahmudi (*khalidiiskii i makhmudiiskii*).

Every tariqat must have a chain (*tsepochka*) that starts from the Prophet (*sAs*) himself and that goes, without interruption, to the last still living carrier of this teaching, the sheikh.

To be a link in this chain is the most important condition for those who start to teach the tariqat. The meaning of the term “*silsila*” (chain) is that all elements of this chain are connected with each other. This can be expressed in the following way: In order that electricity comes to our households it must first come to the general transformer, and from there it is already distributed to the houses. The transformer itself must be linked to the power station. Only in this case will the domestic electricity points – lamps, electric outlets, or switches and so forth – when they are in a functioning state, and with the help of Allah, obtain current, and the house will be lighted. But if there is no connection between the power station and the transformer, then even if it is made of the most precious metals there will still be no use from it, even if it will gleam and lighten the area close by. Exactly this is the example we had in mind when we talked about the special way (*tarikāt*). Although here it is not meant that nobody except the Sufi sheikhs can bring use to the people. There is a hadith that says: “The ‘alims are the luminaries of the umma”. They bring benefit to the people, grace (*blagodat*), and they send people onto the truthful way in accordance with the knowledge (*znaniia*) that God (*Bog*) (*swt*) gave to everybody. Yet here [181:] one has to know that not every person who obtained knowledge becomes an ‘alim. For example, if every person who knows the Arabic language was called an ‘alim, then this would be absurd, for there are quite a lot of unbelievers (*neveruiushchie*) who know the Arabic language. And pay attention to this.

As we have already underlined, regardless of the fact that the ways of the tariqat are many, the goal of all of them is one – the cognition (*poznanie*) of Allah (*swt*). For example, in order to conduct the pilgrimage (*palomnichestvo*) to holy

³⁷ [Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (ruled 632-34) is the first of the four “righteous caliphs” in Sunni Islam. Tayfuri refers to the ninth-century Persian Sufi Abu Yazid Bistami.]

places, some fly with airplanes, others ride by autobuses, and again others take personal cars, some take a KamAZ, and some others walk – every one of them goes travelling according to his possibilities and [according to] what has been written for him by Allah (*swt*). But by whatever way or method they get there, the goal of all of them is one and the same – to conduct the mandatory pilgrimage. So also all directions of tariqat have one goal – the strife for the cognition of the Almighty (*swt*), and only that.

The shariat is the laws of Allah (*swt*) and the rules for serving him, which the Almighty (*swt*) brought to mankind through the prophets and through the revelations that he sent down in the Holy Texts (*Sviashchennye pisanii*). When we speak about the differences between shariat and tariqat, then [we have to first understand that in reality] they are truly one and the same, and there are no real differences between them. People think that they are different things and that there is no link between them.

[The following is given only in Arabic:]

[The Prophet] – peace be upon him, and he be greeted – said: “The shari’a is sayings (aqwal), and the tariqa is deeds (afal), and the haqiqa [“truth”] is states (ahwal), and the ma’rifa is the capital (ra’s mal)”, and the tahara [“ritual washing”] of the shari’a is done by water or sand, and the tahara of the tariqa is done by making oneself free from the lust, and the tahara of the haqiqa is the emptying of the heart from everything that is not Allah ta’ala [the Highest].

The Shaykh Najm al-Din Kubra said:³⁸ The shari’a is like the ship and the tariqa like the sea, and the haqiqa is like the pearl. Thus the one who wants the pearl goes aboard a ship, then he travels (shara’a) the sea, then he arrives at the pearl. He who leaves aside this sequence (tartib) does not arrive at the pearl. So the first thing that a person has to do is all that is demanded by the shari’a, and what is meant by [shari’a] is the orders of Allah and his prophet, [comprising] the washing, the ritual purification, the fasting, the ritual prayer and so forth (... to the end). [Quote from] Jami‘ al-usul, page 77.

³⁸ [Najmaddin Kubra, d. 1220.]

[Back to Russian:] When talking about shariat and tariqat the ‘alims refer to various images as examples. Some say that it is like the back and the belly, one of them cannot exist without the other. Others say that it is similar to the body [181:] and the soul. A third one compares the shariat with a boat, and the tariqat with a sea, and the truth (*khakika* [*haqiqa*]) with a pearl that is produced from the sea. In order to obtain the pearl from the sea, a person must first get on a boat. This boat is the shariat. And only then he must go out to the sea, into the tariqat. This is the meaning that we can get from this example.

Many say that before going on the way of the tariqa one has to study the shariat, and if one does not know the shariat, how can one take on the tariqat? Brother Dzhamal’, once this question is worrying you, listen!

The meaning of the saying that before one accepts the tariqat one has to study the shariat means [only] the acquisition of the basic knowledge (*osnovopologaiushchie znaniia*) according to shariat, including the correct (*pravil’noe*) carrying out of the small and big washing, of the namaz [daily prayers], the keeping of the fasting, the paying of zakat (*zakiat*) and so forth. This is what everyone who wishes to know the tariqat has to know and to carry out. But you should remember that to know the shariat does not mean that it is not allowed to accept the tariqat if one does not fully comply with all parts of [the Sharia].

For those who want to enter the tariqat there are, of course, other special conditions, about these we will speak further below, Allah willing. But the meaning of saying that only he can accept the tariqat who has reached perfection in the fulfillment of all parts of the shariat, is like giving the advice to go to the doctor only after all diseases have already been cured. But is going to the doctor not an expression of the wish to get rid of the disease? And after all, does a healthy person, after his healing, still need a doctor? This is what the sheikh Hasan-Afandi from the village of Kakhib says.³⁹

³⁹ [Hasan al-Qahi (1852-1937) from the Avar village of Kakhib, author of a number of Arabic works on Sufism.]

Dzhamal', you should think carefully about these words! I think you do not belong to those who are not able to judge. For according to the logics it is the one who is most unhealthy who has to go to the doctor first.

The Prophet (*ṣAs*) said that the shariat is words, that which is pronounced by the mouths. The tariqat is to follow with the body that which has been pronounced by the mouths; the haqiqat is the state of the soul (*sostoianie dushi*) that emerges as a result of the unification of shariat and tariqat; the cognition of Allah (*swt*) (*ma'rifa*) is our basis for the goal of serving Him, the cognition of Allah (*swt*) is the means for true knowledge (*istinnye znaniia*).

The washing and cleaning according to shariat is done with water, and in case (water) is not available, by earth (*tayammum*). In the tariqat the washing is done by protecting one's nafs⁴⁰ from the following of one's passions. And in the haqiqat the washing is done by cleaning the heart from everything that is not Allah (*swt*). Pay attention, Dzhamal', from all this it is obvious that in order to make our namaz truthful (*istinnyi*), shariat, tariqat and haqiqat need to unite in it. This is how close the link is between shariat and tariqat in the service of the Almighty (*swt*). Yet without shariat there is no tariqat, even if shariat is possible without tariqat.

[End of the text.]

Text 3: ⁴¹ Answers to Questions relating to the performance of *rabita* and *vuquf al-qalbi* (*vuquful'-kalbi*)

What is *faiz*? What is the meaning of *vuquf*?

To give an example, the *faiz* [Ar. *faiz*] is like a little stream (*ruch'ia*), and the place where it runs to is the water pond (*vodoem*). *Faiz* is what comes to us from within, it is like the flowing stream, and our heart is like the water pond. And *vuquf* is to follow (*sledit'*), to imagine (*predstavliat'*). If a person imagines that he is counting

⁴⁰ [*Nafs* is the Arabic word for soul; the Sufi endeavor is described as the struggle for taming the soul].

⁴¹ Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sbornik vystuplenii. Tom pervyi*, 178-182.

money, then this is not *vuquf*. *Vuquf* is thinking about Allah, to direct the heart to Allah, to keep thoughts about Allah in the heart and to listen.

Also in former times people have talked about *vuquf al-qalbi* [“investigation of the heart”], *rabita* [“connection”] and *huzur* [“presence”]. How do they differ from each other?

They are all connected with another. For example, the *rabita* cannot work out if there is no *vuquf qalbi*, since the meaning of *rabita* is in the observation [or supervision, *nabliudenie*] of the heart. Their goal and essence is the same. So what is the difference between them? To observe the heart, [179:] to concentrate [the heart] on the word “Allah” and to imagine thereby that Mahmud-Afandi [al-Almali]⁴² is in front of you – that is the *rabita*. If Mahmud-Afandi is not there then this is *vuquf qalbi*. That is the difference between them, but their meaning and goal is one and the same. If one imagines the ustadh, when doing the *vuquf*, then the result is *rabita*.

(...)

Can one do the *vuquf* after the completion of the *rabita*, the *istighfar*, the *salavat* and the *dhikr* (*zikr*)?

The *vuquf* is done for the *barakat* (blessing). In general, to do the *vuquf* means to direct one’s [inner] [180:] gaze at the heart. This is the same as *huzur*, therefore the *vuquf* has to be everywhere: during the prayer, and while reading the Quran, while doing the virds. *Huzur* and *vuquf* cannot be separated from each other. To be in the *huzur* means to remember Allah, and how can one remember Him if one is not watching the heart? Accordingly, the *vuquf* has to be absolute, but on the basis of what has been written about it in the tasks [that some Sufis obtain] many people think that it is something uncommon. Whoever has the possibility let him do it also after the virds, and if he has no possibility, then don’t do it.

(...)

[180:] Can one do the *rabita* of the Shadhiliyya and of the Naqshbandiyya tariqats one after the other, in a line?

⁴² [Mahmud-Afandi al-Almali (d. 1877), “founder” and eponym of the Naqshbandiyya mahmudiyya branch to which Said-Afandi belonged].

This is possible, if you want, but the murid of the Naqshbandiyya does not have to do the rabita of the Shadhiliyya. It is enough to do the rabita to Mahmud-Afandi. If a person wishes to do so let him do both in a line, one after the other, that is also possible. The person who does two rabitas will be like the one who milks two cows, for the milk resulting from two cows will be better than from one cow only. This is for the person who is able to do this and wants it like that, [181] but this is, I repeat, not mandatory. For the Naqshbandi murid the Naqshbandi rabita is sufficient. May Allah help!

When doing the rabita, can one imagine the image of the ustadh?

This is a very sore subject, since it gives the Wahhabis a pretext for attacking [us] when murids put photographs in front of themselves. Do not put photos in front of you during the rabita, this is not necessary. For if you just remember Mahmud Afandi [al-Almali] or Sayfullah-Qadi [Bashlarov], their *ravhani* [*ruhaniyya*, spirit] will immediately be before you, although we do not see them. When we forget them, their *ravhanis* disappear, and when we again remember them they return. It is not necessary to try to imagine the exterior of the ustadh. For example, we have all seen the images of Mahmud-Afandi and Sayfullah-Qadi, but during the rabita it is enough to be convinced that the ustadh is in front of you. Do not place photos before yourselves and do not try to imagine their exterior, just think of them and be convinced that they are with you.

[182:] And if the [living, personal] ustadh is really present?

Well then, be it so, this does not change anything. If Mahmud-Afandi is there, how would it then be possible to do the rabita on me? This is not acceptable, it may not even be considered.

Text 4: ⁴³ I am a murid of the Shadhili tariqat, I am doing the vird 300 times [a day]. Am I allowed to [also] read the suras “Yasin”, “Amma” “Tabarak”?

It is not recommended to read them. In the Shadhili tariqat [the masters] give the vird for 100 times [a day], and if the murid wants it, then he can easily also do it [for example] 700 times [a day], even from the first day on, but if he is not able to

⁴³ Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sbornik vystuplenii. Tom pervyi*, 201.

do this then let him do [only] 100 until his death, there is nothing to say against this, but it is better to augment it if possible. Instead of “Yasin”, “Amma” “Tabarak” it is better to be zealous with the vird, for a murid this is better. Only when he reaches a certain level do they give him the Quran to read and other [texts]. For one does not give big chunks of meat and fat to small kids, they have their own diet, beginning with breast milk etc. This is also our education, everything has its own time. You should be zealous with what the ustadh has given, this is useful for you, and I have experienced it myself.

As I mentioned earlier, in my youth I always used to read the sura *al-Sajda* (“Al’-Sazhdar”) in the evening, but when I reached the level of *rekel-zikru* ([heartly zikr] *serdechnyi zikr*)⁴⁴ I could not do this [any more], for lack of time. Subsequently, when I reached the level of *khafsu-nafas*,⁴⁵ the ustadh ordered me to read the sura *al-Sajda* after the evening namaz. I replied that I [once] knew this sura by heart, but that when I had obtained the dhikr (*zikru*), I did not manage to read [the sura any more] and forgot everything I knew. Back then he said: “Now you read the “Yasin” in the mornings, [then] in the afternoon “Amma”, at noon and at night “Tabarak”, and in the evening “Alif Lam”. These suras of the Quran are virds of the Naqshbandi tariqat.” Since that time they were for me like virds. (...)

Block 3: Relations between Sufi Groups and Disputes about Silsilas

Text 5:⁴⁶ Is it allowed to switch from one tariqat to another, or to fulfill the tasks (virdy) of two tariqats at the same time?

To leave one tariqat and accept another one is not forbidden. Not even the slightest sin falls on the person who does this. The shariat allows for the transfer

⁴⁴ [The silent *dhikr qalbi*, “dhikr of the heart”, as opposed to the loud dhikr in which the names of Allah are also pronounced in recitation or singing. *Rekel-zikru* is the Avar word for “dhikr of the heart” – *rek’el* being the genitive of Avar *rak’*, “heart”].

⁴⁵ [*Khafsu-nafas* seems to correspond to Arabic *hafz an-nafs* “control/catching of the soul”].

⁴⁶ Sheikh Said-Afandi al’-Chirkavi, *Sokrovishchina blagodatnykh znanii – Majmu’at al-fawa’id*, 252-255.

from one madhhab⁴⁷ to another, and nobody doubts this. Just as a person may leave one madhhab and enter another one, so a person can also exchange one tariqat for another. Yet it is not allowed to transfer from one madhhab to another, or from one tariqat to another, by accusing or criticizing the imam of the [first] madhhab or the shaykh of the tariqa. The person who intends to carry out such a transfer, without accusing the imam or shaykh in his office, has all the liberty to do so. But the imams and shaykhs of the madhhab and tariqat that the person leaves and takes on have to be situated on the truthful way. If the situation is different, for example a person is on a false way (*lozhnyi put'*), far removed from the people of the sunna, then he has to leave this way and cling on to the truth (*istina*), if this is the will of Allah (*swt*) and if Allah (*swt*) teaches him to do so. Someone might come and say, if it is allowed to go from one madhhab to another, then why is it not allowed to adhere to Wahhabism (*vakhkhabizm*), since that is the madhhab of Ibn 'Abdalwahhab⁴⁸ (Ibn 'Abdul'-Vakhkhab)? I reply that Wahhabism is not a madhhab but a dirty provocation (*griaznaia smuta*) and [a sum of] innovations (*novovedeniia*) that have appeared in Islam. To protect oneself from the damage that it does, and to run away from it, is even more of a duty than to escape from wild lions and poisonous snakes. When we say that it is allowed to move from one madhhab to another then we mean only the four truthful (*istinnye*) madhhabs: [the schools of] Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, al-Shafi'i and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Any [legal] decision that goes beyond the framework of these four madhhabs is regarded as untrue (*nevernyi*). [Such a legal decision] cannot be taken as a basis, and cannot be referenced, when Muftiates or shariat judges pronounce any kind of theological-legal statements (*bogoslovsko-pravovye zakliucheniia*) (*fatvas*) for the Muslims, according to the absolute majority [of experts] (*sawad al-a'zam*).

Among the population there are all kinds of incorrect talks about the transition from one tariqat to another, with the result that people are deluded.

⁴⁷ *Madhhab* [in the Russian form *mazkhab*] (pl. *madhabib* – “way”) – a theological-legal school, a doctrine, a trend.

⁴⁸ [Muhammad ibn 'Abdalwahhab (1703-1792, founder of the Wahhabi movement in the Najd region of present-day Saudi-Arabia.)

They assume that to leave one tariqat and to take on another one is a big sin. Others think that if children accept a tariqat that is different from the one in which their parents were, or still are, [253:] then they will not see each other on Judgment Day. Some people told me that their ustadh said to them: "If someone leaves my tariqat and accepts another, then he will fall into unbelief." Another shaykh said: "I won't forgive the person who leaves my tariqat and switches to another one." Today there are still such "shaykhs" who lead this kind of talk with their "murids". In reality what they teach them is not tariqat but [just] tasks of shariat nature. Anybody can carry out a shariat task, without a [special] license (*razreshenie*) and without a master (*nastavnik*). What is more, those who teach these virds in this manner claim that their tariqat is the Naqshbandiyya, but they come up with calumnies against us, call us "false shaykhs" (*lzheshaikhi*) (*mutasheikhi*).⁴⁹ If you want to distinguish who is standing in front of you – a false shaykh or a real one (*istinnyi*) – then check the contents of the task (*zadanie*), ask about the chain of the shaykhs, and whether he has a license to teach murid. This is what distinguishes real shaykhs from false ones.

See, my brothers, that they have no basis and no truth when they say that they [i.e., the shaykhs mentioned above] do not forgive those who leave their tariqat. What do their words actually mean? Which real (*istinnyi*) imam or shaykh will declare that he who leaves his task (*zadanie*) (vird) and begins to carry out another one will become an unbeliever or [at least] fall into a grave sin? If even people of the Sunna will distort Islam in this manner, then what kind of progress (*progress*) is waiting for the Muslim religion? Only two-three hundred years ago the English intelligence service aimed at destroying Islam and decreasing its role, and their foremost goal was to strengthen the activities within Islam [that work] towards its splitting up and towards the division of the nation (*razdelenie natsii*). [The British secret service] also tried to disturb Muslims when they meet in mosques for the collective namazes, to counter the construction of Islamic educational institutions and mosques and to promote, as much as possible, the propaganda of alcohol and drugs, for which they even augmented their budget

⁴⁹ [The correct Arabic form would be *mutashayyikh*].

expenses, and so forth. If only the Muslims would exert half of those efforts that the enemies of Islam show for the purpose of its destruction...

Whatever, Islam will always be victorious and will never be defeated, this is what the Quran and the hadith underline. There will be a time when that sickness (*nemoshch*) that is now characteristic for the Muslims will disappear, Allah willing.

The question whether one may combine two tariqats at the same time is like the question, can one at one and the same time keep two millstones rotating? The millstones can turn at the same time, even three of them, if there is enough water [to drive them]. But what will happen if the water that is hardly enough for one millstone will be divided between two of them? I am meeting murids of various [Sufi] directions: of the Hajji tariqat, of Obodi, of Muhammad from Balakhuni, of Sharafuddin.⁵⁰ I do not especially look for them [254:], I have no need to do so. But when they come to me or when such a meeting takes place spontaneously, one usually enters into a conversation. Each of them tells me what kind of threats they obtained from their ustadhes concerning the transition to another tariqat. I then explain to them what I have mentioned above, that there is not the smallest ban on moving from one tariqat to another. But not to one of them I recommend to leave what they are doing at the moment and to accept the tariqat that I teach. I give them the advice that they should choose what they wish or continue what they have been doing so far. And if not, then let them leave the first and let them fulfill [the tasks] that I teach. Some go [home] and remain in their old [tariqat] while others accept the tariqat that I teach. I am in agreement with the choices of both, for I do not know what to do with them. I cannot accuse somebody of unbelief that easily.

Also I do not understand how people can say that I do not forgive the person who leaves my tariqat and goes over to another. Is the tariqat then my property, so that I would not forgive a person? The one who fulfills the tariqa or who does not will thereby obtain benefit or damage for himself. To put it briefly, go and tell

⁵⁰ ["Obodi" and Muhammad from Balakhuni and Sharafaddin Kikuni are shaykhs of the Khalidiyya branch; more on these below. The "Hajji tariqat" might refer to the Kunta-Hajji virids of the Qadiriyya brotherhood that are widespread in Chechnya and Ingushetia.]

everybody that he may leave the tariqat that I teach and accept another one as he likes. I am not in the slightest worried about this. If I reject somebody who comes to me and who wishes to fulfill the tariqat, then the Almighty (*swt*) will say to me on Judgment Day: "Why did you reject this or that person? Did he come to you to ask from your property or riches?" Or Allah (*swt*) will say: "You were too proud to accept the one who came to you because he remembered Me, because he wanted to come closer to Me and recognize Me. Do you really believe you had so many reasons to reject him?" Which answer will I then be able to give? Similarly the Almighty (*swt*) will say to that person: "I sent you to My servant, whom I obliged to lead people on the path of the truth, why did you drop that path?" This will be the lot of the person who leaves the true tariqat (*istinnyi tariqat*) behind and steps onto an untrue path (*nevernyi put*).

Some of these people ask whether it is not possible that they fulfill what they had been given before and also, at the same time, that which I teach? One has to answer them with the example of the millstones that I mentioned earlier. How to divide the water into two portions if there is not even enough for moving one millstone, so it is better to work with only one millstone, the one you chose.

As we are teaching two tariqats, the Naqshbandiyya and the Shadhiliyya, the question might arise: why is it possible to teach two tariqats at the same time? [But the answer would be that] we do not teach two tariqats at the same time. A person who comes [to us] first begins with the [255:] smallest [task that exists] in the Shadhiliyya tariqat. How this continues depends on the person himself, on his energy, abilities and preparation. Nobody forbids him to fulfill (*vypolniat*) two tariqats simultaneously, if you manage you can even fulfill three or four. Yet, as we have already stated, each tariqat path (*tarikatskii put*) has to be reliable, truthful, pure and accepted by the people (*akhl*) of that circle.

The example of the person who first accepts a tariqat is like the one who makes the fundament for building his house. For example, if several people build their fundament at the same time this does not mean that they also finish the construction at the same time. One of them might build the house in just a couple of months, the other will do this in a year, and a third one, who is not in a hurry, will raise his house over many years. The final construction depends on the

possibilities of each of these three persons, and also on their means and abilities. The people who follow the tariqat are just like these builders. The ustadhes do not oblige them to do what is beyond their capacities.

Text 6: ⁵¹ **How many types of tariqat are there in Daghestan, and are they all truthful?**

[From this long essay we offer here only some parts that focus directly on the dispute between the Khalidiyya-Mahmudiyya and the Khalidiyya branches in Daghestan, especially the mutual allegations of not having a sound silsila (line of transmission)]

(...) [232:] Those who say that the ghazavat⁵² ended with Imam Shamil,⁵³ and that the tariqat ended with ‘Abdurrahman Sughuri,⁵⁴ speak against the shariat and against the Quran and hadith. Even if we suppose that the ghazavat ended with Imam Shamil, then it is still untrue to say that the tariqat ended with ‘Abdurrahman Sughuri. If they ask me why, then I say the following: even if the tariqat is transmitted only on a weak level, it is still the struggle with the nafs that is called, in Islam, the big ghazavat (*bol’shoi gazavat*). The ghazavat that is done with the help of the sabre does have an end, depending on the conditions [that are valid for the ghazavat in the particular case]. But the ghazavat that is carried out against one’s own nafs cannot have an end, since every Muslim who has reached maturity is obliged to carry out the struggle against the nafs until the end of his days. Such is the truth (*istina*), and for this reason it is wrong (*neverno*) to say that the tariqat ended with ‘Abdurrahman Sughuri. Yet from another point of view

⁵¹ Sheikh Said-Afandi al’-Chirkavi, *Sokrovishchina blagodatnykh znaniy – Majmu‘at al-fawa'id*, 223-251.

⁵² [In the North Caucasus the term ghazavat has more currency than the term jihad, to which it is synonymous. Here ghazavat first refers to the long Caucasus War, the jihad of the three Imams (1828-1859), then to the well-known concepts of smaller and bigger jihads].

⁵³ [The famous third jihad Imam of Daghestan and Chechnya, ruled 1834-59, d. 1871 in Medina.]

⁵⁴ [‘Abdarrahman al-Sughuri (or al-Thughuri), 1792/3-1882, from the Avar village of Sogratl’, a disciple of Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaraghi (d. 1254/1838) and a major figure in the Khalidiyya brotherhood during and after Shamil’s time. On him see Kemper, “al-Thughuri”, in *Encyclopedia of Islam. Three* (Leiden; Boston, 2011).]

there is a piece of truth in it,⁵⁵ but the people who say so do not understand the truth about which we will still speak in more detail, Allah willing. And from my side there is no other goal in this than to teach people the truth, and that they understand it.

*[Page 233 shows a sophisticated diagram of the silsila of the Naqshbandiyya Mahmudiyya and its rival Khalidiyya branch, with numbers attached to each person in the chain and with lines between the names to indicate the historical master-disciple relations. The line of both branches starts with the Prophet Muhammad and first follows the commonly accepted silsila to Baha'addin Naqshband (No. 16), further to Ahmad Sirhindi (24), and then (as the Mujaddidiyya branch) to Mawlana Khalid al-Baghdadi (30), from whence the common Khalidiyya branch starts:]*⁵⁶

1 Muhammad – 2 Abu Bakr – 3 Salman al-Farisi – 4 Qasim – 5 Ja'far as-Sadiq – 6 Abu Yazid Tayfur – 7 Abu l-Hasan Kharqani – 8 Abu 'Ali Farmadi – 9 Yusuf Hamadani – 10 'Abdulkhalig Ghijduvani – 11 'Arif Rivgari – 12 Mahmud Injir Faghnavi – 13 'Ali Ramitani – 14 Muhammad Bab Samasi – 15 Sayyid Amir Kulali – 16 Muhammad Naqshuband – 17 'Ala'addin Attar – 18 Ya'qub Charkhi – 19 'Ubaydullah Ahrar – 20 Muhammad Zahid – 21 Darvish Muhammad – 22 Khawaja Imkanaki – 23 Muhammad Baqi – 24 Ahmad Faruq [Sirhindi] – 25 Muhammad Ma'sum – 26 Sayfuddin – 27 Nur Muhammad – 28 Habibullah – 29 'Abdullah Dihlavi – 30 Khalid Baghdadi – 31 Isma'il Shirvani Kurdamiri

[At this point we enter Daghestan, with Mawlana Khalid's disciple Isma'il al-Kurdamiri. Now the silsila splits into two. First the one of the Mahmudiyya branch up to Said-Afandi himself:]

31 Isma'il Shirvani Kurdamiri – 32 Muhammad Salih – 33 Ibrahim Qudqashani – 34 Yunus Afandi – 35 Mahmud Afandi (al-Almali) – 36 Jabra'il Afandi – 37 'Abdarrahman 'Asavi – 38 Hasan Afandi (al-Qahi) – 39 Muhammad

⁵⁵ [What is meant here is, as will be discussed below, the claim of Said-Afandi and others that Sughuri did not have successors – and therefore that the contemporary Khalidiyya branch that traces its lineage back to Sughuri does not have a sound silsila].

⁵⁶ [The orthography of the names has been simplified. Some obvious spelling mistakes have been corrected.]

Ya'sub – 40 Humayd Afandi – 41 Muhammad Husayn – 42 Muhammad 'Arif – 43 Muhammad Saaduhajji – 44 'Abdulhamid Afandi (from Verkhnee Inkho) – 45 Hamzat Afandi – 46 Muhammad Afandi Khuchadi – 47 Badruddin Afandi – 48 Sa'id Afandi Chirkevi

[The silsila scheme also shows one sideline from Mahmud al-Almali, which is obviously regarded as secondary since its further members are not given continuing numbers:]

35 Mahmud Afandi (al-Almali) – Ahmad Talali, [the latter with two disciples]: a) Shu'ayb Afandi [al-Bagini] – Hasan Afandi (al-Qahi); b) Qusayy Afandi

[Furthermore the diagram also indicates the following additional direct lines as "shortcuts": from 41 to 45; from 44 to Muhammad Akhalchi; from 45 to Muhammad Tidibi; from 46 Muhammad Afandi Khuchadi directly to 48 Sa'id Afandi Chirkevi, so that Said-Afandi is also presented as having a diploma from the shaykh of his direct shayh, 47 Badruddin-Afandi].

[The second silsila that the same scheme shows, clearly in an inferior position graphically and numerically, is that of the "Khalidiyya wing", that is, of the Daghestani competitors of the Mahmudiyya. This line also starts with Isma'il al-Kurdamiri:]

31 Isma'il Shirvani Kurdamiri – Khash-Muhammad Shirvani – Muhammad Yaraghi – Jamaladdin Qumuqi – a) 'Abdurrahman Sughuri – Ilyas al-Tsudakhari; b) Mamadibir Ruchi; c) Shamil Imam.

[Text:]

As we have already said before, the Naqshbandiyya tariqat takes its beginning from the Prophet (ﷺ) and goes without interruption to Ismail Kurdemiri (the branch that is active in Daghestan). In the chain (*silsila*) he is number 31. After him the chain splits into two, since he had two successors (*ma'dhuns*): Muhammad-Salih Shirvani and Khash-Muhammad Shirvani. [234:] From Muhammad-Salih (number 32) this chain goes to Hasan Afandi from Kakhib (he is number 38 in the Naqshbandiyya line). From Khash-Muhammad it went to Muhammad Yaraghi, and from him to Jamaladdin Qumuqi, and his successors were Mamadibir Rochi, 'Abdurrahman Sughuri and Imam Shamil.

‘Abdurrahman Sughuri gave a license (according to the accounts of Shu‘ayb Afandi from Bagini) to Muhammad-Hajji from the village of Oboda and to Ilyas from Tsudakhar.

[Arabic text, without translation:] *And al-Hajj ‘Abdarrahman Afandi al-Thughuri did not have a ma’dhun that is agreed upon (mutaffiq ‘alayhi), except for al-‘Ubudi and al-Tsudaqari. And we do not know whether they made anybody their successor (khalifa) in their place or not, except for the renitent al-Hajj Fir-Muhammad al-Khustadi [who claimed that] he was ma’dhun from al-‘Ubudi, and [only] Allah knows the truth of the story and the truth of what is said... [Quoted from] Tabaqat al-Bagini, page 151.*

[Back to Russian:] ‘Abdurrahman Sughuri did not have any successors except these two, although Fir-Muhammad from Khushtada claimed that he was a successor of Obodi – this is what Bagini said. From the line that went via Ismail al-Kurdamiri, the number 35 is Mahmud Afandi Almaliyi Dagestani, after him the silsila splits again. One line goes to Jibra’il Afandi, then to ‘Abdurrahman Hajji from Asab, and from him to Hasan Afandi [al-Qahi]. The second line that goes via Ahmad Talali goes to Shu‘ayb Afandi from Bagini. When Hasan Afandi came to him after the death of ‘Abdurrahman Hajji from Asab, Bagini taught him the two remaining levels of the tariqat (*muraqaba* – *khafi* and *akhfa*) which he had not yet learned, and [Bagini] made [Hasan-Afandi] his successor (*preemnik*). Shu‘ayb had no other successors than Hasan-Afandi. Hasan-Afandi mentioned that Mustafa from Godoberi was also a Naqshbandiyya shaykh. I do not know from which side this chain had reached him.

[In Arabic:] *And he said, that is, Mamma-Dibir al-Ruchi: None of my murids has emerged who would have reached up to the Well-Preserved Tablet. I would be ashamed before Allah the Almighty, his Prohet and his awliya if I would give a license to somebody who has not reached that level (maqam). [Quoted from] Tabaqat al-Bagini, page 151.*

Mamadibir Rochi said that among his own disciples there was not one who had reached the level to the degree that he would understand what is written on the Well-Preserved Tablet [235:] (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*). He said that he would be ashamed before Allah (*swt*), the Prophet and the *awliya* [“friends of Allah”, i.e.

the Sufi masters or saints] if he gave a permission to a person who does not have that level. Theologians (*bogoslovy*) give numerous reasons to support the allegation that the chain stopped with ‘Abdurrahman Sughuri, the line that came from Khass-Muhammad Shirvani, and also to support the claim that he had no successors. I think that their opinion that the tariqat stopped with ‘Abdurrahman Sughuri is based on the following reasoning:

[Arabic:] One pious scholar told me that another scholar had told him: The Shaykh Udhun al-Salti⁵⁷ once told him: The Shaykh al-Thughuri did not give a permission (idhn) and license (ijaza) to anybody. And neither did he give a permission to him [i.e., to al-Salti] as long as he was alive. Yet he said that [al-Thughuri] told [al-Salti] some days before his death: Oh my son, it turned out that not one of my murids would be able to take over my staff. But he also said that he [al-Salti] had a permission from the spirit (ruhaniyya) of his [i.e., of al-Thughuri]. End [of quote].

This talk is rejected by what the Imam al-Ma’sum [Sirhindi] said in his Maktubat: “The deputyship (khilafa) is a very serious matter. It cannot be confirmed just by a dream (waqi’a). Successorship is only reliable if the permission has been given in the state of being awake, from a respected shaykh who himself had obtained a correct permission...” [Quoted from] Tabaqat al-Bagini, page 150.

[In the following Said Afandi paraphrases the Arabic quote from al-Bagini and criticizes Uzun-Hajji’s claim that he received his ijaza from Sughuri in a dream, not in reality; furthermore Said-Afandi provides more voices of Daghestani shaykhs who agree that ‘Abdurrahman al-Sughuri had no spiritual successor, implicitly saying that the Khalidiyya branch of today has no legitimacy].

⁵⁷ [This is the well-known Naqshbandi shaykh Uzun-Hajji al-Salti (d. 1920), who established a short-lived Islamic state in Avaria and adjacent parts of Chechnya during the turmoil of the Russian Civil War. On him see Marie Bennigsen Broxup, “The Last Ghazawat: the 1920-1921 Uprising”, in: *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. by Marie Bennigsen Broxup (London, 1992), 112-145; Džulietta Mesxidze, “Die Rolle des Islams beim Kampf um die staatliche Eigenständigkeit Tschetscheniens und Inguschetiens”, *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia*, vol. II, ed. by Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, Allen J. Frank (Berlin, 1998), 457-482.]

(...) [250:] In our place, in Daghestan, there is still another true branch of the tariqat – the Shadhili one, which takes its origin from the Prophet (*sAs*) and comes to us without interruption. Before Sayfullah-Qadi this tariqa was not known in Daghestan. He gave the right to spread it to Hasan-Afandi (al-Qahi), and Hasan-Afandi began with the spread of the Shadhiliyya tariqat. Sayfullah-Qadi's first ustadh on the Naqshbandi way was Muhammad-Dhakhir Chistavi [251:] from the region of Cheliabinsk⁵⁸, who was one of the followers of Mahmud-Afandi. After Chistavi's death Sayfullah-Qadi went to [the city of] Ufa. There he met the Sufi master (*murshid*) Zaynullah Sharifi,⁵⁹ who made him his successor and gave him his permission (*razreshenie*), after which Sayfullah returned to Daghestan. Then, driven by the passion to get to know the Shadhiliyya tariqat, he met with the *ma'dhun*⁶⁰ of the Shadhili way Muhammad-Salih,⁶¹ accepted from him the tariqat and became his disciple (*vospitannik*). In the following Sayfullah-Qadi also obtained from Muhammad-Salih the permission to teach others in the Shadhiliyya tariqat and he became his successor (*preemnik*).

[Here Said-Afandi provides a diagram of the Shadhiliyya silsila:]

Muhammad (*sAs*) – 2 Ali – 3 Hasan – 4 Abu Muhammad Jabir – 5 Said – 6 Fathu Su'ud – 7 Sa'du – 8 Sa'id – 9 Ahmad Marvani – 10 Ibrahim Basari – 11 Zaynuddin – 12 Shamsuddin – 13 Tajuddin – 14 Nuruddin – 15 Fakhruddin – 16 Taqiuddin – 17 'Abdurrahman – 18 'Abdussalam – 19 Abu l-Hasan Shadhili – 20 Abu l-Abbas Mursi – 21 Tajaddin ibn 'Ataullah – 22 Davud Bakhil – 23

⁵⁸ [This is a lapsus; al-Chistawi's nisba refers to the city of Chistopol' in present-day Tatarstan, not to Cheliabinsk].

⁵⁹ [On Zaynullah Rasuli (Sharifi) (1835-1917) see Hamid Algar, "Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev – The Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Urals Region", in: Jo-Ann Gross (ed.), *Muslims in Central Asia – Expressions of Identity and Change* (Durham, London 1992), 112-133.]

⁶⁰ Ma'zun – successor (ustadh who obtained the permission to direct [murids] (*razreshenie na nastavnichestvo*).

⁶¹ [This is Muhammad-Salih ibn 'Abdalkhaliq al-Ajawi, a Sufi shaykh born in the village of Azimovo, in what is now Tatarstan. Muhammad-Salih was a disciple of the Shadhiliyya shaykh Muhammad-'Ali Zahir al-Witri al-Madani from North Africa. A manuscript with Madani's ijaza for Muhammad-Salih is preserved in the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography, Makhachkala.]

Muhammad Bahru Safa – 24 ‘Ali ibn Wafa – 25 Sayyidi Yahya – 26 Ahmad ibn ‘Uqbat – 27 Ahmad Zaruq – 28 ‘Abdussalim Ibrahim – 29 ‘Abdurrahman Majdhub – 30 ‘Ali Shaji – 31 Yusuf al-Fasi – 32 ‘Abdurrahman – 33 Sayyid Muhammad – 34 Sayyid Qasim – 35 Abu l-‘Abbas Ahmad – 36 Sayyid ‘Arabi – 37 Abu l-Hasan ‘Ali – 38 Mawla l-‘Arabi – 39 Muhammad Finjir – 40 Habib Rahman – 41 Muhammad ‘Ali Zahir [al-Madani] – 42 Muhammad Salih – 43 Sayfullah-Qadi Qaziqukhi – 44 Hasan-Afandi Qadi – 45 Muhammad Ya‘sub – 46 Humayd-Afandi – 47 Muhammad Husayn – 48 Muhammad ‘Arif – 49 Muhammad Saaduhajji – 50 ‘Abdulhamid Afandi – 51 Hamzat Afandi – 52 Muhammad Afandi Khuchadi – a) Badruddin Afandi; b) Said Afandi Chirkevi

[In this diagram Said-Afandi himself is presented as having two disciples:]

Said Afandi Chirkevi – 55 Arslanali-Afandi [Gamzatov]

Said Afandi Chirkevi – 56 ‘Abduvahid-Afandi

[Additional lines and shortcuts:]

47 Muhammad Husayn – 50 ‘Abdulhamid Afandi

47 Muhammad Husayn – 51 Hamzat Afandi

51 Hamzat Afandi – a) Muhammad Akhalchi; b) Muhammad Tidib

50 ‘Abdulhamid Afandi (from Verkhnee Inkho) – Muhammad Akhalchi

Zaynullah Sharifi – 43 Sayfullah Qadi Qaziqukhi

Shu‘ayb-Afandi – 44 Hasan-Afandi Qadi

‘Abdurahman ‘Asawi – 44 Hasan-Afandi Qadi

Sayfullah-Qadi perfected his knowledge with Ahmad Kamashkhani,⁶² who was the ustadh of Zaynullah Sharifi. Ahmad Kamashkhani had obtained the silsila connection through Khalid Baghdadi, transmitted through the branch of Ahmad Tarablisi. The main silsila of Zaynullah went from Muhammad Ma‘sum, who is the twenty-fifth in the line of the Naqshbandi tariqat that went via Ahmad Makki. Hasan-Afandi’s first master in the Naqshbandiyya tariqat was ‘Abdurrahman-Hajji from the village of Asab, who also gave Hasan a permission. ‘Abdurrahman-Hajji did not return from the hajj, he died and is buried in Jidda.

⁶² [This is obviously Ahmed Gümüşhanevi; on him see Irfan Gündüz, “Gümüşhanevi, Ahmed Ziyaeddin (1813-1893)”, *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 14 (İstanbul 1996), 276-277].

After him Hasan-Afandi took Shu'ayb-Afandi Bagini as his master and became his disciple. Shu'ayb-Afandi taught Hasan-Afandi on the levels of *khafi* and *akhfa*, which he had not yet reached due to the death of 'Abdurrahman-Hajji. Shu'ayb-Afandi gave him the right to direct [murids] (*irshad*). Then, after the death of Shu'ayb-Afandi, Hasan-Afandi became a disciple of Sayfullah-Qadi, who made him his successor and gave him the permission to transmit the Naqshbandiyya, Shadhiliyya and Qadiriyya ways. My brothers, now you see yourself that there is no chain (*silsila*) that goes further from 'Abdurrahman Sughuri and Obodi. [And by contrast] I do not know for what reason one would find any fault with the chain that goes so beautifully and purely from Mahmud-Afandi [to us]. I myself am continuously praising the Almighty (*swt*) and with satisfaction attach myself to the link in the chain of Allah's (*swt*) favor. I have not found any person who would quarrel with me, who would envy and criticize me. I did not think that there are people like this, but obviously there are.

[An Arabic *du'a* (invocation), without translation:] *My Allah, make the umma of Muhammad better (aslah ummat Muhammad). My Allah, have mercy on the umma of Muhammad. My Allah, make the umma of Muhammad happy, Allah pray for him and give him peace. My Allah, forgive me and the umma of Muhammad, Allah pray for him and give him peace, and have wide mercy on them. Amin, amin, amin, amin.*

[End of the essay].

Block 4: Against Wahhabis:

Text 7: ⁶³ Which of the mandatory actions of a Muslim are valued most by Allah ⁶⁴ Almighty?

The most valued of the mandatory actions with Allah Almighty (*swt*) is the belief in Him, in His Prophet (*sAs*) and in all attributes that are inherent in Allah (*swt*)

⁶³ Sheikh Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sokrovishchina blagodatnykh znanii – Majmu'at al-fawa'id*, 11.

⁶⁴ Allah is the only and unique God for all mankind, the Creator of all that exists and the Lord of the Day of Judgment.

(*prisushchie Allakhu atributy*) and in the qualities inherent in his Prophet (*sAs*).⁶⁵ Exactly this belief is the condition under which the Almighty (*swt*) accepts man's good deeds. [By contrast] the assertion that God (*Bog*) (*swt*) is located on the Heavenly Throne (*'arsh*), or [the claim] that after the passing away of the Prophet (*sAs*) one would have more benefit from [turning for help to] a [wooden] staff than from [turning to] the Prophet himself (as the Wahhabis claim), and also to attach to Allah (*swt*) attributes that do not belong Him and to the Prophet (*sAs*) qualities that do not belong to him, all this is, according to the convictions of the people of the Sunna,⁶⁶ unbelief (*kuf'r*).

The Almighty (*swt*) protect us of attaching to Him and to His Prophet (*sAs*) such attributes and qualities, and also of those people who perform such acts! [In Arabic calligraphy:] Allah

Text 8: ⁶⁷[Answers to Questions of a Journalist of the television Station "TV-Chirkei"]

How does Islam relate to extremists and fanatics?

In Islam one is not an enemy of other confessions and one does not provoke enmity. But here are the Wahhabis, for example, [224:], as I understand, [they are] bad people. Islam does not recognize the bad, and Allah does not accept [it], and the Messenger of Allah (*sAs*), and the people who walk his way, do not recognize it. Islam is clean of any violence against whomever. All the good is collected in Islam. Everything that is useful for a person in both worlds, that is religion. What kind of relationship can Islam then have to extremism? But due to a bad relation we do not have to immediately take up our weapons. One thing is when two states are fighting, but with a single fanatic it is not worth struggling. If

⁶⁵ *Syfaty* ("qualities", "characteristics") [Arabic: *sifat*] is the term that is used to determine the attributes of God and the qualities of the Prophet.

⁶⁶ as-Sunna is the example of the Prophet Muhammad (*sAa*) as a model and guideline for the whole Muslim community (*obshchina*) and for each Muslim, as a source for solving all problems in the life of a person and of the community.

⁶⁷ Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sbornik vystuplenii. Tom pervyi*, 223-224. [Chirkei-TV is largely the channel of Said-Afandi's branch of the Mahmudiyya in Daghestan.]

I curse him with a word, he will answer me, and if I hit [him] he will reply by hitting, then somebody from outside will get involved in our conflict, thus it develops into a war and a great number of people will perish. For everything there is an order and a law. For example, if it is necessary to arrest a criminal then you and me will not [go out after him and] get him, since for this there is a public prosecutor and a judge. Only after a court [procedure] will they put a criminal into prison, nobody has the right to turn to self-help (*tvorit' samosud*).

Block 5: On Women:

Text 9:⁶⁸ Can a woman be the head of the family?

There are many things that a woman does not have to do, by contrast to the man, like for example: to attend the Friday prayer and many other things. In this way Allah singled out the men, there is nothing we can do about it. And the fact that a woman can have good [social] connections, an education and the like, this is not taken into account by shariat, for according to shariat they are not obliged to work for money. The man is obliged to care for the family, to maintain his wife and children. This is how it needs to be according to Islam. The women who [225:] are referred to in the question are busy with things that they should not do according to Islam. In our time we see trading and working women, but Allah did not impose on them such a duty. The women should do the work in the house, and men outside of the house. For example, the man brings the flour and the women bakes the bread. And to travel to search for work is not what women should do. If they act like this in our country (*u nas*), that does not mean that it is all the same everywhere. For example, in Arabia women do not work.

Men and women have respective duties. Women may not comport themselves as it comes to their mind, she has to obey her man. And also the man has respective limits that he may not violate. He does not have the right to torture his wife, to beat her, to leave her hungry and things like that. If both of the couple will

⁶⁸ Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi, *Sbornik vystuplenii. Tom pervyi* (Makhachkala, 2010), Question 8, page 224-225.

fulfill their duties that Allah has laid upon them, then there will be love and mutual understanding between them. But if they behave as it comes to their mind, then problems are inevitable. In family relations everything is regulated by *iman*, by belief (*vera*).

Analysis of the texts

Personal style, examples and images

The texts presented above comprise three major genres, that of a biographical narrative, that of answers to individual questions that were put before Said-Afandi, and longer explanatory narratives. What they have in common is their personal, lively, and easily accessible style; sentences are short, without complicated syntactical structures. The first text, the biographical narrative, is personal in style (providing dialogues in direct speech) as well as in contents (Said-Afandi talking about himself and about his relations to his fellow murids and to his teacher). Also the fatwas are very personal, above all by the connection that is made to the person who reportedly posed the question (in one instance this person introduces himself as “a murid of the Shadhiliyya”, and in another text the person who asked is directly addressed by his full name, as “Dzhamal’ Gasanov from the village of Khindakh”; here the connection between Said-Afandi and the interlocutor is maintained through the whole text: “Brother Dzhamal’, once this question is worrying you, listen!”). Said-Afandi thus evokes the impression that he is a very accessible person who pays a lot of attention to the questions and concerns of his followers. This simple style sometimes conflicts with the academic style of the footnotes, e.g. when Said-Afandi’s spontaneous exclamation “Vallah” is explained in a rather formal footnote as “I swear by Allah (translation from the Arabic)”.

The lively style is supported by a significant pool of images and educative examples, from the comparison of Sharia with a sea and Sufism with a boat, over food images for explaining when a student is allowed to do this or that “task”, to the hajj pilgrim who travels to Mecca on a KamAZ, the archetypical Russian truck; and the Sufi network is compared to an electric power station with its

transformers and power lines to the lamps in the individual households. The most lively example is the biography of Said-Afandi himself; he describes himself as being of humble origins, without any substantial Islamic education, and he explains how he started to work in the most primitive profession one can imagine, as a herdsman, was then drafted into the army, and after return took on a simple position as a watchman in the hydroelectric power station.⁶⁹ Also striking is the author's account how entry into the tariqa produced for him an immediate success in a rather worldly problem that he had been struggling with for a very long time, namely to quit smoking; his account, according to which he did not even feel the urge to smoke any more, is certainly meant to appear as a small miracle, although a term for "miracle" – *karamat*, for example – does not appear in the text; instead the achievement is explained through the training of a strong will (in the tariqat "everything depends on the conviction", as Said-Afandi tells us in another context).

Said-Afandi's autobiographical narrative also gives a lively impression under which conditions murids communicated with their masters in the Soviet period (the reader can see him and other murids in a cramped Moskvich car, riding over unpaved mountain passes and evading police checkpoints to eventually meet their master), how they socialized with each other (in "love", respect and mutual help), and how they were gradually led by their masters to higher goals, from simple *virds* (litanies) to more sophisticated "tasks" and techniques. In this context Said-Afandi describes his encounter with a certain Mukhtar, who used to contemplate over a photograph of his master, the "ustadh from 'Urib". This passage clearly describes the Naqshbandi practice of *rabita* (and the Daghestani Naqshbandis of the Mahmudiyya branch are known for their use of photographs, to better imagine the physical traits of their master in front of them, with the master functioning as a reflection of Allah). At one instance (the end of text 3) one can

⁶⁹ Also for Central Asia we know that many Muslim authorities, especially after their return from the Gulag camps in the second half of the 1950s, were employed as watchmen, which they enjoyed for the free time it provided them for studying Islamic literature; see Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "From Revival to Mutation: The Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from De-Stalinization to Independence (1955-1991)", *Central Asian Survey* 30.1 (2011), 53-80.

read between the lines that Said-Afandi orders his students to also conduct the *rabita* to him personally, that is, to imagine him in the *rabita*, not only Mahmud al-Almali.

Said-Afandi repeatedly emphasizes that the more sophisticated practices are not to be explained or “given” to unprepared people. The strong emphasis on gradation when walking the Sufi path of course emphasizes the authority of the personal shaykh, without whom no real progress can be booked. Said-Afandi’s narration about his own beginnings on the Sufi path is therefore also a strong emphasis of the authority that he possesses now, after all these years of guided practice; and he carefully avoids describing his own masters in too much praising detail, seemingly in order not to be perceived as still standing in their shadow.

Islamic terms

As usual, the most obvious Islamic elements in the texts are the abundant eulogies, esp. (*salla Allah ‘alayhi wa-sallama*) “Allah pray for him and make him safe” (added to the name of the Prophet Muhammad), as well as (*subhanahu wa-ta’ala*) “He be exalted” (added to almost every mentioning of Allah). In the original texts these two are introduced in the form of minuscule stamps, in Arabic letters; as these are obviously used not as texts that the reader would actually read (they are almost too small to decipher) but just as markers to remember, we render them in the form “(sAs)” and “(swt)”, respectively. The eulogy “(radiya Allahu ‘anhu)” (“Allah be satisfied with him”) also appears (in our text, curiously, for a woman, A’isha, where the eulogy should have taken a female form). Shaykhs of the Naqshbandiyya (like Muhammad-‘Arif Afandi, the son of Shaykh Hasan al-Qahi) obtain the eulogy “(q.s.)” [whereby the Arabic letter *qaf* is expressed in the Avar form, namely as the Cyrillic letter *къ*, comprised of *k* plus *tverdyi znak*], the customary abbreviation of “*quddisa sirruhu*” (or: “*qaddasa Allah sirrabu*”), “his secret be sanctified (by Allah)”. A fellow murid who obviously did not reach the level of a shaykh still obtains a Russian eulogy in one of our texts, “let his sins be washed away” (*da smoiutsia ego grekhi*).

God is usually *Allah*, occasionally *Bog*. The term “Holy texts” is used as well, comprising not only the Quran. Islamic terms that are not explained in the text, but where the author (and editor) can assume the reader’s knowledge, are for example *‘alimiy* (Arabic *‘alim*, pl. *‘ulama’*, scholars of Islam), *zakiat* (Arab. *zakat*, almsgiving), *namaz* (the ritual daily prayer), *dua* (*du’a*, saying a prayer/invocation for somebody else). More specific Islamic terminology is explained, as for instance “*sawad al-a‘zam*”, “the biggest/absolute majority [of experts]”, a term known especially from the context of theological debates. Not explained, but probably well-known to Avar readers, is the eschatological concept of *akhir zaman* that Said-Afandi mentions in his biographical narrative, “the end of the times” (*akhir zaman* in Arabic), as a designation for the Soviet period when Islam appeared to be largely destroyed by state terror and when people believed there were no more Sufi masters.

Another Arabic term, *adab* (“ethics”), is used in our texts in a very narrow sense, namely as the ethics of the Sufi adepts, therefore related to discipline and obedience within the brotherhood (used here in the context of not “jumping ahead” to new tasks that one lacks the preparation for) rather than to personal morality. From the individual Shadhili and Naqshbandi practices the texts here mention *virt* (as the simple litany given by the shaykh for constant repetition) and the *khatm*, plus the techniques of *muraqaba*, *ma‘iyyat*, and *lataifa* (seemingly *lata‘if*) that are not explained in these passages.

An interesting “neo-Russianism” is *ochen’ barakatnyi chelovek*, “a person with a lot of Allah’s blessing”, derived from Arabic *baraka* “blessing”. Note that the Avar language has the word *barakatab*, translated in the 1967 Avar-Russian dictionary of Muslim Soviet Arabist M.-S. Saidov as “*blagodatnyi/blagoslovennyi*” (“blessed”).

Direct elements from the Avar language appear in the forms of *rekel-zikru* (“dhikr of the heart”, from Avar *rak’*, genitive *rek’el*, “heart”), *khafsu-nafas* (seemingly from Arabic *hafz al-nafs*, “the capturing of the soul”, a certain stage on the Sufi path) and *khatmu-salavat* (the litany of blessings for the shaykhs of their *silsila*).

The name Naqshbandiyya itself appears in the two books in two forms, as *nakshubandiiskii* and *nakshbandiiskii tarikat*. The difference seems to go back to

Avar and Arabic spelling. The central terms of Sufism that occur in the text (like *silsila* and *mutashayyikh*) are usually explained.

Not surprising in a text that is meant to cement the authority of a religious leader is the central place of terms from the semantic fields of “truth” (*dostovernnyi*, *istinnyi*, *pravilnyi*), of “knowing” the truth (*znaniia*, usually used in the plural), combined with the transmission of the truthful knowledge by “order” (*zadanie*, *amr*, *povelenie* etc.), thus emphasizing authority through truth claims.

Use of Arabic text passages

The way how passages from Arabic texts are interwoven with the Russian text is quite unique in Said-Afandi's writings, and seems to go back to the style of mosque sermons in Daghestan, where Arabic passages are given in the original and then explained in the vernacular. Thus Said-Afandi leaves not only long Arabic passages of religious symbolical meaning without translation (e.g. the Arabic formula introducing Said-Afandi's narrative); also in the middle of the Russian text we find long passages in Arabic that are not translated but only paraphrased, in Said-Afandi's own words, and sometimes not even directly after the Arabic quote but in a later position. Thus in the text on the relation between Sufism and Sharia we find two Arabic quotes, one from a hadith and the other allegedly from the Sufi shaykh Najmaddin Kubra, that are rendered in Russian only in passing. This device underlines the personal, and flowing, character of Said-Afandi's style, but it also gives him the possibility to transform the quote already in his own interpretation. We see this in the way the author changes the statement ascribed to Najmaddin Kubra: the core message of that saying is certainly that Sharia precedes Sufism (“the first thing that a person has to do is the Sharia ...”), but in his own narrative Said-Afandi manages to present this statement already in conformity with his major claim, namely that not *full* conformity with Sharia is a condition for entering the Sufi path but only the acquisition of the *basic* knowledge of Sharia, of elementary things like prayer and fasting. This quote, and the discussion on Sharia and Sufism that it is placed in, has a direct connection to the educational principle of the Mahmudiyya in Daghestan, namely their practice

to allow a huge amount of murids onto the “easier” Shadhiliyya path and then to give access to the higher level of the Naqshbandiyya practice only to those who have proven their capabilities, zeal and loyalty.

Contents analysis:

a) Sufism

A major issue discussed at several points is obedience in the tariqat, including whether it is permissible to follow two virds at the same time (“[But] we do not teach two tariqats at the same time. A person who comes [to us] first begins with the smallest [obligation that exists] in the Shadhiliyya tariqat. How this continues depends on the person himself, on his energy, abilities and preparation”). It also comes up in the personal narrative, where Said-Afandi tells his reader how easy it was for him to get into the Shadhiliyya – he was accepted without ever having seen the Shaykh, just by the communication of a rosary exchange (which obviously fulfilled the function of “asking for entry”) and, in return, the reception of his *vird*, that is, of the task, in this case to recite a certain number of litanies every day. Even more, the “loose” character of the affiliation that the young Said-Afandi apparently had to his first master is in the text further enhanced by the circumstance that Said-Afandi is not able, or willing, to tell much about this master, ‘Abdulhamid from Inkho, and that murids easily switched from one shaykh to another when the conditions demanded to do so, as in the case of Said-Afandi’s fellow murid Muhammadhajji who switched from his first shaykh, Hamzat-Afandi, to another (here: ‘Abdulhamid-Afandi) when Hamzat-Afandi was placed under KGB surveillance. The topic of “free choice” is then reiterated in the fatwa on the relations between the various branches of Sufism (also called *virds*); in this fatwa Said-Afandi defends the right of a murid to leave his master, seemingly in response to accusations against him, namely that he in fact does not tolerate “his” murids’ departure to another shaykh, or that he is fishing in the ponds of other masters.

Said-Afandi’s narrative about the Soviet times is rather ambiguous, especially when he compares that epoch with the present time. On the one hand he points

out that today there are many more scholars of Islam than there were in Soviet times (and in other fatwas he expresses himself very positive about the possibilities to study Islam that opened up when the USSR was gone). On the other hand, there are several remarks to the effect that most of the many murids who approach him are not suitable for Sufi work (not walking the Sufi path “for the sake of Allah”), and that today many Sufi disciples act independently, not heeding to the orders of their masters. This evokes the impression of a certain nostalgia for the Soviet period (and curiously, in another fatwa that we do not reproduce here Said-Afandi compares Islam to the Communist Party of the USSR, and the “Wahhabis” to Gorbachev and Yeltsin who destroyed the CP!). In other words, now, in his old age, Said-Afandi, himself the modest but very dominant Sufi master of his country, an authority who raised the Mahmudiyya to a leading political and spiritual role in the Daghestani communities, also seems to realize that much of these political achievements are not particularly furthering the spiritual aspects of Sufism.

b) “Wahhabism”

Said-Afandi’s negative stance on “Wahhabism” is obvious from most of his essays and fatwas. His rejection of “Wahhabism” has a theological (dogmatic) side; we see this from his text 7 on the issue which deeds of a Muslim are most valued by Allah. In Said-Afandi’s *Majmu‘at al-fawa’id*, this is actually the first of the 47 fatwas, thus giving the issue of “Wahhabism” a very prominent position. The fatwa starts as if the author wanted to go into a discussion of the theological question of how to understand the relationship between Allah and his creation, a relationship that is discussed by Islamic theologians (of the *kalam* tradition) usually in terms of which attributes of Allah are essential (*dhati* in Arabic), and thus eternal, and which are “accidental” (*‘aradi* in Arabic), that is, created, non-eternal, and only thinkable in relation to the creation after it was created, thus in time; and in fact Said-Afandi starts a discussion of these issues in the second fatwa that follows. What he is doing in this first fatwa, however, is that he defines the question in the negative, pointing out what Allah does *not* want his Muslims to

believe – namely, that Allah has anthropomorphic features (the reference to the Heavenly Throne presupposes that Allah has a body like a human being and can sit down on the throne). Anthropomorphism in the field of Quranic exegesis is mostly associated with theologians of the Hanbali school, which brings the issue already into connection with the Wahhabi scholars of Saudi Arabia. The difference between “Wahhabism” and “Sunnism” is thus portrayed as being of the most crucial dogmatic nature, not just of secondary importance.

The second attack against “Wahhabis” is that they reject the belief that the Prophet can still intervene, with Allah, for the sake of his believers; in the fatwa this is couched in the phrase that “Wahhabis” believe you cannot expect more from the Prophet than from a dry stick of wood (and what comes to mind when reading this is that the Wahhabi movement destroyed many tombs of the Prophet’s companions when they occupied Mecca and Medina). Said-Afandi’s harsh verdict on the “Wahhabis” is that whoever supports their views is an unbeliever. Such a *takfir* (that is, the pronouncement that somebody is an unbeliever) is a very disputed issue in Islam, since it is regarded as leading to *fitna* (civil war). Said-Afandi here obviously pays the “Wahhabis” back in their own coin, since they practice the *takfir* of Sufis, claiming that that Sufis are unbelievers since they believe in intercession by the Prophet and by their saints. It should be noted that in the Avar edition of this fatwa the reference to the Wahhabis [“(as the Wahhabis claim)”] is missing;⁷⁰ for an Avar Muslim reader it must be clear who is meant when it comes to accusations of this type.

Next to these questions of dogma, Said-Afandi also rejects the “Wahhabis” for their role in splitting the Muslim community. He characterizes their strife as a “dirty provocation/civil war” (*griaznaia smuta*, *smuta* being a term from Russian history), and at various occasions points out that the “Wahhabis” were supported, if not invented, by the Western enemies of Islam, especially by the British intelligence service (and in another huge essay against the Wahhabis Said-Afandi quotes widely from a booklet that came out in Makhachkala in the 2000s, the “confessions of a British Spy” about the reported activities of the British in

⁷⁰ Ch’ikiasa Sa’id Afandi, *Mazhmu’atul ’Favaid (Sualal-zhavabal)* (Makhachkala, 2000), 4-5.

Arabia). The spread of “Wahhabism”, allegedly with Western help, is for Said-Afandi a major reason for the “sickness” that he observes in the Muslim world today.

For Said-Afandi, “Wahhabism” is obviously a synonym for violent Salafism, not only in the Arab world but in particular also in the North Caucasus. He refrains in his public statements from making clear references to their leaders or groups, focusing instead on general aspects; thereby he claims that his own position is that of the “people of the Sunna”, that is, of mainstream Sunnism. We can also place Said-Afandi’s discussion of the four legal schools of Islam into this context; while the Avars are mostly regarding themselves as followers of the Shafii school, Said-Afandi is treating all four Sunni schools with respect.

c) Women in Islam

Lastly, a word on Said-Afandi’s views on women. His fatwa on this point is very clear: women should not work, not emancipate themselves, because their role is to cook, raise the children, and to obey their husbands. This is how Allah designed it, we cannot change it. This very patriarchal position contrasts markedly from what another of our authors, Anastasiia Ezhova, has to say about the same issue (see below, chapter 8 in this volume), but also from Mufti Gainutdin’s writings on women rights.

Interesting is Said-Afandi’s position that a woman may not attend the Friday prayer; this reminds us of the Daghestani Soviet Mufti who ordered women to stay out of the mosque. At the same time, however, Said-Afandi’s biographical narrative mentions that his mother “used to follow the tariqat”, and that under his own influence also his wife “decided to accept the tariqat”. What is meant here is probably the ethical side of Sufism, not the implementation of Sufi practices like *muraqaba* or *rabita*; and to our knowledge there are no female shaykhs among the Mahmudiyya in contemporary Daghestan.

RAFAIL' VALISHIN'S "ANTI-WAHHABI" SUFI TRADITIONALISM IN RURAL WESTERN SIBERIA

Alfrid K. Bustanov

This case study brings us to the village of Novoat'ialovo in the Ialutorovskii region of Tiumen' oblast in Western Siberia. Today this village has about a thousand inhabitants, the majority of whom being Siberian Tatars (an ethnic group that emerged on the basis of Kazan Tatars, Siberian Bukharans, and others groups). The village existed already in the mid-17th century, when, according to local Sufi narratives, there was a shrine of 'Aluf Hadrat, a spiritual heir of the famous Sufi Abu Yazid Bistami (804-874)¹, located in "Atyal, close to the Tobol region."² In the late 19th and early 20th centuries there was a local Sufi leader by the name of Ishan Niyaz Baqī b. Biktimer (1846-1924) who studied with Sheikh Zaynullah b. Habib Allah Rasuli (Rasulev, 1835-1917)³ in Troitsk and entered the Khalidiyya branch of the Naqshbandiyya mujaddidiyya brotherhood. After finishing studies in Troitsk, Niyaz Baqī returned to his native village, started to teach there and died peacefully before the major Bolshevik onslaught on Islam in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Soviet power was installed in Novoat'ialovo in 1918, but the local mosque continued to function until 1929. Even after its closure the community of

¹ Abu Yazid or Bayazid Bistami was a Persian Sufi incorporated into the chain of spiritual succession in Naqshbandiyya.

² See the text and translation of the narrative on Islamization of Western Siberia: A.K. Bustanov, "Sufiiskie legendy ob islamizatsii Sibiri," in: *Tiurkologicheskii sbornik* 2009-2010 (Moscow, 2011), 42.

³ Zaynullah Ishan is regarded the last great Sufi authority in the Volga-Ural region. He was a proponent of Islamic modernization, established a madrasa in Troitsk and had many students. About him see: H. Algar, "Shaykh Zaynullah Rasulev: the Last Great Naqshbandi Shaykh of the Volga-Ural Region," in: J.-A. Gross (ed.), *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Continuity and Change* (Durham and London, 1992), 112-133.

believers continued to perform Friday prayers, either in private houses or in the open field. The family of Niyaz Baqī was not subject to state persecution, and his son ‘Abdallah (Abdulla) Biktimerov succeeded in preserving his father’s library of some two hundred manuscripts and printed books of Jadidi Sufi character.⁴ In the late Perestroika years members of the Islamic community appealed to the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Ufa, and in 1990 they opened a new mosque (which was the first in the whole oblast). In the 1990s a number of Islamic propagandists from Central Asia arrived in Novoat’ialovo and tried to spread Salafi ideas, and even to call for jihad. However, the Muslim community (*jama’at*) of the village opposed their propaganda and decided to revive the “traditional”, allegedly autochthonous Islamic model of Naqshbandi Sufism.⁵

Next to Munir Biktimerov, the grandson of Ishan Niyaz Baqī b. Biktimer, also Rafail’ Vil’karovich Valishin (1956-2012) played a central role in the beginning Sufi revival in Western Siberia. A native Tatar from the village Novoat’ialovo, Valishin re-discovered Islam for himself during the Perestroika years, and in the early 1990s he studied at a local Islamic school in the village of Embaevo, which he however left because he was not satisfied with its program of education. In the late 1990s Valishin and the whole *jama’at* joined the Naqshbandiyya Sufi brotherhood, and in 2008 they established their own unregistered public organization, called *Ikhsan* (*Benefaction*), which was initially led jointly by Valishin and Timur Zaripov, a young student at the Russian Islamic University in Kazan. This organization enjoyed a certain degree of popularity and has today around a hundred mainly young Muslim members in Tiumen’ oblast. This Sufi organization sees its main enemies in what they regard as the “Wahhabis” who occupy important positions in the Spiritual Administration (Muftiate) in the city of Tiumen, which is also the administrative center for Novoat’ialovo. Over his last

⁴ For the description of this library see: A.K. Bustanov, *Miras: Knigi kak kul’turnyi kapital: Musul’manskii rukopisi v Zapadnoi Sibiri* (Moscow, 2012, forthcoming).

⁵ For details see the results of my 2011 expedition to the village: A.K. Bustanov, I.V. Belich, I.G. Gumerov, “Sem’ia Biktimerovykh i traditsii Nakshbandiia v Zapadnoi Sibiri,” in: *Vostochnye rukopisi: sovremennoe sostoianie i perspektivy izucheniia: materialy kruglogo stola* (Kazan’, 2011), 148-153.

years Valishin worked on his private farm and served as a mosque guard in the village. He died of a heart attack in early 2012.

Below we will look in detail at two small brochures on Islamic issues that Valishin wrote in 2010-2011; these brochures were distributed (in xerox form, as a kind of post-Soviet Samizdat) by Rail Makhmutov, an Imam of the Ialutorovsk mosque, and were widely disseminated in the Tiumen' region by Valishin's followers. Valishin's texts represent a fascinating piece of a "popular", non-academic Russian Islamic lexicon that is full of Arabic loanwords – the opposite of Aliautdinov and Gainutdin's refined Russian style. At the same time we will show below that Valishin's lexicon and phraseology is not just his own idiosyncratic invention; even his bitter opponents, the Salafis⁶, use the same terminology and style.

The larger version of the two texts has 10 pages (A3 format) and bears the title: Who Are They, the "Shirkachi-Bidagatchiki"? Renovators of Islam or Its Destroyers?! (Kto oni "shirkachi-bidagatchiki"? Obnoviteli islama ili ego razrushiteli?!). Under the composite term of shirkachi-bidagatchiki, which can be translated as unbelief-innovators, Valishin means his opponents – the Salafis, whom he accuses of introducing unlawful innovations (Arabic Sg. *bid'a*) and of performing the acts of idolatry (Arabic *shirk*). The smaller version consists of six pages of the same format and was probably composed earlier. Both of the brochures have a photo of Valishin on the cover, who appears in the title as the 'spiritual leader' (*dukhovnyi rukovoditel'*) of the Ikhsan movement. The structure of these brochures is rather chaotic: they both start with attacks against the Wahhabis and continue with an explanation of Sufism and the practice of Sufis in Novoat'ialovo, and a short history of Sufism in the village, to continue with an attack on the shortcomings of foreign teachers and of the Spiritual

⁶ On the Salafi movement in modern Russia see: A.A. Iarlykapov, "Narodnyi islam' i musul'manskaia molodezh Tsentral'nogo i Severo-Zapadnogo Kavkaza," in: *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* 2006 (2), 60-74; M. Shterin, A. Iarlykapov, "Reconsidering Radicalisation and Terrorism: the New Muslims Movement in Kabardino-Balkaria and its Path to Violence," in: *Religion, State and Society* 39,no. 2/3 (June/September 2011), 303-325.

Administrations (Directorates) and its Muftis; and they both end with inviting believers to join the Ikhsan movement.

Both of these texts are peculiar for their lively speech, and their pathos of anti-Wahhabi rhetoric. Valishin is fighting against all other Islamic forces in the region: “Wahhabis”, official Religious Administrations and foreign teachers (including Central Asians, Turks and Arabs), accusing them all of having a corrupt understanding and poor knowledge of Islam.

Russian Islamic Patriotism with a Tatar Face

Valishin opposes the idea that Muslims should migrate to another place when they suffer from repression in their home country. He regards Russia as a homeland (*Rodina*, with a capital letter) which should be protected from anti-Islamic enemies: “What is today the motivation to destroy our Homeland?”; “[the Tajiks] are trying to agitate us against the Russians and others. [Earlier] they expelled the Russians and other peoples from their country, and now they came after them to eat Russian bread”; “Dear compatriots, if somebody is calling for the overthrow of the government or is denying everything in Islam, then these are not from among us, they are provocateurs”; “Allah save Russia, do not let it be destroyed by Your enemies!”. Valishin stands for “those who love their people and Homeland” and defend it against “anti-state sects” (*antigosudarstvennye sekty*). Valishin thus follows the simplified but very popular notion that Islamic trends in Russia are either “traditional” (good) or “Wahhabi” (bad). This notion is taken from the “official” state-patriotic discourse that is also represented by the major Muftis.

Valishin opposes all actors of modern Islam in Russia except for the Daghestani Naqshbandiyya and what he sees as the followers of “traditional Islam” in Tatar villages. While thus isolating himself in the Islamic environment, Valishin calls for cooperation between representatives of all “traditional confessions” in Russia, namely Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. How he wants to engage also other confessions is unclear; his texts, full of Arabic terminology, must be an enigma for the average non-Muslim, and even for a non-

practicing Muslim reader. In fact, Valishin's style addresses only a very tiny audience: he takes for granted that the reader knows many Arabic terms and the contexts in which they are used. Below we give a glossary list of his terminology, with some suggestions about their linguistic origins and transformations.

Some expressions and ideas in the brochures have an obvious Tatar inclination: Valishin is speaking as a person of Tatar background. The author claims that today the Tatars have no religious scholars: "Those whom we regard as such are not suitable." This claim is obviously directed against representatives of the numerous Spiritual Administrations and Muftis who pretend to have religious authority, but who, according to Valishin, lack any serious grounding in Islamic scholarship. Some of his Russian expressions are one-to-one translations from the Tatar language and thus hardly understandable for a non-Tatar speaker; examples for these are *posviashchat' nagrađu* (meaning "to devote God's spiritual award for one's prayer or good deed to somebody else", coming from the Tatar *säväpne baghışblau*). Valishin repeatedly calls for a return to the sources (*istoki*), meaning native traditions of Islam, not any "foreign" teachings brought by Central Asian and Arab Wahhabis or by Turkic students whose appearance and behaviour is, he claims, far from what the Prophet commanded in his *sunna*.

Mirasism on a Local Scale

Through his Tatar identity in a Sufi colour, Valishin postulates an autochthonous continuity of the local Islamic tradition of Siberian Muslims from the pre-revolutionary period to the present. The success of the Islamic revival is portrayed as depending on the heritage of the ancestors.

This call has several dimensions. The first element is the ongoing revival of the veneration of sacred places (called *astana* in the local tradition), the number of which is indeed growing significantly in our days. Sacred places, the tombs of dignified persons are at the core of the currently emerging ethnic Siberian-Tatar tradition (as distinct from the Kazan Tatars) and of the regional Islamic identity, which are juxtaposed to foreign influences.

The second aspect that Valishin emphasizes is the value of old books, including manuscripts. Valishin claims that he spent several years reading old books in Turkic that he possessed, including *Ibadat-i Islamiyya* ("Islamic Worship") by the well-known Volga Tatar scholar, intellectual and Duma politician Ahmad-Hadi Maqsudi (Maksudov, 1868-1941).⁷ We know that the turn to the local written heritage in Novoat'ialovo had been initiated by the above-mentioned local imam Munir Biktimerov, who started to study the library of his father and grandfather. The history of local Sufis, their miracles and foreign contacts are of great importance for the new generation. People even start to produce oral hagiographies, in a process similar to that in modern Tajikistan: believers codify oral life stories about significant religious persons of Sufi background.⁸ This respect for Sufi saints of the past, and the belief in their miracles, is a central issue that distinguishes the rural areas (including in the North Caucasus) from city environments; in the absence of prestigious Islamic mosques and teaching institutions, Islamic tombs function as the topographical markers of Islamic identity, and hagiographies embody the ethnic or regional Islamic history.⁹

Valishin justifies his turn to Naqshbandi Sufism through a reference to the Islamic past of Novoat'ialovo: As Munir Biktimerov's grandfather Niyaz Baqī b. Biktimer was already a respected Naqshbandi Sufi sheikh in the village, the villagers of today should again link up with this Sufi brotherhood. But where to get the *silsila* from, the marker of Sufi legitimacy? Valishin solved this problem by claiming he established ties with the prominent Daghestani sheikh Said-Afandi Chirkeevskii, the hero of our previous case study, and that he entered the

⁷ This book was republished in the late-Soviet Tatarstan: A. Maksudi, *Gyibadate islamiia* (Kazan', 1990) and is still used at religious schools.

⁸ Stephane A. Dudoignon, "From Revival to Mutation: the Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan, from De-Stalinization to Independence (1955-91)," in: *Central Asian Survey* 30.1 (March 2011), 53-80.

⁹ A.J. Frank, "Islamic Shrine Catalogues and Communal Geography in the Volga-Ural Region: 1788-1917," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7.2 (1996), 278-284; A.J. Frank, *Islamic Historiography and 'Bulgar' Identity among the Tatar and Bashkirs of Russia* (Leiden, Boston, Köln), 1998; B. Privratsky, *Muslim Turkestan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory* (Richmond, 2001).

Naqshbandiyya (khalidiyya) mahmudiyya) brotherhood in its Daghestani conjunction with the Shadhiliyya. In his last years Valishin was the most experienced Sufi in Novoat'ialovo. He spent much time studying and propagating the Daghestani Shadhiliya textbooks and small brochures, and won new followers of the Sufi path whom he gave simple starting assignments (*vird*), mostly comprising the recitation of short suras and other prayers (*istighfar*, *salawat*). That is, in fact he appropriated for himself the position of a Sufi shaykh, although most probably he himself was just a murid of Said-Afandi (or of one of the latter's disciples) and never obtained any written Sufi "diploma" (*ijaza*) that would have made him a sheikh in his own right. Valishin also supported the veneration of holy shrines, as an important part of the re-emerging local Sufi practice in Siberia.

Valishin's style is a curious mix of Russian patriotism, expressions from the jargon of the mass-media, and influences of Christian terminology, Tatar nationalism, and Sufism. It lacks any academic influences, which reflects the fact that Valishin had no university education; according to his own words he "did not read any book over the last five years except Qur'an."¹⁰ His texts reveal only a limited familiarity with literary Russian. The author turns this into a plus when he confesses, quite in the Sufi tradition, of his ignorance and lack of education – not only in Islamic matters, but also in secular issues.

Apparent are a few borrowings from the Russian lexicon of the Orthodox church: *Gospod'* for God, *brat'ia i sestry* for "brothers and sisters", *sekta* for 'unlawful' dimensions in Islam, "congregation" (*prikhozhane*) for the Islamic community, and *dukhovenstvo* for representatives of official Islamic institutions (Muftiates). Some of these words seem to be borrowed from Christian and even atheist brochures that Valishin told us he had read in former times. However, the name of God is mostly rendered as Allah or *Vsevyshnii* (*the Highest*), Satan is Iblis (not *D'iavol* or *Satana*), and the angel Jabrail is not converted into Gavriil.

In what follows we would like to give a translation of Valishin's bigger brochure, with some additions from the smaller one. After that we give a list of

¹⁰ See a fragment of interview with Valishin by a journalist L. Ereemeeva in her "Bratstvo drevnego sela," in: Protalina 3-4 (Ekaterinburg, 2010). Online: http://www.protalina.com/num_3_4_10/eremeeva.htm. Last visited: 25.05.2012.

the Islamic expressions that are so characteristic for Valishin's discourse; this list might be useful for analysing the language of other texts of Russian Muslims. We close this chapter with a comparison of Valishin's style with a fragment from a sermon by a Salafi scholar, Abu Maryam, to show the linguistic similarities "across the battle lines".

Valishin's brochures have no division into paragraphs; in order to provide a better orientation for the reader we introduced such paragraphs. Valishin uses a multitude of Arabic terms in his text, often with a capital letter (e.g. Nafs), sometimes in quotation marks ("tarikah"). We render these words not in the Russian transliteration but in the simplified academic English transcription of the Arabic; at the same time we do not put Arabic terms in italics but preserve the manner in which Valishin presents the terms, with capital letters or quotation marks.

Text 1.

Public Organization of Muslims "Ikhsan"
The "Shirkachi-Bidagatchiki" – Who Are They?
Renovators of Islam or Its Destroyers?!

"This is My direct way. Follow it and do not follow other ways, because they will bring you away from His path." [Quran,] Sura 6, verse 143.

Valishin Rafail Vil'karovich, Spiritual Leader of the "Ikhsan" Movement
(intended as a guide for those who strive to obtain Almighty Allah's satisfaction)
[Ialutorovsk, Tiumen' region, 2010/2011]

[1:] I am seeking the help of Allah, the Merciful, against Satan, the cursed.¹¹ Praise be to Allah, who created us as Muslims and made us happy by this, giving us iman¹² – the treasure in this and the next world! Blessings and prayers to His Habib¹³ Muhammad, s.a.s.¹⁴ Allah created him out of His Nur¹⁵ and then made

¹¹ [This phrase is written in the Arabic language in Cyrillic-script transliteration.]

¹² [Faith.]

¹³ [Beloved.]

out of this Nur everything on earth! [We are] from the umma¹⁶ of Muhammad, s.a.s., who was born, lived and died with the words: "My umma, my umma!" He will make shafaat¹⁷ for Muslims on the Day of Judgement. His shafaat will help some to escape from punishment, and for others it will be a chance to obtain higher positions in the Heaven. Some [people] will be carried to Hell by angels of punishment, with their faces down in order to avoid that Muhammad – s.a.s. – recognizes them and intercedes for them. May Allah save us from this fate of the unlucky ones. When Allah, the Greatest and Almighty, cursed Iblis, the latter asked for a postponement and [also] received it (postponement). After that Iblis swore before the Almighty that he will always mislead the descendants of Adam, a.s., from the path of obeying Allah the Almighty. Then He the Almighty replied: "I gave them [the opportunity] to make tauba¹⁸ and I will always accept it! They will commit sins and then repent, and I will forgive them. Later they will commit sins and repent again, and I will forgive them again! Truly, My forgiveness is eternal for my slaves (raby).¹⁹ I will accept their repenting until their last breath. I will forgive anybody whom I want, even if he will not repent [before his death]." This is more or less how this conversation took place between Allah and the cursed Iblis. Dear brothers and sisters, give this a thought: what a happiness to be from among the umma of Muhammad, s.a.s. A person whose tauba was accepted will be innocent like a baby that just came to this world! Who says "I am asking for God's forgiveness. He is the only God. He is the Everlasting and I repent before Him"²⁰ (according to some versions this should be repeated three times), all sins of this person will be forgiven, even if he is full of sins as a desert is full of sand, as a sea is full of foam, or as the sky is full of stars... There are many ayats of the Almighty Allah and hadiths of the Prophet, s.a.s., about tauba, there is no

¹⁴ [Thus in the text (abbreviation for *salla Allah 'alayhi wa-sallama*).]

¹⁵ [A divine light.]

¹⁶ [Community.]

¹⁷ [I.e., intercede on behalf of someone.]

¹⁸ [I.e., to repent.]

¹⁹ [In Arabic the term *'abd* means "slave" but is also used for a servant of Allah.]

²⁰ [This phrase is written in Arabic language transcribed in the Cyrillic-script.]

need for further argumentation. Also there is much evidence against the polemics whom Allah turned away from.

It is said: “Nobody can mislead [a person] whom Allah guides on the path of truth (put’ istiny); and a person whom Allah has brought onto the path of erring (put’ zabluzhdeniia) cannot be led back onto the path of the truth except by Him.” I am asking You for protection from Your anger, because You are the Forgiver! Your forgiveness comes faster than Your anger. Guide us on Your path, and not the path of those on whom You are angry! I testify that there is no Allah except Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger!²¹ Please accept my shahadat,²² because no words have more worth on the scales! Please accept my salavats²³ on the Prophet Muhammad, s.a.s., who first pronounced them and then ordered us to repeat them, promising for this deed ten blessings from his own side [in turn]! All praise to You, who blessed our beloved Prophet, s.a.s., with the mi’raj²⁴ and with a conversation with Himself, who presented us the five-time namaz²⁵! I have no worthy words to praise You and this is the only reason that I praise You so little!

Today we are living in a time where we are overcome by human sins, where piety ceased to exist except in the [old] books! In our lives we have become similar to people who are living on a dung-heap and who do not even notice the dirt on themselves and on their neighbors. They do not feel the stink around them. This is the time when Muslims show more mercy to the corpse of a dog than to a believer (*veruiushchii*). They hate the believer who is calling them to [do what is] approved (*odobriaemoe*),²⁶ and they are trying to liquidate him even by murder. The time has come when those who earn their living illegally became examples to be imitated, and some Muslims regard stealing as [only] a small sin. Probably they compare it to what others have stolen. Those who [2:] are trying to live correctly

²¹ [This phrase is written in Arabic language transcribed in the Cyrillic-script.]

²² [The testimony of Allah’s unity and Muhammad’s prophethood.]

²³ [*salawat*, pl. of *salat*, Arab. “prayer”.]

²⁴ [The heavenly journey of Muhammad referred to in the Quran; here the Tatar version *migradzh*.]

²⁵ [The five daily prayers.]

²⁶ [A reference to *al-amr bi l-ma’ruf wa l-nahy ‘an al-munkar* – A call for good and rejection of evil.]

are regarded [by such Muslims] as unbelievers (*neveruiushchii*), and they hate them more than Iblis. It is not surprising therefore that the youth in the Northern Caucasus is going into the forests and mountains,²⁷ while here in Central Russia they are uniting in anti-state sects (*antigosudarstvennye sekty*). Both of these groups regard the war against their own Fatherland (*Rodina*) as "jihad" (holy war).²⁸ This is our difficult time, the time of Jahiliyya.²⁹ Those who call for killing are seen as correct, while those who call for obedience to the shari'at and for its study are called infidels (*nevernye*), and sometimes they are sentenced³⁰ to be killed.

Illiterates who have studied Arabic only to the slightest degree are making shari'a judgements. People forgot that lying about Allah and His Prophet, s.a.s., can take [the person] out of Islam and certainly leads to misguidance (*zabluzhdenie*). People who did not even study [the book] The Basics of Islam [*Osnovy Islama*], not even in its shortened version (*Mukhtasar*), are explaining the ayats of Allah the Almighty and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, s.a.s., as if it was a child book with pictures that children explain. For those people Muhammad, s.a.s., is [just] a man, while the Imams of theology [*bogoslovie*] and Islamic law are simply nothing [to them], because those people regard themselves as great Imams. How can an illiterate be equal to respected Imams?! In a well-known hadith it is said: "A person in white cloth came closer to us... He asked Muhammad, s.a.s., about iman, about Islam and about ihsan."³¹ The Prophet Muhammad, s.a.s., answered him. On the next day Muhammad, s.a.s., asked his ashab³²: Do you know who that was yesterday? They could not answer. Then Muhammad, s.a.s., said that it was Jabrail, a.s., he came to teach you Religion." This is very popular hadith, there is no need to cite it fully, but I would say: iman, Islam and ihsan together constitute the religion of Islam.

²⁷ [In order to join the militants.]

²⁸ [This translation belongs to Valishin.]

²⁹ [Jahiliyya, the period of ignorance before the revelation of Islam.]

³⁰ [Meaning here: by the 'Wahhabis'.]

³¹ [In Arabic ihsan means perfection and excellence. In the religious context it is applied to perfection of worship and spiritual qualities.]

³² [Companions.]

There is no religion in parts: either everything or nothing! Iman is given by Allah the Highest to his slave (*rab*) due to His mercy, and he pronounces the shahadat: "I testify that there is no God except of God and I testify that Muhammad is His slave and Prophet."³³ This is how one is becoming a Muslim due to the mercy of Allah! Again, due to His mercy after the death of Muhammad, s.a.s., the great Imams of theology, in order to keep religion free from distortion (*iskazhenie*) in the field of iman, wrote books on theology. Since then we have two madhhabs (*mazkhaby*) of theology, the madhhab of Ash'ari³⁴ and the school of Imam Maturidi. The Muslims of the ahl-i sunna³⁵ adhere to one of these two madhhabs in the field of theology. We, the Hanafis, are following Imam Maturidi, while the Shafi'is are following Imam Ash'ari. To make this clear I would like to give examples of misguidance: some people after having read the ayats of Allah understand them literally. This produced [in them] the idea that Allah is [indeed situated] in the sky, sitting on the throne, moving in the sky – in general they are talking heresies (*eres'*). According to the creed (*ubezhdenie*) of the ahl-i sunna, people of this creed are not Muslims, and none of their good deeds (*blagoe deianie*) will be accepted [by Allah]. This is, dear brothers and sisters, the creed of the ahl-i sunna. You see how easy one can fall out of Islam. Another example: if someone said to another person, [you are a] kafir,³⁶ you have no Iman, or he accuses him of shirk³⁷, then one of them is an unbeliever. Sometimes people wish each other that they die as an infidel, but then the one who wanted the unbelief of another will die in unbelief.

I am writing all of this in order to persuade Muslims to follow the madhhabs. One cannot attribute to the Almighty attributes and qualities (*atributy i kachestva*) which do not belong to Him! May Allah the Almighty keep us from attributing untrue characteristics to Him and His Prophet, s.a.s.! May Allah keep

³³ [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription.]

³⁴ [Here: Ashgari, in Tatar pronunciation.]

³⁵ ["Muslims who follow the Sunna".]

³⁶ [Here: kafer, "infidel".]

³⁷ [Idolatry.]

Your umma free from people who are following their own fantasies instead of the madhhab!

Dear brothers and sisters, the shahadat is a most valuable [treasure]. Who pronounced it becomes a Muslim. Nowadays [2:] many smart alecks appeared who say that those who do not perform the namaz cannot be counted as Muslims. According to ahl-i sunna, once you pronounce the shahadat, you are a Muslim. Those who do not agree with this are non-believers themselves. Dear brothers and sisters, be careful whom you follow, otherwise instead of the religion of Allah you get a religion of Satan! Islam is shahadat, namaz, fasting, zakat and hajj. The shahadat belongs to the field of iman, while the rest is from the field of worship (*poklonenie*). Probably all of you know the famous hadiths saying that if you are stroking the head of an orphan, this is [already counted as an act of] sadaqa,³⁸ and also working for the maintenance of the family is [an act of] worship... There are many similar hadiths. I give here only well-known hadiths in order to escape from polemics. Many do not know even such hadiths, so why do they even open their mouths? Everything connected to the life of a person from his birth to his death belongs to the field of worshipping, if he is obeying Islamic law. Our best scholars worked in the field of Islamic law. They made the performance of worshipping easy for us, as it is said: "make easy, do not make complicated." In so doing they closed the door for munafiqs³⁹ for misinterpretations of Islam. Their books were called "Fiqh" ("a deep understanding of religion"), and today there are four madhhab of fiqh: Imam Hanafi, Imam Shafi'i, Imam Malik and Imam Ahmad [ibn Hanbal]. We should follow one of these schools in order not to be among the misguided.

Who wants to be misguided should follow the way of his "ego" [*"ia"*] (Nafs).⁴⁰ When God created the Nafs, He asked it: "Who am I, and who are you?" the Nafs answered: "I am I and you are you." Then Allah the Almighty punished it and even placed it in Hell (*Ad*), but still Nafs answered: "I am I and you are you." Only [3:] after keeping it hungry Allah got the answer: "You are my Lord, and I

³⁸ [Alms giving.]

³⁹ [Hypocrites.]

⁴⁰ [Ego, soul.]

am your slave!” In this story Allah showed us the weak place of our Nafs, but this is of course only for those who are able to think (*razumnye*). Those who will follow the madhhabs will be saved [on the Day of Judgement], and the fate of the rest, who think that they are equal to the great Imams, is well known, if they will not do tauba.⁴¹ Those who do not follow the madhhabs are like chicken without parents and owner. How many of them will still be alive by autumn?!

Here we come to ihsan, which is a condition of the believer’s soul (*dusha*) that always feels the presence of Allah Almighty even though it does not see Him. Is it possible that such a person does something wrong?! It is said: “A Muslim is the one who shall not do harm to others, but a Muslim is the one whose harm does not instil fear in others.”⁴² In the field of ihsan there are also madhhabs, we call them Tariqat, which comes from the word “way”, “way to Allah Almighty”. Dear brothers and sisters, this is Sufism! Sufi Sheikhs have special knowledge. They know what Nafs is and they guide their murids (students) on the way of understanding the nafs. It is said: “Who understands the nafs, knows Allah.” There have always been people who reject the wali of Allah.⁴³ But know: those who display enmity towards the wali of Allah, on this person Allah declares war (*voinu*)! It is hardly possible that such a person will die as a Muslim.

Muhammad, s.a.s., said: “Be scholars! If you cannot, be students of scholars! If you cannot do this, respect and love these people, but do not be from the fourth group who are their enemies!” The people of tariqat, the people of worship! They preferred their Creator to all creations. Muhammad, s.a.s., was the best in worship. He prayed so long that his legs swelled. He prayed even though he had already been forgiven! He, the beloved of Allah Almighty, gave an example of worship! One of the holy hadiths (*sviashchennyi khadis*) reads as follows: “I give the hardest difficulties to my prophets, then to their followers and then to their followers.” This dunya⁴⁴ is created for suffering. Here are cold, hunger, and deceases. Here are wars and torments, but by some reason we still like this Dunya,

⁴¹ [Ask forgiveness.]

⁴² [The meaning of this sentence is not clear.]

⁴³ [Arab., the friends of God, a common expression for Sufis.]

⁴⁴ [The material world.]

[4:] but not the Akhirat,⁴⁵ where everything is eternal: eternal felicity due to the mercy of the Merciful, and eternal punishment due to the justice of the Just. The Holy and Great said: "Would I not deserve worship, if I had not created Heaven and Hell?!" Are these words not sufficient for those who are able to think?! This is why Sufis think that worship for [the goal of reaching] Paradise or because of fear of Hell is shirk. Sufis are worshipping in order to gain the satisfaction (*dovol'stvo*) of Allah Almighty, because of love for Allah. This worship is the pure worship devoted to Allah! However, this type of worship is unreachable for an insincere person. If such a person has just a small drop of an "ego" [*ia*], he will not be able to completely enter the condition of Ihsan. But there is no worship without Ihsan! This is the reason why Muhammad, s.a.s., transmitted the knowledge of batin⁴⁶ to his ashab. Indeed it was the sahaba who established Sufism, i.e. the study of the conditions of the human soul in order to achieve the condition of Ihsan. As a result, if our critics are living in this condition of Ihsan, then they are obliged to point at our mistakes, or even better they should live in a full subjugation to Allah Almighty and to teach it to others. But today they are busy with forbidding many types of worship to Allah. They are rejecting Sheikhs, trying to mislead Muslims.

The most regrettable is that they easily succeeded in this, because of the total [religious] ignorance of our [people]. A wise person said: "Which scholar is satisfied with himself, and which illiterate is not?!" Dear brothers and sisters, think about these words! Allah willing,⁴⁷ it is useful for you. It is said that the umma of the Muslims will be divided in seventy-three divisions, and only one will be saved [from Hell]. Can you imagine that the munafiqs will be saved, while the walis of Allah will go to Hell?! Think about it a bit. There have always been enemies of Islam, they are still there and will be there all the time! But the worst of them are the munafiqs and the worst munafiqs are those who claim that they are ahl-i sunna, whereas the [real] Muslims they call mushriks⁴⁸ and

⁴⁵ [The next world.]

⁴⁶ [Here: batyn; the concealed.]

⁴⁷ [Inshallakh.]

⁴⁸ [Infidels.]

bidagatchiks.⁴⁹ Under the pretext of struggling for the purification of Islam they are fighting against the whole Islamic heritage (*nasledie*). These illiterate even forbid the raising of the hands for a prayer (*mol'ba*). They are forbidding Takbir⁵⁰ and Salavat.⁵¹

They forbid the veneration of graves of pious persons (*pravednye liudi*), they forbid even what Muhammad, s.a.s., allowed. They are illiterates who do not know basics of Islam, they do not know that everything what is not forbidden is allowed. When you tell them something that does not fit into their narrow mind, they ask for a dalil⁵² without understanding that they themselves are a dalil, due to their ignorance and ambition. Is it not better for all of us to study Islam [first]?! This can prevent debates, and enemies of Allah will not so easily be able to lead Muslims away from religion. Why would you show yourself a learned person?! Anyway, the lie will be revealed! Dear brothers and sisters! We have very little knowledge (*znaniia*), this is the reason why these shirkachi-bidagatchiki grow insolent. Still we know at least something. Let us oppose those wits, even on the basis of our limited knowledge!

For example, this is a well-known hadith: "Everybody [will receive] according his intention."⁵³ Hence we can analyze and listen to our hearts in order to distinguish between Truth and Lie. This way we can recognize lying and truthful people. It is said: "An hour of thought is better than seventy years of worship!" Dear brothers and sisters, think about it! Even with small knowledge we can live piously. According to the holy hadith, "A small burden is easier for your spine than a bigger one." Is it not better to live according to our modest knowledge and think deeply, than to be like a donkey loaded with books?! We will be held responsible for this burden! Is it not obvious that one should be in line with one's knowledge. The true scholar (*uchenyi*) is the one who is living according his [5:] knowledge. The true knowledge helps to live piously, i.e. to observe your own

⁴⁹ [Unlawful innovators in religion.]

⁵⁰ [Praising of Allah.]

⁵¹ [Blessing.]

⁵² [A proof.]

⁵³ [Intention.]

Nafs, but not your neighbour. This is what Sufi sheikhs are teaching us! The people of the dhikr⁵⁴ carefully fulfil all the prescriptions of shariat. They move away not only from forbidden things (*zapretnoe*), but they also move away from what is allowed (*razreshennoe*) [because this] can lead to doing things that are not recommended (*nezhelatel'noe*). They think about the responsibility⁵⁵ beforehand and take the responsibility for themselves. It is said: "Be responsible for yourself before you will give responsibility [to Allah]." It is also said: "Who is laughing when doing a sin will enter Hell crying. Who is crying while repenting, will enter Paradise laughing." What can be better before Allah than the cry of a sinner who is afraid that Allah can turn away from him?! This is what tariqat sheikhs⁵⁶ are teaching us! This is why those munafiqs are slandering us, the followers of Sufism.

Now I will tell you, dear brothers and sisters, something about what the murids of the Shadhili tariqa are busy with. The Shadhiliya is the easiest way to Allah the Greatest. Sheikhs of this tariqat gently (*s miagkost'iu*) teach certain types of dhikr to people who are immersed in worldly affairs. They are putting only a small load on beginners [of the Way]. A murid, spending several minutes a day, is taught to be in a worshipping condition, i.e. to be together with his Creator! A student repeats the shahada three times. Is it not said that [the shahada] is the thing that weighs most heavily on the scales?! Is it not a happiness for the believer?! After that he makes tauba⁵⁷: "I am asking for God's forgiveness. He is the only God. He is the Everlasting and I repent before Him"⁵⁸ for a hundred, three hundred, five hundred or seven hundred times. After that he makes a du'a:⁵⁹ *Ilahi anta maqsudi wa-ridaka matlubi* ["O my Lord, you are my goal, your satisfaction is my desire."⁶⁰] Is not this the goal of our life?! After that he makes a salavat on the Prophet⁶¹, s.a.s.: *Allahumma salli 'ala sayyidina Muhammadin*

⁵⁴ [The people of God's remembrance, i.e. Sufis; here: *Liudi zikra*.]

⁵⁵ [*Otchet*, here: to Allah.]

⁵⁶ [In the original: *tarikatskie sheikhi*, Sufi Sheikhs.]

⁵⁷ [Is repenting to Allah.]

⁵⁸ [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription.]

⁵⁹ [Here: *dua*, the invocation of Allah.]

⁶⁰ [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription.]

⁶¹ [In original: *Chitaet salavat na Proroka s.a.s.*]

*abdika wa-nabiyka wa-rasulika nabiyi al-ummi wa-'ala alihi wa-sahbihi wa-sallim*⁶² ["O Lord, praise upon our Master Muhammad, your slave and prophet, the illiterate messenger and [praise] his family and his companions"] (and this^{also} one hundred, three hundred, five hundred or seven hundred times). After that he repeats the du'a: *Ilahi anta maqsudi wa-ridaka matlubi* ["O my Lord, you are my Goal, your satisfaction is my desire."].⁶³ And then: [he is repeating a formula] "There is not God except Allah"⁶⁴ a hundred times and then adds: "Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, may God praise him" (also one hundred, three hundred, five hundred or seven hundred times). [Then he makes a prayer:] "O my Lord, you are my Goal, your satisfaction is my desire."⁶⁵ After that he is devoting the award [of his prayer] (*posviashchaet nagrady*) to all Teachers [*Uchitelia*] up to the Prophet Muhammad, s.a.s. This wurd⁶⁶ is to be repeated twice a day.

Now, dear brothers and sisters, compare yourselves with the people of the dhikr! Who is really pious: you or the murids [of Sufi sheikhs]? The answer is obviously not in your favor. Even without much knowledge it is possible to compare and understand where the truth is. Do you think that Allah will guide lying and greedy people on the way of His mercy? Can one trust people who are swallowed by the aim to gather money, and who do not pay attention to halal and haram? Can one trust people who are not able to tell the truth (*pravda*)? Was it not ordered to you to follow the pious?! Is the Paradise promised to devious people as an award for their infamy?! Is the Hell promised for the pious as an award for their piety?! Think about it, dear brothers and sisters! Human pride is caused only by man's ignorance. Ignorance is like humus for the growing of our sins! It is said: "Which scholar is satisfied with himself and which illiterate is not?!" Complacent illiterates join the enemies of Allah and fight with the whole heritage (*nasledie*) of Islam! For them everything is shirk and bid'a [here: *bidagat*] except for their fantasies. If you listen to them they are saying controversial things

⁶² [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription without a translation.]

⁶³ [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription.]

⁶⁴ [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription.]

⁶⁵ [This phrase is written in Arabic through Cyrillic transcription.]

⁶⁶ [Exercise.]

within just several minutes! Just listen to them a bit carefully. They are blaming Muslims of shirk, though even in their booklets they are citing a hadith which says the following: "I am not afraid that my umma will practice shirk, I am afraid that they will fall into small shirk [6:] (showing off [*pokazukha*]). If there was the danger that Muslims leave their religion in masses, would this not be mentioned in the hadiths. The fact that Muslims are infected by showing off is obvious. But there is a cure (*lechenie*) for this, this is Ihsan (Sufism). The Sufi Sheikhs are exactly the specialists in the field of healing this disease!

There are hadiths: "The body has an organ which causes pain in the whole body if it is infected. This is the heart." "When a person is committing a sin, a small spot appears on his heart. If he repents, the spot will disappear. If he continues committing new sins, the spot will grow until it covers the whole heart." Even if there would be no specialists in the heart healing, it would still be a fard⁶⁷ for us to seek a means for healing this disease! Dear Muslims, look at the ayat number 36 of Sura number 5: "O believers, be afraid of Allah and seek means and ways to get closer to Him." Does this Ayat not order to search for coming closer to Allah? Are there better means than to follow in the steps of pious people?! Dear brothers and sisters! We should do everything with a pure intention. In this case even the booklets of munafiqs will not cause as much harm as they do now. All troubles result from the condition of our hearts. If our intention is to distinguish ourselves among the people, to be famous as a scholar, even the best books of pious people will not be useful, even to the contrary. All deeds should be performed only for the sake of Allah's satisfaction, but not for the sake of feeding one's nafs. Do you not see that today such terrible diseases as showing off and self-satisfaction became widespread? The sign of these diseases is very simple and obvious: when somebody is praising you, your satisfaction is growing; when somebody is abusing you, you are getting angry or injured; [after this,] when you pray, you are getting distracted from Allah. Are not we, Muslims, obliged to fight with these diseases?! It is impossible that Allah the Almighty and His Prophet, s.a.s., let us be without guidance. We have a continuous chain of

⁶⁷ [Mandatory.]

Teachers (*tsep' Uchitelei*) up to Muhammad, s.a.s. Today some smart alecks who, while accepting Sufism in their words, are preventing others from entering this way, or even stop some stupid murids from fulfilling the dhikrs given by their ustadhes, giving nothing instead except for moving away from Allah the Almighty. This is the "benefit" that these Muslims bring to their brothers and sisters in religion. In this brochure I do not want to correct the disputants, otherwise one could give more ayats and hadiths. I doubt that this would be useful, for it is more probable that an arrow will fly back to its shooter than that a disputant will turn to the truth!

Also the munafiqs are forbidding the tawassul (intercession [*posrednichestvo*]).⁶⁸ Here it is probably better to answer through the words of a scholar of the followers of the Sunna. According to a brochure by Magomedov A.A., *Tavassul' (Posrednichestvo)* (Makhachkala: "Nurul' Irshad", 2009), tawassul is a request (*pros'ba*) or turn to Allah through the mediation of the Prophet, s.a.s., or through a companion (*spodvizhnik*), or through a good person or through a good deed, in the conviction that only Allah is giving and taking the good deeds (*blaga*). The requesting person is also convinced that the intermediary is a slave of Allah, just as is the one who is asking through this intermediary, but Allah the Almighty gifted the former with dignity (*dostoinstvo*) which increase chances that the prayer finds acceptance. This is the definition [of the] followers of the Sunna. Here comes the answer of another scholar from Saudi Arabia, from the same brochure: "The great expert in hadith and other Islamic sciences, the descendant of the Prophet, s.a.s., Imam Muhammad b. Alawi is saying in his lecture "Mafhum yajibu an tusahhah" ["A concept that needs correction"]: "The question of intermediary is not a topic that can be disputed to such a degree that [7:] somebody puts the labels of infidelity or misguidance on somebody else. Among the scholars of the whole world there is no dispute whether this question belongs to the category of halal or haram, but [rather] if it belongs to the category of 'aqida."⁶⁹ This means that somebody who made a mistake in this question is not

⁶⁸ [Intermediation.]

⁶⁹ [Which means: it is a legal issue that does not touch upon the question whether a Muslim has a correct faith or not.]

becoming an unbeliever or a polytheist. He just made a mistake, or in the worst case he committed a sin." Who has at least a minimum amount of spiritual knowledge will have no doubt about this. This is what a scholar from Saudi Arabia says. I have been to Medina, in the mosque of the Prophet, s.a.s. I prayed several times there, turning my face to the grave of Muhammad, s.a.s. Only some Wahhabis disturbed my prayer, saying that I was doing something haram, but nobody said that this was shirk. By contrast, our shirkachi-bidagatchiki are even overtaking those Arab Wahhabis. I am citing from the abovementioned book [by Magomedov]: "There has almost always been a mediator between Allah and His slave. There are many proofs for this, for example the intermediation of the Angel Jabrail between Allah and His prophets. This is the will of Allah, and a Muslim who has belief in his heart will not dare to oppose it. [This is] the mediation of prophets, companions and other scholars who transmitted the Islamic religion to us, though Allah himself could have disseminated His religion among the slaves.

All Muslims, when praying, are turning their faces to Mecca, and we also should at least once in our life-time perform the hajj. When doing the hajj we are obliged to perform seven circles around the Ka'ba. It is also prescribed to kiss, if possible, the hajrat al-aswad [the Black Stone].⁷⁰ It is desirable to perform a two-rak'a prayer behind the maqam⁷¹ of Ibrahim. These are inanimate creations of Allah which we are glorifying and which are means of getting awards from and satisfaction of Allah. This is only because Allah elevated [these items] Himself. Nobody from among the Muslims would ever regard them (the Ka'ba, the hajrat al-aswad, the maqam of Ibrahim) as gods, and those who do so are certainly falling into unbelief. We should know that the dignity of the prophets, of the companions, of the awliya'⁷² and sheikhs, i.e. the closest people to Allah, are more dignified than the Ka'ba and the other objects mentioned above, because the prophets are the chosen favourites (*liubimtsy*) of Allah. The companions were

⁷⁰ [Here: *khazbratul' asvad*.]

⁷¹ [Literally: place. The Maqam Ibrahim is a standing place of the Prophet Ibrahim close to the Ka'ba.]

⁷² [Pl. of Arabic *wali*, "friend"[of Allah].]

celebrated by Allah and His Messenger, s.a.s. In a holy hadith⁷³ Allah tells us about His awliya', i.e. sheikhs: "Who will fight with my awliya', to that person I will declare war!" Dear brothers and sisters, let us make tauba as long as it is not yet too late. Do not be led by munafiqs and do not slander the followers of Sufism. Is it not better to join us?! Muhammad, s.a.s, said: "Be scholars! If you cannot, be students of scholars! If you cannot do this neither, then respect and love these people, but do not belong to the fourth group (who are their enemies)!" Who is more knowledgeable and pious than the Sufi sheikhs?! In Islam a scholar is the one who knows Islam and who lives according to his knowledge, i.e. piously. Dear brothers and sisters, you should know that who fights the wali of Allah does not die as a Muslim. People used to ask for Muhammad's (s.a.s.) mediation even before he was born. This was revealed in a true hadith (*dostovernyi khadis*): "When Adam, a.s., committed an offense, he said: "O Lord, I am asking your forgiveness in the name of Muhammad's dignity!" Then the Highest answered: "O Adam, how do you know about Muhammad whom I did not yet create?" Adam, a.s., said: "O Lord, when You created me by Your Might, and when you gave me [8:] my soul, I raised my head and saw an inscription on the columns of the Arsh⁷⁴: "No God (*bozhestvo*) except Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger." Thus I learned that You write next to Your name only the name of the best of the creations." Then Allah said: "What you said is true, he (s.a.s.) is indeed the best from among all creations. Ask me through his mediation. I forgave you, and if there was no Muhammad I would not have created you."

If asking Allah is shirk, then how could the prophet Adam, as., perform shirk, and how could Allah, a.s., call upon Adam, a.s., to do shirk? Let us now take from the Quran, Sura al-Baqara, ayat 89. Ibn 'Abbas, the great interpreter of the Quran, Muhammad's cousin and companion, said: "When the Jewish tribes were repeatedly defeated by the Arabs in battles, they used to say: "O Allah, we are asking You through the mediation of Muhammad, s.a.s, whom You promised to

⁷³ [In the original: *khadisu kudsi*. This category of hadith includes elements of Allah's speech that have not been included in the Quran.]

⁷⁴ [Arabic '*arsh*', "Throne".]

send us when the Day of Judgement will be close, to give us the victory!" Ibn 'Abbas continues: "When they asked Allah in this form they gained the victory."

Do the "shirkach-bidagatchiki" have better knowledge of Islam than Ibn 'Abbas, or than Adam, a.s., and even better knowledge than Allah the Highest Himself?!⁷⁵ Some of them are even accusing Muslims for just saying "O Prophet!" or "O sheikh!" They refer to true hadiths of the Prophet, s.a.s., which they however interpret incorrectly. For example: "al-du'a huwa al-'ibada".⁷⁶ They also refer to ayats from the Quran that were wrongly translated, for example the Sura The Jinns, Ayat 18. They are translating the word du'a in this hadith and in this ayat as an invocation (*vzyvanie*), and the meaning of the ayat in their interpretation amounts to the following: "Do not invoke somebody besides Allah," while the meaning of the hadith is in reality "Invocation is worship." Judging from this incorrect translation, they are thinking that the person who is asking somebody else but Allah is an infidel. In this case, everybody who calls upon somebody else will become an unbeliever. For example, if I would exclaim "O reader", then I will be become an infidel in their opinion. When they understand that this translation is absolutely unacceptable, then they make limitations and accept only the interpretation that comes from their own mouths, but not those of trusted sources and scholars. They say: "If there is a worldly matter, then the invocation is permitted, while in the matters concerning worship and the Akhirat any invocation is forbidden." But what if I say: "Dear brother, please help me to learn a Quranic verse." This is not a worldly matter. Am I an infidel in case of asking my brother Muslim to help me learning the Quran?! In this case they are inventing (they do not refer to any source) some answer which legitimatizes their position in this question, in a similar way how they are misinterpreting the hadith referred to above, and the verse. They are able to do everything only to show that they are right. Therefore for these people the hadiths

⁷⁵ [In another version the following text is added here: "In our village Novoat'ialovo people give alms (*daiut sadaka*) for the soul of a pious person named Kuliup Babay, the student of Baha'addin Naqshband. Others accuse our people of direct invocation to Kuliup Babay."]

⁷⁶ [Here in the not very correct Cyrillic transcription: *addugai khual' gibada*; "Invocation is worship."]

and verses are not an example for the truth which could serve as a basis for scholarship, but a means to be used for legitimization of their claims.

(...) [Here comes a long classification of human deeds according to Islamic law].

[10:] Often shirkachi-bidagatchiki are giving quotes of Imams of Islamic law in order to achieve their dirty goals. For example, "Imams suggested to follow Quran and Sunna if there will be a contradiction between their [decisions] and the Quran and Sunna of the Prophet, s.a.s." What can you say?!

Still, one should answer them, dear brothers and sisters, because many people are following this cheating of the Satan. Dear brothers and sisters, to make decisions one should have elementary knowledge in this area. Who dares to argue with this?! In order to get simple education we spend many years. Afterwards experienced specialists should spend time with students to train them. It is obvious that in order to know how to work one should have practice in the field. Only after this time there could be good specialists, though not from all of these students. Is not it obvious?! If so, why are these stupid people acting against the decisions of respected Imams?! The answer is that either they are enemies of Allah the Greatest or they are simply idiots! Do you think you can follow them?! When we are sitting in the public transport, we know that it goes in the right direction. Why do we follow in our religion only our fantasies and the strange people? In the books our blessed ancestors warned us against this behaviour. People who are following their fantasies are misguided (*zabludshie*) and some of them went out of Islam. Is it possible for somebody who goes to Hell to bring others to Paradise?! Munafiks and those idiots who follow them are denying everything what is good in Islam. How stupid can you be to follow them?! Please switch your minds on!

Were the great Islamic scholars, who spent their lives in Islamic studies and for the defence of Islam, ignorant about their religion, while these uneducated persons know it better?! Russia is today in a spiritual revival. They build mosques and people start to go to mosque. However there are still many problems with education. The Satan is using this, forcing Muslims, especially our youth, to do everything the other way around. [Young people] do not recognize tubeteika. They are very arrogant and they keep their legs [during the prayer] as if they are

new-born calves⁷⁷. They do it all only to be in opposition. This way we will soon have female Imams. It is quite possible, since they are already ruling in our houses! Let us fight our ego gradually! Let us be careful in our deeds, because there will be a great reward for doing fard, and a great punishment will be for those who ignore it.

(...)

The textbook *Gyibadat Islamiia* by Ahmadhadi Maqsudi became widely spread among our community. Our ancestors studied Islam with this book. Who does not have it, should buy it. There are many books today, because paper is cheap and we want to be famous scholars! [However] it is difficult to find the real Islamic book [11:] in an 'Islamic' bookstore. It is better to study Islam with tested books, because Islam is not a game. Everything what is counted as sunnat, should be regarded as *vajib* [on the scale of importance], because we are followers of the Sunna and have to live in accordance with the Sunna of the Prophet, s.a.s. Non-fulfilment of *vajib* seems to be not a big sin. However, dirt is collected through small dust in a similar way as a big fire can be caused by some splinters. Everything begins from something small. The big sins grow from committing small sins that do not seem to be dangerous.

Some people are against the rosary (*chetki*). Look at them and compare their behaviour with those people with rosary. Even small criminals intentionally wear a tiubeteika and take the rosary in their hands to cheat consumers on the market. Remember, everything starts from something small!

(...) [Follows an explanation of what the Sunna of the Prophet consists of.]

[12:] The enemies of Allah want to destroy Islam! They do not know that this Religion is defended by Allah the Highest. Islam is like a tree! Some time in Mecca Islam was a Sprout, in Medina it turned to a Seedling, in the time of 'Umar askhab [sic!] it became a young but strong and fructiferous Tree. In Mecca, in Medina and today here Islam is the same! Is it not clear?!⁷⁸ The enemies of Allah

⁷⁷ [This is a hint on the habit of the Salafis to place their legs widely when praying.]

⁷⁸ [Addenda in the other version: "Shirkachi-bidagatchiki reached an absolute stupidity in their fight with innovations. For example, Internet. Shirkachi-bidagatchiki are actively using it, while Internet

are intentionally sowing dissention among the Muslims. They are distorting Islam and trying to show it in a corrupted way. They want to cause hatred of the Divine Religion! They are doing it successfully through employing of stupid and corrupted Muslims. Gangsters (*bandity*), who are calling themselves mujahedin are helping them through the terror attacks against the civil population (*grazhdanskoe naselenie*). The enemies of Allah do not want the victory of Love and Justice on Earth. They do not want the spread of the Divine Religion! If we follow these hypocrites, all discoveries should be abolished altogether, including book production, telephone, television, Internet, everything what we do have today and what did not exist in the times of Muhammad, s.a.s.

(...)

[13:] Unfortunately, the teachers in Islamic educational institutions know this topic badly and hence they distort information. As a result, madrasa graduates cannot be distinguished from street thugs. Is it not clear to these teachers that there is no knowledge without good manners. A learned person follows adab. Is there a worse Muslim than a teacher who does not observe what he is teaching?!

Now I would like to proceed to the topic which is interesting above all for the youth. This is jihad. I will do my best to elucidate this topic. Jihad is a holy war on the way of Allah the Highest. As far as I know, there are two types of jihad: the great and small jihad. The great jihad is the fight against one's ego, while the small jihad is a fight against a foreign enemy. The great jihad is a prerogative of Sufis. The well-known hadith says: "We have returned from the small jihad to participate in a great jihad!" The companions asked, what is the great jihad. Muhammad, s.a.s., answered: "This is the fight against one's ego." Today our youth is concerned with the small jihad, i.e. the military fight against a foreign enemy. Before going into details I would like to tell you a story. In my childhood I read a book, as far as I remember, about the capture of Kazan by the Russians and about the forced Christianization of the peoples of the Volga region, mainly the Tatars. I clearly remember an advice given there by our ancestors. Somebody

is an innovation (*bidagat*). In the mosques they are reciting the Holy Quran for showing off, while the very book is an innovation, which did not exist in the times of Muhammad, s.a.s."]

asked what to do if a Christian state will suppress us? The answer was to tolerate it. On the question "what to do if they will forbid the prayer" another answer was given: "Leave the Fatherland, go elsewhere to be able to pray." I did not understand anything at that time, of course. [Several years ago] Wahhabis from the city of Riyadh in the Saudi Arabia arrived in Tiumen'. They taught their understanding of Islam. One of them gave a lecture about the methods of making decisions in Islamic law.

As it is known, they did not accept madhhabs and therefore used the method elaborated by Imam Ghazali, which is called, I believe, *istislah*, which means 'advantage'. This concept implies the arrangement of the following values: Iman, then life, mind, children and property of Muslims. This method explains the advice of our ancestors. We need reasons and [a suitable] environment to do something. Is there any reason to fight today? Who is suppressing whom? Who is abusing or robbing somebody? Is there any motivation to destroy our Fatherland (*Rodina*)? Let us compare the condition of Muslims in Islamic countries and in Russia. I have been to Saudi Arabia. It is an extremely rich country, probably because it is less corrupt than Russia. However, by some reasons they opened the mosques only for a short period of time for an obligatory prayer. Only central mosques are open all the time. Syria is also an Islamic country, but they have a similar order.

In Turkey it is even worse. The mosques in Turkey are big and beautiful, but they open them only for minutes, as the Arabs do. The mosque toilets are always open, but without a dollar you cannot get there. In Islamic educational institutions it is forbidden to wear Islamic cloth even for [14:] teachers. A graduate of a Turkish 'school' [in Russia] can be identified easily by a tie and an uncovered head. It is *adab*, according to our books, to cover the head, if there is somebody next to you. The condition of the mosques in Russia is also deplorable: no visitors (*prikhozhane*). The state spends a lot of money on building mosques, but we stubbornly do not go there and even say that the state spends more money on the building of churches than on mosques, forgetting that we have less Muslims in the country than Christians. Is it not better to educate ourselves?! Of course, one should be concerned, first of all, with one's self. This way the topic of

jihad will disappear. However, very few people are busy with self-perfection; the majority prefers to teach others in topics that are not in their competence. An ignoramus is teaching another ignoramus, while anti-Islamic sects are spreading under the label of Islam.

Each activity requires respected conditions; otherwise somebody will get profit from the idiocy of Muslims, while we are receiving only enmity of almost the whole world including the ethnic Muslims (*etnicheskie musul'mane*). Our youth is destroying itself. Our people is ashamed to be Muslims and they are gradually leaving the regular prayer and forget about the religion. Parents are afraid of letting their children go to mosque. This is the 'profit' of our community from such a 'Satan jihad'. Now it is time for jihad against these mujahedin. Today we do not have a worse enemy than these ignorant people! Nobody was so successful in destroying Islam as these people. Even if all armies of the world will start a war against Islam they are not as harmful as these shirkachi-bidagatchiki and 'mujahidin.' Dear brothers and sisters, this is the time for education! All satans are not as harmful as an ignorant Muslim. Do you not know the hadiths about the harm of ignorance? Do you think that you are a great scholar if you have read several books like *Mubtal' kyroat* or *Shifakhiia*⁷⁹? You have to be realistic and do tauba! Inshallah, this will be useful. One should study the religion of Allah, but not occupy oneself with fantasies. This way we will be much better than we are today. Other people, seeing our piety, will enter Islam in big numbers as it had been in the times of our pious ancestors.

In Russia we have the best conditions for the flourishing of our religion. But we do not have to fight against Islam! This is the time of the great jihad, the fight against your ego. Look around, there are so many possibilities to get forbidden things! Everywhere is God's call to fight against your ego, but we are do not see it. Allah the Greatest said: "My signs are everywhere, but you do not see them..." It is said that when Dajjal will arrive on the Earth, he has a letter 'kaf' on his head. It is also said that those who see him, will follow him, therefore not all people will be able to see that letter, but why?! The answer to this question is concealed in the

⁷⁹ [*Shifahiyya* is a book by Ahmad Hadi Maqsudi.]

science of Ihsan, the students of which are so much hated by the shirkachi-bidagatchiki. The army of Satan is fighting against us for a long time! Remember the hadith, where Muhammad, s.a.s., did not pray into the direction of the Nejd, saying that the Satan will come from there. Shirkachi-bidagatchiki appeared exactly there [in Central Saudi Arabia]. Hypocrites and their followers are often using verses and hadiths to prove their ideas by misinterpreting them and giving them a new meaning. Let me give some examples. "If somebody brings into our religion something that is not a part of it, this person should be neglected." "Be aware of the innovations, because each innovation is misleading, and [15:] all that misleads goes to the fire." "From a person who introduced innovation Allah will not accept his fasting, hajj, 'umra, fight against his ego, his alms-giving and his adherence to justice. He steps out of Islam like a hair from dough. I left you with a clear religion, its night is like a day and those who refuse will perish anyway. Everybody is trying to do something, and each attempt has its own time. Those whose actions are in accordance with my Sunna are on the right path, while others will perish." From a superficial view and especially after the propaganda of the shirkachi-bidagatchiki an ignorant Muslim can understand this as if any bidagat is forbidden. Sometimes they are giving distorted and shortened hadiths in order to mislead people. However, if one goes into details and compares several hadiths on the same topic, the real meaning will be clear. This analysis shows that the real bidagatchiki and shirkachi are these [corrupted interpreters].

Dear brothers and sisters, Islam is not a stupid and brutal religion as the shirkachi-bidagatchiki and "mujahidin of the devil" (*modzhakhedy d'iavola*) are trying to show to the whole world. Islam means Peace. Do you not see?! Do you not see that these hypocrites and their followers are helping to fight against Islam and against the state! The world has long been an arena of war for resources and fields of influence. Be aware, dear brothers and sisters, whom you follow. Accepting ideology of shirkachi-bidagatchiki you are following the enemies of Allah the Greatest. You are fighting against your Muslim brothers and you are destroying your country. Look at the Tajiks! They went through a fratricidal war, 'the devil jihad', and some of them are even trying to set us against the Russians and others. They kicked all Russians and other people out of their country, but

later they went to Russia to eat Russian bread. Is this not a lesson for ‘mujahidin’?! I do not want to offend the Tajiks or other peoples, but what to do if they cannot feed their own home and went out of their country seeking bread, but they are trying to teach us?! It is better for them to restore their own country. It is probably better that those who love Allah, not dunya, will rule in the religious institutions. I swear by Allah the Greatest that these people will not sell their religion.

(...) [16:] (...) Can you imagine: all clergy (*dukhovenstvo*) love this world! They are ready to sell Islam! This is the real reason of the hypocrites’ hatred of Sufism! Those who follow their ego and are living by selling out Islam should imagine how they will enter their graves!

Do we need all these numerous Muftiates in one country? In order to get the Truth one does not need something superficial. One needs to be honest and should love one’s Creator without willing something instead. Dear brothers and sisters, do you see how easy is this way to Allah the Highest which seems so difficult to some of you. There are so many people who are ready to enter Hell because of their love of this world. They do not want to acknowledge their mistakes! May Allah prevent us from following our ego!

(...) [Here follows a discussion about the celebration of the Prophet’s birthday].

[19:] At the time being we cannot cooperate with the Muftiates. The Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tiumen’ region and its Mufti Bikmullin⁸⁰ are spreading anti-Islam, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in the Asiatic Part of Russia and its Mufti Ashirov⁸¹ are disseminating ‘Wahhabi’ brochures. The Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims and its Mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin⁸²

⁸⁰ [Galimdzhan Bikmullin (b. 1952) is Mufti of the Tiumen’ Spiritual Administration (DUMTO). In office since 1992. In 2011 he was elected to be life-long Mufti of the region. Bikmullin graduated from the Bukhara madrasa Mir-i ‘Arab.]

⁸¹ [Nafigulla Ashirov (b. 1954) is chair of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Asiatic Part of Russia (DUM AChR), co-chair of the Council of Muftis. Ashirov was born in a village in the vicinity of Tobol’sk.]

⁸² [In the original: Talgat Tazhutdin.]

rejected our offer. Inshallah, if we will turn to Allah the Highest, He will make our 'clergy without a soul' (*bezdukhovnoe dukhovenstvo*) more pious!

Hoping for your support and prayer, the needy of Allah the Highest, Valishin Rafail' Vil'karovich

My telephone numbers: Tiumen' region: 8-950-49-32-994, Bashkiria: 8-962-537-40-32.

We do not exclude a possibility of cooperation with other traditional beliefs of Russia (*traditsionnye konfessii*), who love their people and their Fatherland.

The Ihsan movement was born in the village Novoat'ialovo of the Tiumen' region.

Text 2.

Public Organization of Muslims

"Ikhsan"

"They returned with the mercy and generosity of Allah, nothing bad occurred to them and they followed Allah's kindness. Truly, Allah is the owner of the great mercy!" Surah 3, verse 174⁸³

Valishin Rafail Vil'karovich, Spiritual Leader of the "Ikhsan" movement,

Village of Novoat'ialovo

[Ialutorovsk, Tiumen' region, ca. 2010]

[1:] I am seeking help of Allah, the Merciful, against Satan, the cursed.⁸⁴ The reason of writing this article is that one murid left the tariqa because of his ignorance. Besides, my desire was inspired by a brochure of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Asiatic Part of Russia. This brochure was printed in Moscow in 2009 [and is called] The Prayer (Mol'ba) to God: Its Significance and Place in Islam." If the Muftiates disseminate anti-Islamic books

⁸³ [Translation by Arberry: So they returned with blessing and bounty from God, untouched by evil; they followed the good pleasure of God; and God is of bounty abounding.]

⁸⁴ [This phrase is written in Arabic language transcribed in the Cyrillic-script: *Auzu biLliakhi min ash-shaitanir radzhim, bismiLliakhirRakhmanirRakhim.*]

with perfect impunity, then Satan will have nothing left to do in Russia. The clergy (*dukhovenstvo*) will fulfil Satan's tasks and spoil so many souls who are seeking the satisfaction of their nafs. If the clergy did its work properly before Allah the Highest and the people, such an incompetent person as I am would not sit down and write all this. Before that time we need to defend the religion given to us by Allah the Highest from these 'specialists.' Inshallah, I will do my best to demonstrate the real physiognomy of the people who are selling off Islam for worldly matters, [selling off] an eternal happiness. We need to defend Islam ourselves before Allah will give us the [real] specialists in defending our religion from the munafiqs. O Allah, grant us happiness of living and dying as Muslims!

All of our actions before Allah the Highest have a certain value, similar to how we are judging our deeds. In order to understand it better I would like to explain the topic according to the madhhab of Imam [Abu] Hanifa. (...) [Follows a detailed classification of human actions similar to the one in the first brochure.]

[3:] Fortunately, the Russians (*rossiiane*) have two absolutely pious branches of tariqat: the Naqshbandiya and the Shadhiliya. Said-Efendi Chirkeiskii is connected to both of them. We, the Tatars, also had sheikhs. Khalil Ishan⁸⁵ from the village of Turba was the latest whom I know, he did not leave a heir. There were other sheikhs, but I know nothing about them, except for Zaynullah Ishan Sharifi from Troitsk, the teacher of Khalil Ishan. I have heard that at the great gathering of murids [Zaynullah Ishan] gave the robe of hadrat 'Ali to [Zaynullah Ishan's] student Sayfullah Qadi,⁸⁶ quddisa sirruhu. Now this robe is possessed by Said-Efendi Chirkeiskii. Therefore one cannot doubt the legitimacy (*polnomochiia*) of our teacher (*Uchitel'*). Do not listen to the slanderers! They are sicker than those in the hospitals. (...)

Why do we have to follow our pious ancestors? This question only seems to be stupid. Today we are so much ignorant in religion and are so much self-confident

⁸⁵ [Khalil Ishan Khalilov (1866-1931) was an Imam in the village Turby near Tobol'sk. His tomb is today an object of veneration.]

⁸⁶ [Sayfullah Bashlarov (1853-1919) was a well-known Daghestani scholar of modernist views.]

in our exceptional qualities (*vunderkizm*⁸⁷) that one should answer this stupid question and explain it all the time. The most stupid people [4:] are sure that they are very clever. If you translate their speech into understandable language, it says: "I do not understand anything, but you have to explain to me why traditional Islam (*traditsionnyi Islam*) is the real Islam." Dear brothers and sisters, is it possible to explain something to such person?! Everything that I am writing [here] is for those who did yet not sink into obstinacy. I am writing for our kids, in order to prevent them from following those dangerous people, against our religion and against the Fatherland. (...)

I have spent several years reading books: old books in the Turkic language as well as various brochures including Christian and atheistic ones. I thought a lot and understood that today it is enough for me to have the small book *Gyibadat Islamiia* by Ahmad Hadi Maqsudi. Dear Muslims, this book is more than enough. I personally cannot fully implement everything what is written there. (...) [5:] May Allah grant us *taufiq*⁸⁸! Let us live following our Imams in theology, law and Ihsan! Imam Hanafi⁸⁹ did not restrict himself to law. He understood the insufficiency of this knowledge and became a murid of the Sufi sheikh [sic!] Ja'far Sadiq⁹⁰. Let us follow our Imam in everything! Amen!

(...) How can a Muslim slander the Sufis who are busy with sincere liturgy (*bogosluzhenie*)? It is impossible to be sincere without tariqat. You have probably noticed that when somebody starts praying he becomes 'a minister' of Allah, who knows everything and is very arrogant. They are slandering the people who are better than they are, especially the Sufis. (...) An Uzbek without any Islamic knowledge [lived] in Novoat'ialovo. He lied very well and supported the ego of the people. He did not distinguish between halal and forbidden haram. He indulged the deeds of elders and called upon the youth to kill the infidels. This was all his religion. Once I reproached him saying that he is using his knowledge

⁸⁷ [This is an author's neologism derived from 'wunderkind' plus a productive suffix -izm to signify a phenomenon.]

⁸⁸ [Success.]

⁸⁹ [Imam Abu Hanifa (699-767) was a founder of the Hanafi madhhab.]

⁹⁰ [Ja'far Sadiq (702/703-765) was the sixth Shi'i Imam and regarded as a founder of the Ja'fari madhhab.]

as a weapon against people. The answer was: “How else can you use your knowledge?!” A person who does not know why he needs knowledge, cannot teach [6:] others. This is the anti-Islam that is brought by the enemies of Allah under the label of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tiumen’ Region (DUMTO) led by Galimdzhan Bikmullin! Dear brothers and sisters, today we have to gather and study our religion. They sell our religion as much as they can! We can overcome it only together and save Islam for our children. The Muslims of Novoat’ialovo have a permission (*razreshenie*) on [the following of] the tariqat and are the murids of Said-Efendi, quddisa sirruhu, the sheikh of the Shadhili and Naqshbandi brotherhoods. We will help those who want to enter this way, inshallah. The way to Allah is difficult. (...)

Dear brothers and sisters, dear compatriots (*dorogie sootchestvenniki*)! Let us go back to the way of our pious ancestors! Let us go back to the only way, to Allah the Highest, i.e. to Sufism! Our ancestors used to carry the rosary all the time and did not spend time on idle talk, but they remembered Allah. Many of them were murids. The three hundred sixty-six Saints (avliialar) whom we mention in our prayers were the murids of the greatest sheikh Baha’ ad-Din Naqshbandi⁹¹ from Bukhara. Many of them became shahids, but they did not preach to kill unbelievers, they rather brought Islam to the unbelievers. They brought love to Allah the Highest and to His creatures. They preached love, but not the hatred. The elderly generation remembers Imametdin Divana⁹², he was a murid of our last sheikh Khalil Ishan in Turba. Both of them lived in a difficult time – Communists, the enemies of Allah, ruled over the country, however nobody remembers that they would even have called [for acting] against the government. [7:] This was the Islam of our ancestors. Dear compatriots, those who are calling to overthrow the power and are denying everything in Islam are not with us, they are provocateurs. For some reason they are against Islam! Only those who acknowledge and follow the Imams of theology Ash’ari⁹³ or Maturidi, the four

⁹¹ [d. 1389. In the original: Bagautdin Nakshubandi.]

⁹² [Imametdin b. Sayfitdin (1852-1948) was a local Sufi in the village of Sabanaki near Tobol’sk. After his death Imametdin Divana (“the Holy, Possessed”) was regarded as a saint – awliya.]

⁹³ [In the original: Ashgari.]

Imams of Islamic law and Sufism can be regarded the followers of the Sunna (*posledovateli akhli-sunny*). If we knew at least who the [real] Sunni [masters] are, the munafiqs would have no chances to cheat the Muslims.

In Novoat'ialovo it was easier to get back to sources. Our elders Aisetdin Babay and Askhat Babay knew what Sufism is. Our Imam Munir hadrat [Biktimerov] knows Islam better than anybody else. His grandfather was one of the best students of Zaynullah Sharifi. Generally, we were quite lucky, and we are ready now to help everybody on the way of understanding Allah the Highest. We are under protection of sheikh Said-Efendi al-Chirkavi. Let us go back to the sources, to pure Islam, which has a chain of teachers up to the Prophet Muhammad, s.a.s., and we will be happy in both worlds!

(...)

[8:] About idolatry (shirk) or whom the DUMTO is fighting? Abolition of idolatry and bidagat on their territory is the main preoccupation of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Tiumen' region. Let us look at this topic in more detail. Idolatry is attaching an associate to Allah. According to the creed of the followers of the Sunna, if one sincerely said: "There is no God except God, Muhammad is His Prophet"⁹⁴, nobody can claim this person an infidel. I have never seen a Muslim who is thinking that Allah had a partner in creation of the world. However, in DUMTO under the leadership of Bikmullin they think differently. They claimed that the veneration of graves (*poseshchenie mogil*) and invocations to an other than Allah are [signs of] idolatry. They are fighting actively against the veneration of Astana. Praise to God, some graves of the pious people survived in Siberia. We call them Astana. DUMTO and Bikmullin are trying to purge the memory of those who brought Islam to our country. There are very few Astana, let us keep what we have! Mainly the graves of the students of the greatest sheikh Baha' ad-Din Naqshbandi from Bukhara are known. He sent his students to Siberia to spread the Islamic religion. Before that and after that there were preachers of Islam and pious people. The oldest Astana is located in the

⁹⁴ [This Arabic phrase is transcribed in the Cyrillic script: *Lia iliakha illiaLlah, Mukhammadar rasulinLlah.*]

village Iurt-Bor in the Iarkovskii region [of the 'Tiumen' oblast]. If not sahabas, then [at least] tabi'ins are buried there. The latest big Astana is located in the village Turba of Tobolsk region. Our last sheikh Khalil Ishan is buried there. Ignorant and bad people are trying to purge the memory of our great ancestors. I am also ignorant, I do not have a special education, but educated people are busy with other things. They do not have time [9:] to defend Islam from the hypocrites. May Allah give me strength to go on Your way and give the ability to distinguish the Truth and the Lie! May Allah save Russia, do not let it be destroyed by Your enemies! (...)

An Islamic Glossary of Valishin's Texts

adab (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *adaby*) – traditional [ethical] norms; from Arabic *adab*. Here as well as in all other cases the Tatar intermediary is highly possible.

aiaty (n. masc. pl.; sing.: *aiat*) – the Quranic verses; from Arabic *aya*.

akhirat (n. masc. sing.) – the world of Eternity; from Arabic *akhirah*.

akida / *akyda* (n. fem. sing.) – creed; from Arabic *'aqida*.

akbli-sunna (n. fem. sing.) – the followers of the four schools of Sunni Islam; from Persian *ahl-e sunna*.

Astana (n. fem. sing.) – a sacred grave of a pious person; from Persian *astana*.

bidagat (n. fem. sing.) – unlawful innovation in Islam, from Arabic *bid'a*. The letter 'ayn is sometimes expressed in Tatar pronunciation as [gh] and is written through [g] in the Cyrillic. Russian synonym: *novshestvo*. Cf.: *poleznoe novshestvo* or useful innovation is a commonly accepted equivalent for Arabic *bid'a hasana*.

bidagatchiki (n. pl.) – those who introduce and practice *bid'a*, i.e. unlawful innovation in religion. The noun consists of the plural Arabic loan *bida'at* plus Russian masc. suffix *-chik* (for denoting a profession or occupation) with the additional pl. ending form *-i*. Arabic equivalent is *mubtadi'* – someone who introduces the innovations.

brat' takharat' / delat' omovenie – lit.: to take/ perform the ablution. Originates from the Tatar *tabarat alu*.

dalil' (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *dalili*) – religious arguments; from Arabic *dalil*.

delat' dua – lit.: to invoke God; originates from the Tatar *du'a qilu*.

delat' namaz – lit.: to perform the daily prayer; to pray. Obviously originates from the Tatar *namaz qilu*. Synonym: *chitat' namaz* (lit.: to read a prayer). Cf. in Persian *namaz khwandan* – 'to read a prayer' and *namaz kardan* – 'to do a prayer'; the same in Tatar respectively: *namaz uku* and *namaz kilu*.

delat' shafaat – lit.: to perform an intercession; to intermedate, to intercede. Obviously originates from Tatar *shafaat itu*. Here and in the following examples collocations are made by using a Russian verb plus the Arabic, Persian or, rarely, Russian word. These collocations reflect Turkic constructions ("to make something").

delat' tauba – lit.: to perform repentance, to repent; originates from the Tatar *tauba qilu*.

dzhakhil' (n. masc. sing.; fem.: *dzhakhiliika*, fem. pl.: *dzhakhiliiki*) – those people who do not practice Islamic rituals, ignorant in Islamic religion. Antonym: *religiozno praktichnye*.

dovol'stvo Allakha – God's satisfaction; probably of Tatar origin: *Allahnıng rizalighi*.

dun'ia (n. fem. sing.) – this perishable world; from Arabic *dunya*.

dzhakhiliia (n. fem. sing.) – the epoch of ignorance before the revelation of the Quran; from Arabic *jahiliya*.

eres' (n. fem. sing.) – heresy; Russian word for 'unlawful' dimensions in Islam. Synonym: *sekta*.

etnicheskie musu'mane – ethnic Muslims who usually do not practice their religion.

farz (n. masc. sing.) – an obligatory religious duty; from Arabic *fard*.

fikkh (n. masc. sing.) – Islamic jurisprudence; from Arabic *fiqh*.

imam (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *imamy*) – a leader of local Islamic community; from Arabic *imam*; synonym of *khazret*.

iman (n. masc. sing.) – belief; from Arabic *iman*.

kafer (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *kafery*) – unbeliever; the word is taken in the Tatar form *kafer*, originally from Arabic *kafir*.

khadis (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *khadisy*) – traditional narratives on sayings and deeds of the Prophet; from Arabic *ḥadīth*.

Kuran (n. masc. sing., pl.: *Kurany*) – Qur'an.

lechenie (n. neuter sing.) – healing of spiritual diseases; Russian equivalent for Arabic *ʿilaj*.

liubov' k Allakhu – love of God; the Russian equivalent of Arabic *al-muhabba*.

liudi zikra – Sufis; Russian translation of Arabic collocation *ahl al-dhikr* ("the people who perform the Sufi practice of commemorating Allah in the *dhikr*").

madrasa (n. fem. sing.) – Islamic school; from Arabic *madrasa*.

mavlid (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *mavliidy*) – celebration of the Prophet's birthday; from Arabic *maulid*.

mazkhab (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *mazkhaby*) – school of Islamic law; from Arabic *madhhab*.

migradzh (n. masc. sing.) – the Prophet's midnight journey to the seven heavens mentioned in the Quran; from the Arabic *mi'raj*. The Arabic letter 'ayn is given in Tatar pronunciation.

miurid (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *miuridy*) – follower of a Sufi sheikh, from Arabic *murid*.

muftiiat (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *muftiiaty*) – the Spiritual Board of Muslims.

munafik (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *munafiki*) – hypocrite; from Arabic *munafiq*.

mushrik (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *mushriki*) – "idolator", synonym of *shirkachi*; from Arabic *mushrik*.

musul'manin (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *musul'mane*) – a Muslim; the word is already well rooted in the Russian language through adoption of Arabic *muslim* with the Russian suffix *-anin* for denoting the foreign origin of a person.

nafs (n. masc. sing.) – the bodily soul, ego; from Arabic *nafs*.

namaz (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *namazy*) – prayers; from Persian *namaz*.

nezhelatel'noe (adj. neuter sing.) – objectionable; Russian equivalent for Arabic term *makruh*.

otchet (n. masc. sing.) – the final report in front of God.

poklonenie (n. neuter sing.) – lit. "bowing", reverence; worship; from Arabic *ʿibada*.

posrednichestvo (n. neuter sing.) – lit. “mediation”, i.e. to step in for someone before Allah; a Russian equivalent of the Arabic term *tawassul*, (a synonym in the text: *tavassul*’).

posviashchat’ nagraду – to devote the spiritual award of one’s prayer to somebody else; obviously of Tatar origin: *säväpnä baghışlau*.

pravednye (n. pl.) – pious people; Russian equivalent for Arabic *salihun*.

prinimat’ dua, tauba, molitvu, etc. – lit.: [God] accepting invocation, repentance, prayer, etc.

put’ istiny – the Way of Truth; from Arabic *sirat al-mustaqim*.

rab [Allakha] (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *raby Allakha*) – God’s slaves; Russian equivalent for Arabic *‘abd Allah* and *‘ibad Allah*.

razreshennoe (adj. neuter sing.) – permitted; Russian equivalent for Arabic terms *halal* and *mubah*.

sakhab (n. masc. (rarely – fem. in sing. form *sakhaba*) sing.; pl.: *askhab, sakhaby*) – companion of the Prophet; from Arabic *sahaba* (the sg. of which is *sahib*). A singular masc. form is made in the form of a loanword by cutting the –a (usual fem. ending of Russian words). Synonym of *spodvizhnik* (pl.: *spodvizhniki*).

salavaty (n. masc. pl.; sing.: *salavat*) – blessing of the Prophet; from pl. Arabic *salawat* (sing.: *salat*).

savab (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *savaby*) – a spiritual award; from Arabic *thawab*.

shakhadat (n. masc. sing.) – the testimony of faith; from Arabic *shahada*.

shariat (n. masc. sing.) – Islamic law; from Arabic *shari‘a*.

shirk (n. masc. sing.) – polytheism; from Arabic *shirk*.

shirkachi (n. pl.) – those who are performing *shirk*, i.e. who attribute a companion to God. The noun consists of an Arabic loan *shirk* (polytheism) and the Russian masc. suffix –*ach* for denoting a profession or occupation, supplemented by the pl. ending –*i*.

shirkovat’ (verb) – to practice polytheism. The verb is made of the Arabic loanword *shirk* and the Russian productive ending –*ovat’* which is largely used for transforming loanwords into Russian verbs.

sekta (n. fem. sing.; pl.: *sekty*) – unlawful fractions in Islam.

sunnat (n. masc. sing.; pl. *sunnaty*) – the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and his companions; from Arabic *sunna* (pl. *sunan*).

tarikat (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *tarikaty*) – the Sufi path, Sufi brotherhood; from Arabic *tariqa*.

tsep' uchitelei – chain of spiritual succession; Russian equivalent of Arabic *silsila*.

uchenyi (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *uchenye*) – religious scholar; Russian equivalent for Arabic 'ulama'.

uchitel' (n. masc. sing.) – a (Sufi) teacher; Russian equivalent for Arabic *ustad* and sometimes *shaykh*.

umma (n. fem. sing.) – the global community of Muslims; originates from Arabic *umma*.

vazhib (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *vadzhiby*) – an obligatory act; from Arabic *wajib*.

vali Allakha – God's friend (traditionally denoting Sufi sheikhs); from Arabic *wali Allah*; synonym of *avliia* in Valishin's text.

zabluzhdenie (n. neuter sing.) – the wrong path; from Arabic *dalala*.

zabludshii (n. masc. sing.) – a person who went a wrong way in religion; from Arabic *dall*.

zakat (n. masc. sing.) – alms tax, alms giving, one of the pillars of Islam; from Arabic *zakat*.

zapretnoe (adj. neuter sing.) – forbidden; Russian equivalent for Arabic term *haram*.

zikr (n. masc. sing.; pl.: *zikry*) – remembrance of God; from Arabic *dhikr*.

A Comparison with the Vocabulary and Style of a Salafi Author

The style and vocabulary of Valishin is quite similar to that of the Salafis. As an example let us take Abu Maryam Nazratullah (Abu Mari'iam Nazratullakh). An ethnic Tajik who studied over twenty years in various Islamic countries and now lives in Medina, Abu Maryam is very popular among Russian and Kazakhstani Salafis. Below we translate a fragment that we took and transcribed from one of his sermons on his popular website. This site was visited by 26.000 users only in

May 2012.⁹⁵ The topics of Abu Maryam's lectures mainly comprise polemics against various Islamic movements, including Sufism and (more) radical Salafis. Abu Maryam does not produce printed books or articles, his audio sermons and answers on specific questions are simply disseminated through the Internet.

By contrast to Valishin, Abu Maryam Nazratullah knows Arabic very well. Still, he uses many similar expressions and in similar grammatical forms. The following vocabulary is shared by both authors: *abl-e sunna wa jama'a*, *kufi*, *shirk*, *namerenie*, *da'wa* and very characteristic *bidagatchiki*. Both Valishin's and Abu Maryam's texts are full of Arabic terminology, but while Valishin rarely explains these terms, Abu Maryam often gives Russian synonyms and equivalents to Arabic words. Both authors use the construction 'noun + verb' to denote religious actions. For example, just like Valishin calls to do repentance (*delat' tauba*, literally 'do repentance'), Abu Maryam suggests to do patience (*delat' sabr*). This construction is similar in the native tongues of both authors, in Tatar 'to repent' is *tauba qilu*, while in Tajik and Persian 'to be patient' is *sabr kardan*. The ideological tastes of the authors, notwithstanding, they bring expressions and the syntax of their mother tongues into the newly emerging Russian Islamic vocabulary.

Worth mentioning is that Abu Maryam's narratives recall elements of a criminal style of speaking that is known in Russian as *blatnoi iazyk*. This can be seen from such expressions as *kidat' shubukhaty* – to share doubts; literally: to throw doubts. Another broadly known expression starts with *govorit' za* or *prikhodit' za*, meaning 'providing evidence to'. For example, in the sentence: *Za eto prishel takoi khadis* – "The following hadith provides evidence for this." In literary Russian the preposition *za* should not be used in this context, but for *blatnoi iazyk* this usage is rather typical. The reason for this 'criminal' influence is not very clear, though one can guess that closeness to marketplaces and circles with criminal background provides the Muslims of the former Soviet Union with a certain level of familiarity with *blatnoi iazyk*. The above-cited expressions should not be classified as just common speech style (*prostorechie*), because the

⁹⁵http://www.madani.jino.ru/data/audio/russian/Abdulla_Buhari_o_vzaimootno6eniyah_s_ahl_bida_perevod.mp3. Last visited: 6.6.2012.

usage of the latter is not restricted to a certain social group and its meanings are clear to a broad audience, while *blatnoi iazyk* is rather symbolic and its codes are familiar only to a specific community.

Text: Abu Maryam on Islamic Groups

May peace be upon Muhammad, his family and all of his companions⁹⁶.

What was the topic of our last lecture? It was about *somneniia*, *shubuhaty*⁹⁷ provided by⁹⁸ those ahl-e bid'a, *bidagatchiki*⁹⁹ and ahl-e dalal, ahl-e shahab.¹⁰⁰ They are always in *shubuhats*.¹⁰¹ You know what it is, right? They always want to argue, day after day they get new doubts. How to deal with it for *rajl sunni*¹⁰² and *trebuiushie znaniia*¹⁰³? Should he always answer to their doubts and argue with them? Otherwise what should he do? The sheikh says that many people are asking about it, send messages and call him: What to do? [Suppose] we have a person [with an affiliation to] *takfiris*, *hizbis*, *tablighis*, *ikhwanis* or *sururis*. How to deal with them? What to do? There are many people with these questions, right?

The sheikh gave us the following *manhaj*¹⁰⁴ from the Quran and the Sunna. If a person follows these recommendations, he will be happy. His problems will be solved, because Allah, s.w.t.¹⁰⁵, says in the Quran talking to Dawud, a.s.w.s.¹⁰⁶: “Do *shukr*¹⁰⁷, because very few of my slaves are thankful.” [34:13]¹⁰⁸ “Those on the *istinnaia doroga*, *sirat al-mustakim*¹⁰⁹ are very few in number.” [38:24]

⁹⁶ [This phrase is spoken in Arabic.]

⁹⁷ [In the original *somneniia*, *shubukhaty*; doubts.]

⁹⁸ [In original: *kotorye kidaiut nam*]

⁹⁹ [Those who introduce unlawful innovations.]

¹⁰⁰ [Misguided people.]

¹⁰¹ [Doubts.]

¹⁰² [Follower of the Sunna.]

¹⁰³ [Those who seeks knowledge.]

¹⁰⁴ [Explanation; lit. “method”.]

¹⁰⁵ [Always pronounced as *Subhanahu wa ta'ala*.]

¹⁰⁶ [*Alayhi-s-salatu wa-s-salam*.]

¹⁰⁷ [Be thankful.]

¹⁰⁸ [Here and in all other cases translations from Arabic Abu Maryam pronounced the original.]

¹⁰⁹ [The right path.]

Therefore ahl al-batil¹¹⁰ and ahl al-bid'a¹¹¹ perform a lot of [deeds leading to] kufr¹¹² and shirk¹¹³ and they have a lot of shubuhats. Therefore a man seeking knowledge should have a clear position in this question. Moreover we should not forget that our religion is protected. Allah, s.w.t., says in the Quran: "It is We who sent down dhikr,¹¹⁴ i.e. the Quran, and We watch over it." [15:9] This means that nobody can do anything with the religion. Sheikh Ibn Hibban,¹¹⁵ r.l.a..¹¹⁶ said¹¹⁷ in his book Muqaddima wa Jawhil: "Allah, s.w.t., prepared for the religion those people who are fursan¹¹⁸, they forgot about themselves, about their families, they are travelling to seek knowledge.¹¹⁹ They walk for miles, they overcome hunger and cold. They do not think about [comfort] and seek only knowledge and hadiths. This way they show what is true and what is lie, which hadiths are correct¹²⁰ and which are false (*nedostovernnye*). These scholars¹²¹ existed in the times of Ibn Hibban and today these are also present in great number.

A person should be thankful to Allah for being guided on the right path by Allah, s.w.t. We talked about thankfulness. Allah, s.w.t., says: do¹²² thank! This means that one cannot simply say "Alhamdulillah" or "ash-shukr". One should perform 'amal¹²³ and leave everything forbidden.¹²⁴ As being thankful¹²⁵ one

¹¹⁰ [Liars.]

¹¹¹ [Unlawful innovators.]

¹¹² [Unbelief.]

¹¹³ [Idolatry.]

¹¹⁴ [Remembrance.]

¹¹⁵ [Abu Khatim Muhammad b. Hibban at-Tamimi al-Busti (884-966) was a Khorasan-based Sunni scholar of hadith sciences.]

¹¹⁶ [*Radiya Allahu 'anhu.*]

¹¹⁷ [In the original: *privel.*]

¹¹⁸ [Literally: a riter. Here means a person with a desperate spirit.]

¹¹⁹ [In original: *dlia trebovaniia znaniia.*]

¹²⁰ [Dostovernnye.]

¹²¹ [*uchenye.*]

¹²² [In original Arabic: *i' malu.*]

¹²³ [Actions.]

¹²⁴ [*zaprety.*]

¹²⁵ [In original: *ot shukra.*]

should leave all jama'ats¹²⁶ which are contrary to ahl-e sunna wa jama'a.¹²⁷ One can answer: "How can I leave those with whom I have lived the whole life?" Sheikh Ibn Qayyim¹²⁸ said: wa-llahi,¹²⁹ it is much better to overcome the difficulty of leaving this people in this world¹³⁰ before the punishment of Allah at the Day of Judgement." All the people contrary to the shari'a will go to Hell. Ibn Qayyim said in his qasida nuniyya.¹³¹ "If you want to save your soul, listen to your brother who gives you nasikhat,¹³² follow the Quran and the Sunna in all of your deeds and do not follow your doubts, help in the dissemination of the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet. Hit those who are against the shari'a or improvise on the shari'a with the sword of the Quran and the Sunna like a mujahid.¹³³ Trust Allah, s.w.t., in your namerenie.¹³⁴ Be under the banner of Allah, s.w.t. If you die on this field, you will get God's satisfaction." This knowledge, this da'wa¹³⁵ and dissemination of the Quran is even stronger than jihad. This is the greatest form of jihad. Everybody can fight, but not everybody can read books and do sabr.¹³⁶ Ibn Qayyim continues that this is why the sahaba¹³⁷ did not conquer the cities¹³⁸ by using force, because they possessed knowledge and faith. [...]

Today those takfiris¹³⁹ show the religion in such a way that even the Muslims are leaving Islam. Muslims are starting to fight against their own religion [because

¹²⁶ [Islamic communities.]

¹²⁷ [The way of followers of the Sunna.]

¹²⁸ [Muhammad b. Abu Bakr or Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziya (1292-1250) was a Sunni scholar of hadith and Islamic law. He was one of the students of Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328).]

¹²⁹ [Truly.]

¹³⁰ [In original: *Eta dun'ia*.]

¹³¹ [A poem with a rhythm on the letter *nun*.]

¹³² [Advice. In the original: *pomogaet nasikhatom, delaet nasikhat*.]

¹³³ [Fighter.]

¹³⁴ [Intention.]

¹³⁵ [Islamic propaganda.]

¹³⁶ [Be patient. In original: *delat' sabr*.]

¹³⁷ [The companions.]

¹³⁸ [In original: *otkryli goroda*. From the Arabic fath "opening", "conquering".]

¹³⁹ [Sectaries, groups who pronounce takfir, i.e. declare their Muslim adversaries to be infidels. In the original: *takfirity*]

of this approach]. These bidagatchiki¹⁴⁰ are fighting against the religion of the Prophet, s.a.s. [...]

Ibn Qayyim made clear to us the methodology of all ahl-i bid'a. Under the notion of bidagatchiki we understand ikhwan,¹⁴¹ tablighis,¹⁴² Shiis,¹⁴³ Sufis and takfiris.¹⁴⁴ (...)

¹⁴⁰ [Innovators.]

¹⁴¹ [The Muslim Brothers.]

¹⁴² [Tabligh-i Jama'at.]

¹⁴³ [Shi'as.]

¹⁴⁴ [Takfiris.]

JIHADISM: THE DISCOURSE OF THE CAUCASUS EMIRATE

Michael Kemper

An overall picture of the major trends of the Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation would not be complete without an analysis of “Jihadist Islamic Russian”. We do this by looking at an online text produced by Dokku Umarov, the self-proclaimed leader of the “Caucasus Emirate”. We place Umarov’s discourse in a broader historical perspective; and also the text that we selected for analysis is historical in character, presenting Umarov’s view of how the idea emerged up to give up the nationalist struggle for Chechen independence, and to replace it by the fight for an Islamic state that transcends ethnic boundaries, and that also involves other areas of the North Caucasus and of Russia proper.

From Sufism and Nationalism to Salafi Jihad

The major trauma of the Chechen nation is the period of enforced exile in the mid-twentieth century.¹ On 23 February 1944, long after the withdrawal of German troops from the North Caucasus, Stalin ordered the entire Chechen and Ingush population (reportedly some 478.500 persons) to be deported to rural areas in Kazakhstan and Central Asia, under the fabricated pretext that they had massively collaborated with the enemy. Under horrible conditions tens of thousands died during deportation and after arrival. The Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Republic (within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic)

¹ There is a growing amount of literature on Chechen history and the Chechen wars. Good overviews are Moshe Gammer, *The Lone Wolf and the Bear: Three Centuries of Chechen Defiance of Russian Rule* (London, 2005), and James Hughes, *Chechnya: From Nationalism to Jihad* (Philadelphia, 2007). For a Chechen account see *Istoriia Chechni s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei. Vol. 2: Istoriia Chechni XX i nachala XXI vekov* (Groznyi, 2008).

was abolished and its territory divided among the neighbouring republics Daghestan, Georgia, and North Ossetia; Grozny became the center of an enlarged RSFSR oblast. The abandoned Chechen and Ingush settlements were to be resettled by populations of the respective neighbor republics.

In the course of de-Stalinization, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was re-established in January 1957, but the return of the surviving Chechen and Ingush from Kazakhstan and Siberia was obstructed by the predominantly Russian Communist Party leadership in Grozny; and most returnees could not settle in their places of origin. The ASSR of Checheno-Ingushetia now included also the steppe lands north of the Terek, whereas parts of Ingushetia (esp. Prigorodnyi raion) remained with North Ossetia. While the great human losses were quickly made up by a high birth rate, the thirteen years of forced exile had a devastating effect on education among the Chechens, and on their integration in Soviet society, economy, and administration; until 1989, the head of the Chechen-Ingush communist party branch was always a Russian, and the lucrative oil industry in Grozny remained in Russian hands. Chechens were active in agriculture and petty trade.

Anti-religious propaganda and close KGB surveillance of Islam continued all through the Soviet period. Islam in Chechnya was administered by the North Caucasian Muftiate in Daghestan (see our second chapter). While there were no 'official' mosques in the country before 1978, and very few thereafter, non-registered praying houses were maintained in practically all Chechen settlements and neighbourhoods. In circumvention of the Soviet courts, unofficial "shari'at courts" regulated disputes according to *'adat* and Islamic law in villages and kolkhozes.

Just like Daghestan, also the history of Chechen Islam is closely connected to Sufism. The major brotherhood is a conglomerate of *virds* (branches) that go back to the teachings of Shaykh Kunta Hajji Kishiev from Inkho (Daghestan). In the late 1850s, still during the Imamate of Imam Shamil (ruled 1834-1859), Kunta Hajji started a new Sufi movement in Chechnya which introduced public *dhikr* dances, and was hence called "zikrists" in Russians reports. The Shaykh claimed to represent the Qadiriyya Sufi order, into which he was reportedly initiated during

his hajj in Mecca. Imam Shamil prohibited music and dancing as “un-Islamic”, and Kunta Hajji left for another *hajj*. After his return he managed to attract huge numbers of followers and placed his deputies in several Chechen communities, especially in the plains north of the Caucasus mountains. Reportedly, Kunta Hajji preached not only hard work and abstention from theft and alcohol but also a pacifist attitude that appealed to the Chechens who were exhausted by decades of war against the Russians; however some of his proclamations indicate that he expected a divine sign to start another *jihad*. In 1863 he was arrested and sent into exile to Novgorod province, where he died of hunger and exhaustion in 1867. Kunta’s exile and the suppression of his movement provoked protests and insurgencies (with some leaders claiming the rank of *imam*), which were brutally quelled by the authorities. Kunta’s movement subsequently split into several powerful *virds*, each of which has individual *dhikr*/dance techniques. These *virds* are named after Kunta Hajji and his major deputies, especially Bammat Hajji and Chim-Mirza in Ichkeria, and Batal Hajji in Ingushetia. These *virds* suffered heavily from Soviet persecution in the 1930s but survived all through the Soviet period. One new branch, that of Vis-Hajji, even emerged in Chechen exile communities in Soviet Kazakhstan. Some of these branches are linked to “clans” and holy families, and thus have local strongholds, others are spread all over Chechnya. Also some Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya groups have a solid presence in Chechnya.²

It would however be misleading to regard twentieth-century Chechen society as “traditional”, as having survived Russian imperialism and colonialism and Soviet modernization without major changes. The constant resettlements since the mid-nineteenth century (when, after the Great Caucasus war, a major wave of Chechen emigration to the Ottoman Empire occurred, the so-called *muhajir* movement), and then again under Stalin, had largely destroyed the traditional social structure, and especially the authority of the traditional elders. When today reference is being made to the importance of the Chechen “clans” then what

² On the various Chechen *virds* and their Sufi shrines, see Mairbek Vachagaev, *Sheikhi i ziiraty Chechni* (Moscow, 2009).

people have in mind are largely political networks and alliances supported by extended family relations, not the historical clan (*taipa*) distribution where clans were closely-knit social groups with a fixed territory and characterized by the rule of elders who administered customary law (*'adat*), and who could demand submission from their communities.³ As to the Sufi *virds* it seems that in the Soviet period they did not produce new charismatic leaders, remaining instead in the shadow of their nineteenth-century founders.

Like elsewhere in the Soviet Union, Perestroika fomented political engagement; first in the form of “pro-Perestroika committees”, intellectual and literary discussion clubs, and movements against the dreadful environmental destruction, then more and more in nationalist groups that managed to mobilize tens of thousands of street protestors and set up militias. Islamic slogans were used but clearly of secondary character, reinforcing the national identity. In September 1991 the secular Chechen nationalist revolution under ex-Soviet airforce general Dzhokhar Dudaev (1944-1996) toppled the Communist regime in Grozny and then proclaimed the independent Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. Ingushetia peacefully split from Chechnya/Ichkeria in June 1994, hoping to gain Moscow’s support for its conflict with North Ossetia. In winter 1994 Russia launched a major attack on Chechnya that led to a devastating war (Dec. 1994 - Aug. 1996); eventually tiny Ichkeria (and the broader crisis in Russia) forced President Yeltsin to withdraw his troops from Chechnya. The Khasaviurt peace accords that ended the war evaded any decision about the international legal status of the breakaway republic and its relation to Russia.

From among various fighting groups, Islamist units emerged as the most prominent forces in Chechnya, and Dudaev’s first successor as president, Zelimkhan Iandarbiev (1952-2004, in office 1996-1997) proclaimed the introduction of Islamic law (curiously, on a Sudanese model, obviously because no other was at hands). Iandarbiev’s successor, Aslan Maskhadov (b. 1951, in office 1997-2005), did not have strong Islamic credentials but was not able to stop the

³ Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, *Governing Fragmented Societies: State-Building and Political Integration in Chechnya and Ingushetia (1991-2009)*, unpubl. Ph.D. diss., Central European University (Budapest), 2009.

Islamization process. The paradigm shift in the separatist movement from nationalism to Islamism is thus closely connected to the rise of Salafism in Chechnya and to the militias that had been set up during the war, and that were led by several ambitious war lords competing with each other. Smuggling, criminality, and especially the “hostage industry” (taking hostages for ransom) thrived. From the position of Moscow (and the West), Chechnya was a failed state. Salafi warriors found financial sources and training grounds in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and many Arab mujahids had come to Chechnya to fight against the Russians. It is difficult to say why Sufism, which has traditionally been regarded as the embodiment of Chechen Islam, turned out to be no major political force; seemingly the Sufi *virds* did not produce any charismatic personalities and military leaders that could have overcome organizational fragmentation.

The rise of Salafism was closely connected to developments in neighboring Daghestan, where, already in the 1970s, Bagautdin Magomedov (b. 1946 in the Chechen village of Vedenov, at that time attached to Daghestan) and others had begun to teach the ‘pure Islam’ to Daghestanis and Chechens. By 1989 Magomedov was *amir* of an own community (*jama‘at*) and ran his own *madrasa* in Kiziliurt, Northern Daghestan; similar communities, as well as thousands of mosques, sprang up elsewhere in Daghestan and Chechnya during the “Islamic boom” of the late Perestroika years and early 1990s. Around 1996 Magomedov began to call for *jihad*, and in the following year he moved to Gudermes (Chechnya), where the Saudi-born and former Afghanistan *mujahid* al-Khattab (1969-2002) became close to him.⁴ Under their influence the Dargin village group of Kadar in central Daghestan declared itself independent Islamic territory (1997-1999), attracting many young Chechens and Daghestanis. Khattab had moved to Chechnya already in early 1995 and fought, under the command of Shamil Basaev (1965-2006), against the Russian invasion; after the war he led a number of military training camps in Chechnya. In June to August 1999 Islamists

⁴ Vladimir O. Bobrovnikov and Akhmed Iarlykapov, “Vakhkhability Severnogo Kavkaza”, in Stanislav M. Prozorov (ed.), *Islam na territorii byvsheï Rossiiskoi imperii. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (Moscow 2006), 84-91.

from Chechnya, under Basaev's and Khattab's command, attempted to occupy villages in Avaria/Daghestan but were repelled by the Russian army and the armed population; these attacks triggered off the Second Chechen War (1 October 1999 to 16 April 2009, when the Russian counter-terrorism operation was declared to be "officially concluded"). Due to the wars, terror, organized crime and economic devastation, most of the Russian population had left Chechnya by 2002, and so have hundreds of thousands of Chechens. First president of the re-established Chechen Republic within the Russian Federation was Akhmed Kadyrov, former Mufti of separatist Chechnya-Ichkeria; Kadyrov, who positioned himself against the Salafi challenges, had switched to Moscow's side shortly before the Russian invasion of fall 1999. Akhmed Kadyrov became victim to a bomb attack in 2004; after an interim solution he was eventually followed, in 2007, by his son Ramzan Kadyrov (b. 1976). The Kadyrovs were successful in incorporating many opponents into their militia and into the new administration, while the Russian FSB has been continuing to fight the remaining militants. This is what is commonly referred to as the "Chechenization" of the conflict: after most Russian troops left the country the conflict is largely one of Chechens against Chechens.⁵ While fighting the Islamists, Ramzan Kadyrov demonstrates an increased emphasis on what he calls "traditional" Chechen Islam; this is done via a republican Spiritual Board/Muftiate, by the construction of mosques (Groznyi now claims to have the hugest mosque in Europe) and an Islamic university, and through the restoration of popular Sufi shrines in the country. Consequently, the population finds itself subject to a "double Islamization" pressure, from the militant underground as well as from above, through the state.

After the second Russian invasion, the remaining Chechen Islamic militants (Basaev, Khattab and others) continued to carry out major terrorist attacks inside and outside of the Caucasus (e.g. the well-known hostage taking operations of Moscow Dubrovka Theatre in October 2002 and of a school in Beslan, North

⁵ Aleksei V. Malashenko, *Ramzan Kadyrov: Rossiiskii politik kavkazskoi natsional'nosti* (Moscow, 2009); Richard Sakwa, "The Revenge of the Caucasus: Chechenization and the Dual State in Russia", *Nationalities Papers* 38/5 (2010), 601-622.

Ossetia, in September 2004, for which Basaev claimed responsibility); a fairly recent feature is the devastating attacks by female suicide bombers (e.g. the Moscow Metro bombings of March 2010, for which Dokku Umarov claimed organizational responsibility, and the blast in Moscow Domodedovo airport in early 2011). As Kadyrov's rule strengthened in Chechnya proper (with massive financial support from Moscow for the reconstruction of Grozny), more terrorist groups became active in the neighboring republics, especially in Daghestan and Kabardino-Balkaria, where Islamist underground groups emerged that seem to act rather independently; especially in Daghestan assassinations of policemen, military personnel and officials (including Islamic authorities) occur almost on a weekly basis. In response, the military and interior ministry special forces conduct raids against suspected terrorists. Human Rights organizations continuously accuse all sides of excessive violence, and have documented a multitude of cases where civilians were killed or "disappeared".

Dokku Umarov's "Caucasus Emirate"

In October 2007 Dokku Umarov, leader of the Chechen militant Islamic opposition and (fifth) president of the defunct Republic of Chechnya-Ichkeria in the underground, proclaimed the termination of that republic and the establishment of an Islamic state, the Caucasus Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz), with himself as Amir.⁶ The major outlet for the underground militants is the internet; accordingly, their Emirate has rightfully been characterized as largely "virtual".

The following text is taken from the major website of the Chechen militants, *Kavkaz Center*, which was set up in Grozny in 1999 by Movladi Udugov, one of the major Chechen Islamic ideologists. Reportedly, this site has since then been run from changing places in the West (Sweden, Lithuania, Estonia), where it is seemingly not bothered by censorship; in Russia the site has been banned and

⁶ For the many uncertainties in our knowledge of Umarov's biography see Kevin Daniel Leahy, "From Racketeer to Emir: A Political Portrait of Russia's Most Wanted Man", *Caucasus Review of International Affairs* 4.3 (Summer 2010), 248-270 (largely based on interviews and internet sources).

blocked by various court decisions. For Western analysts, Kavkaz Center has been a welcome tool for obtaining some kind of “insider information” from the Chechen underground, and Gordon M. Hahn’s *Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Reports* (at the Monterey Institute of International Studies)⁷ provide regular updates on “what has been released” by the Chechen militants and their sympathizers. What is clear is that Kavkaz Center is a huge propaganda tool – and it is exactly as such that we analyze it here. There is no real possibility to verify any information, and except for the video messages we do not even know the authors of the contributions to this site, and their whereabouts. They might be sitting in the woods of Chechnya, in the mountains of Ingushetia, in the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, or in Moscow, Qatar, London, or New York. A significant part of the electronic production is devoted to attacks on Sufism, both in the Chechen/Ingush variant (the Kunta-Hajji cluster of virds) and of the Daghestani Naqshbandiyya khalidiyya and mahmudiyya; this vitriolic critique is largely borrowed from the classical patterns of Wahhabism, amounting to *takfir* (declaring that the Sufis and their followers are no Muslims). Sufis are represented as associates of the godless regimes in the North Caucasus. Yet this website (as well as some others) do not only target a domestic audience; while all “original” items seem to be written in Russian, many of the speeches and proclamations are also given in English and Arabic translations, and the site also comprises whole libraries of Russian texts on jihad and Islam that have been translated from the Arabic and English, plus many links to (and borrowings from) Salafi websites in English and Arabic from all over the world. As Alexander Knysh noted in his excellent analysis of the “virtual Emirate’s” electronic realm, “each language site [of Kavkaz Center] is designed to cater to the cultural and religious sensitivities of the target audience without, however, compromising the Emirate’s overall message.”⁸ Accordingly, the site presents a wide array of Islamic styles. Yet while

⁷ See also Gordon M. Hahn’s influential book, *Russia’s Islamic Threat* (Yale, 2007).

⁸ Alexander Knysh, “Islam and Arabic as the Rhetoric of Insurgency: The Case of the Caucasus Emirate”, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35 (2012), 315-337, here: 321. An earlier version of this article was published as “Virtual Jihad in the Twenty-First Century: The Case of the Caucasus Emirate”, *Ab Imperio* 1 (2010), 183-211.

Islamic elements are paramount, the sites also display a huge variety of specific Russian styles: thus the many updated “news reports” (mostly on recent terrorist attacks) borrow in form and style clearly from mainstream Russian journalism, while the Emirate’s “official” proclamations are full of what we have called the Russian Islamic administrative language, treating the various parts of the Caucasus (including Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) as “vilayats” (provinces) as if they were under the Emirate’s unifying control. The site displays a very wide spectrum of styles-contents relations; one even finds Islamic romantic poetry in the Russian language that is very close to Soviet soldiers’ songs from WWII, e.g. when fallen warriors are extolled as “martyrs” and “heroes of the fatherland”.

The one sample that we selected for translation below is a “message” (*poslanie*) by Dokku Umarov himself, published on Kavkaz Center on 30 August 2011 in the form of an edited transcript on the basis of Umarov’s video message that can also be visited on the site. The text gives an interesting account of how the major Chechen jihad field commanders arrived, over several years, at the decision to give up fighting for the (already defunct, due to the 1999 Russian occupation of Chechnya) Republic of Ichkeria (Chechnya) and instead to proclaim the establishment of an Islamic Emirate that is based on Sharia, the “Imarat Kavkaz”. This turn from the fight for a republic to the struggle for Islam is presented as resulting, at least in part, from the militants’ disillusion with the West. While Chechnya has clear national and geographical boundaries, the new Islamic Emirate is consciously left without fixed limits: it is supposed to encompass the whole of the Caucasus but potentially even parts of Southern Russia up to the Volga region.

In Umarov’s “message”, the major protagonists (next to Umarov) are (1) underground President of Ichkeria Aslan Maskhadov (killed March 8, 2005) who, according to Umarov, was a real Muslim but hesitated to proclaim an Islamic state because he still expected help from the West (esp. via the Chechen exile politician Zakaev); (2) Abdul-Khalim Sadulaev (1966-2006, Maskhadov’s deputy and successor in office between March 2005 and his death in June 2006), and (3) Shamil “Abu Idris” Basaev (1965-2006, the most prominent military leader of the resistance known also as the major organizer of terrorist attacks outside

Chechnya). In addition to these major players the text also mentions a number of other fighters, including some mujahids of Arab origin. During their first consultations (some time before 2005) about whether or not to replace the republic with the Islamic state, Dokku Umarov himself was only one of several military leaders. Then Maskhadov's deputy Sadulaev made Umarov his deputy (meaning that Umarov would become President in the case Maskhadov and Sadulaev would be killed). After Maskhadov's death and Sadulaev's rise to leadership, Basaev and Umarov agreed that they would eventually proclaim the Emirate. Shortly thereafter, in June/July 2006, not only Sadulaev but also Basaev were killed, which made Umarov the new leader. Umarov explains that he had problems to have himself recognized as the new leader because Seifullah (Anzor Astemirov, 1976-2010), an important military leader in Kabardino-Balkaria, announced that if Umarov does not proclaim the Islamic state, he would do so himself; and according to Umarov, the militants in the other neighboring republic, Daghestan, were ready to give an oath of allegiance to Seifullah. Accordingly, Dokku Umarov found himself pressed by non-Chechens to give up the fight for the Chechen Republic and to proclaim the (multi-national) Islamic state, since otherwise someone else would have done it, with the consequence that the Chechens would have lost their (anyways limited) control over the other "fronts".⁹ Umarov made this proclamation in fall 2007, and this message is devoted to its fourth anniversary. The document is thus an important self-testimony of Umarov's precarious situation between the "Western" (Kabardino-Balkarian) and "Eastern" (Daghestani) fronts, revealing that the Chechen jihadists were by 2007 to a certain degree dependent on Islamist leaders in neighboring republics. The text also gives insight into the factional strife (referred to as *fitna*) within the Chechen resistance; and finally it gives indications about how the militants communicated with each other, by means of sending audio cassettes (that were listened to collectively) and mutual visits and convocations.

Worth mentioning is also that the 2011 text makes a reference to the current events in Egypt (the "Arab Spring", which is here represented as the Muslim

⁹ Cf. Knysh, "Islam and Arabic", 329.

nations' strive for the establishment of Islam and Sharia). This "international" connection fits into the broader development – away from Chechen national liberation towards a jihad that hopes to link up with similar groups on a global scale.

The written text of Umarov's message (2,990 words, not including an introduction by the editor)¹⁰ is reproduced in literary Russian, though mostly in the form of spoken conversation and with few sophisticated literary devices. The text has probably been highly brushed up by an anonymous editor. In our translation¹¹ we try to preserve the "original tone" by not translating the many Arabic terms that are being used without Russian translation; we explain these terms in the footnotes. After the translation we offer a brief linguistic analysis of the text.

Shamil Asked Me: "When You Become Amir, Will You Proclaim the Emirate?" [Kavkaz Center, 30 August 2010]

(...)¹² [1:]

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, Who created us as Muslims and gave us the gift of Jihad [*oblagodel'stvoval Dzhikhadom*], giving us the possibility to conquer Paradise (*zavoevat' rai*). Peace and blessings to the Leader of all mujahids, the Prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions [*spodvizhniki*] and to all who followed his Path up to Judgment Day. And then:

We are doing a du'a¹³ for all who become shahids,¹⁴ for the Muslims who endure difficulties, inshaaLlah.¹⁵ We have been doing everything possible, and will continue with this work, to ease the burden that they encounter.

¹⁰ <http://kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2011/08/30/84755.shtml>

¹¹ Our translation has been produced independently of an anonymous English translation that is also posted on Kavkaz Center (next to an Arabic version).

¹² [The message is preceded by an anonymous editorial explaining that the message is dedicated to the fourth anniversary of the proclamation of the Imarat Kavkaz of 7 October 2007, and that this Emirate meant a "cardinal change" towards "the establishment of a united Islamic state of the Caucasus Muslims."]

I praise Allah for those events that occur in the Islamic world today. The Muslims are waking up, people go out [on the streets] against the dictators and tyrants. [There have been] many casualties. If they went out for the establishment of the Shariat of Allah, then they will get their reward. Those who fell in this battle will enter Paradise, inshaaLlah! But if they remove one dirty slave of the unbelievers from power only to install another, some Amr Musa or Mohammed el-Baradei, then one can only have pity with the ones who died, may Allah forgive them. And those who brought these people out [onto the streets] and threw them into the hail of bullets, those will receive their punishment on Judgment Day [*Sudnyi Den*'], inshaaLlah. We are doing a du'a that those who perished did indeed die for the sake of Allah, for the purpose of establishing Shariat in these countries, so that Muslims be aware [2:] of the truth and follow it.

[I.]

Many times in its history the Islamic Umma has encountered difficulties. And these difficulties came always when the Muslims were divided. In the time of the Mongols the first who died was the Shah of Khorezm. Neither the Caliphate of the Abbasids nor Egypt came to help him. The Mongols destroyed the Caliphate. The Caliph himself was killed.¹⁶ The Muslims were in a terrible panic. The Mullas and the corrupted scholars [*prodazhnye uchenye*] of those times, just like their counterparts today, did their despicable job. They claimed that the Mongols are Ya'juj and Ma'juj [*ia"zhudzh i ma"zhudzh*], the Gogs and Magogs [*gogi i magogi*].¹⁷ That it is impossible to fight against them and that it was necessary to wait for the coming of the Prophet 'Isa (peace be upon him),¹⁸ on whose prayer

¹³ [Arabic, "invocation to Allah", usually for the purpose of obtaining Allah's help in this or that respect; when translated as "prayer" it should not be confused with the five daily prayers (Arabic *salat*, Persian/Turkic *namaz*).]

¹⁴ [Arabic, "martyrs for the faith".]

¹⁵ [Arabic, "if Allah wills".]

¹⁶ [With the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258.]

¹⁷ [The Old Testament and the Quran mention Ya'juj and Ma'juj (Gog and Magog) as creatures that terrorize people, often with eschatological elements (the final battle before the end of the world).]

¹⁸ [This is Jesus, whom Islam regards as a prophet who comes back before Judgment Day.]

Allah will respond and destroy Ya'juj Ma'juj. After these words of the Mullas and of the corrupt scholars many Muslim armies simply dispersed and did not enter the battle with the Mongols.

The Mongol army counted 100.000 warriors, and their highest number [at one given point in time] was [only] up to 150.000. But they killed around ten million Muslims. In that severe time the Muslims of Egypt – of which very few remained, up to a point that if these [remaining Muslims of Egypt] had [also] died, then the religion of Islam might have disappeared –, by the will of Allah, displayed iman,¹⁹ steadfastness and bravery. They fought battles against the Mongols, gave them a crushing defeat,²⁰ and saved the religion of Allah. I wanted to especially mention this fact, in order that our brothers in Egypt do not forget their heroic history which the enemies attempt to distort, in order to plant among the Muslims the worship [*pochitanie*] for the dirty Egyptian Pharaohs.

There was a fitna²¹ in the past. It still exists today. But nevertheless we are doing Jihad, inshaAllah, because this is what Allah has imposed on us. But the Muslim who does not perform jihad (may Allah save us from this), or who did not have the intention to go out for jihad, will have died with the attributes of a hypocrite [*litsemer*].

We are today doing jihad according to our capabilities and possibilities, and if we had more forces then we would be doing even more. In our jihad we are opposed by the unbelievers and murtadds [*nevernye i murtady*]. Each time we give another blow to the unbelievers, the munafiqs and murtadds start fighting against us even more actively than the kafirs.²²

¹⁹ [Arabic, "belief".]

²⁰ [In 1260, in the battle of 'Ayn Jalut in Palestine, the Mamluks of Egypt defeated the Mongol forces of Hülägü, thereby stopping the Mongol advance into the Mediterranean.]

²¹ [Arabic, "temptation", "civil strife", "civil war".]

²² [In Umarov's jihadi terminology a *kafir* is an "unbeliever" (here also comprising Christians); a *munafiq* is a "hypocrite" who claims he is Muslim but does not perform the acts of jihad that, according to the Jihadists, are needed to support his status as a Muslim; a *murtadd* is an apostate who, in Jihadi terminology, has renounced Islam by supporting the enemies of the Jihadists. The act of claiming that a person who describes himself as a Muslim is indeed no Muslim is called *takfir* ("to

We gave them a blow in Moscow.²³ It was Allah's will that the kafirs managed to identify the personality of our brother who performed the *istishhad*²⁴ [in the Moscow aerodrome of Domodedovo]. We had learned about it still before [we] sent out the video message for publication. We published the recorded message only after the kafirs had identified the personality of our brother. The Russians discussed for a long time why we did not publish the recorded message earlier, and tried to attach some importance to it. We know the methods of the Russian kafirs and therefore tried to protect the relatives and close ones of our brother from their arbitrariness. But the enemy [*vrag*] will always interpret things in their own ways.²⁵

For us this year has, *alhamdulillah*,²⁶ begun well. By showing patience we have also overcome the fitna in this year. So, say a *du'a* for us. Of course we still encounter difficulties, big difficulties. Even if you try to foresee all nuances, still not everything succeeds. The enemy does not sleep and works against us, trying to respond to our activities. Some of our plans are thwarted, but *inshaaLlah* we are doing what we can, and the result depends on Allah.

[II.]

Now I would like to touch upon the question of the proclamation of the Imarat Kavkaz. Much talk has been in circulation since then. For this reason I believe that it would be beneficial to shed light on some aspects that might not be very well-known.

denounce somebody as an unbeliever, to make him a *kafir*"). Thus the difference between *kafir* and *murtadd* is that the latter once belonged to Islam.]

²³ [Referring to the terrorist attack of a suicide bomber at Moscow Domodedovo Airport on 24 January 2011, killing 37 people and injuring 173.]

²⁴ [Arabic, "to strive for obtaining the status of a *shahid* [martyr]"; as suicide (and thus also suicide bombing) is highly controversial in Islam, *istishhad* is the jihadi term meant to give suicide bombings Islamic legitimacy. Traditional scholars would object that you cannot force Allah to take you into Paradise; and it is for this reason that Umarov repeatedly emphasizes that Allah has the final decision.]

²⁵ [Here Umarov seems to try to make sense of why in his first internet reaction to the Domodedovo bombing he did not claim responsibility (vaguely arguing instead that the responsibility lay with the Russians themselves), while he later did claim responsibility.]

²⁶ [Arabic, *al-hamdu li-Llah*, "praise be to Allah".]

Allah, in his mercy, gave us the understanding of what is going on in this world. As we know from a hadith, all Muslims are like a single organism. By mutual love, support, and brotherhood. And if one part of the body is hurting, then the whole body feels the pain. This hadith instructs us about the duty of our unity and of helping each other. Jihad is going on in the whole world, and for us time has come to align the arkans²⁷ [*vyrovniivat' arkany*] of this jihad. And if you do not repair [*ispravliat'*] them, then there is already a question about [the correctness] of your 'aqida.²⁸ And so, when this question came up, we [p. 3:] proclaimed the Imarat.

We have to direct our attention to [the problem] in whose company those munafiqs find themselves who spread lies about the Imarat. Let us recall a hadith which says that on Judgment Day each of us will be resurrected [*voskreshchen*]²⁹ together with those whom one loves in this world. Kadyrov says: "I respect Putin, I love Putin." That means, on Judgment Day he will be resurrected together with Putin, inshaallah. Another one will sit next to Berezovskii. We have to remember that neither Berezovskii nor anybody else in Moscow would ever have made money if he had not been under the roof of the KGB, and they cannot use the money they earned without permission from the "office" [*kontora*]. We also know that the agents of the KGB, FSB and the people linked to them never go into retirement. They just change the area of their activities if this is necessary for their organization. The money that Berezovskii now owns is the treasure of that same KGB, which is being replenished by his business activities in Russia. Zakaev,³⁰ who lives on that treasure and pays the education of his children and the maintenance of his family [from it], will, on Judgment Day, also be with those

²⁷ [From Arabic *rukḥ*, pl. *arkan*, "first principles", "basic elements".]

²⁸ [here: *akida*, from Arabic *'aqida*, "dogma", "doctrine", "creed", "belief". The idea here is that the obligation of jihad, and of living in an Islamic state, has to be seen as a duty, and that the Muslim who does not accept this duty has an incomplete faith that needs "repair", in order to not let him fall into unbelief.]

²⁹ [A major tenet of Islam is the belief in the bodily resurrection.]

³⁰ [Akhmed Zakaev (b. 1959), Chechen military leader and prominent politician under Aslan Maskhadov, lobbying for the defunct republic of Ichkeria in the West; obtained political asylum in the UK.]

whom he loved in this world, inshaaLlah. Therefore everything that these people said, say or will say about the Imarate, is lies. There is not one gram of truth in their words.

I went out for jihad in order to elevate the word of Allah, inshaaLlah, to fulfil the fard,³¹ because I love Allah, love His religion, love the Prophet Muhammad (*'alayhi salat wa-salam*).³² My brothers in Islam went out [to jihad] together with me, inshaaLlah.

Aslan Maskhadov, taking into account the situation in the world, and out of political considerations, tried to give some rest and a break to the people in order to come back to strength, and played politics; thereby he entered into confrontation with those who strongly insisted on [their call] to take on the position of Islam. Holding on to his position and to politics, he hoped that the West would really follow up to its declarations. He hoped there would be some kind of justice [*spravedlivost'*] from their side.

I talked a lot to him. In his soul Aslan understood well the real worth of those Western politicians. I can testify that he was a true Muslim and that he loved Islam. Therefore in 2002 Aslan selected Abdulhalim [Sadullaev] as his na'ib.³³ And he made a veset (testament [*zaveshchanie*])³⁴ to Abdulhalim that if he [i.e., Maskhadov] perishes, he [i.e., Sadullaev] would chose Abu Usman (Dokku Umarov) as his na'ib.

Why did Aslan select me, why did he set up this chain [of successors]? Because my convictions had not yet been clearly formed out, although I knew what the

³¹ [Arabic, "religious duty". The five individual duties of Islam are shahada (testimony), prayer, Ramadan fasting, hajj, and zakat alms; jihad, in Islamic legal thought, is not a personal duty but a collective one, meaning that a given community must produce enough jihad fighters (especially if it is under attack). There is a long-standing debate about who can declare jihad, and when exactly the collective duty turns into a personal one.]

³² [Arabic in Cyrillic transliteration.]

³³ [Arabic, "deputy", "successor".]

³⁴ [The term *veset* is a Caucasian form – e.g. in the Chechen and Avar lexicon – derived from Arabic *wasiiyya*, "testament".]

kafirs were worth. Aslan knew my relations with Zakaev³⁵ and in this context hoped that one could, by this line [of contacts], still try to establish some kind of process via the West, in order to ease the situation of the people. For this reason I was selected as the na'ib to Abdulhalim.

In fact, there was some misunderstanding among the people. In 2002 Arsanov, Gelaev and Abdulmalik Mezhidov³⁶ refused to give the bay'at³⁷ (oath [*prisiaga*]) to Aslan Maskhadov. We had a meeting with them. We demanded from them that they explain their refusal to give the bay'at, and their first argument was that, allegedly, they had been called FSB-people [*efesbeshniki*], that they had been insulted, and so forth... Also Shamil [Basaev] and many other commanders were present. We asked: Did Maskhadov perhaps ask you to retreat from religion [*otstupit' ot religii*]? No. Or did he say to not do jihad? No.

Shamil told them that he disliked Maskhadov more than any other of those who were present. Yet he would not argue with Maskhadov while jihad was still going on, since this would have been a crime [*prestuplenie*]. "When the jihad is over, and when it is still necessary, then I will turn to a Shariat Court and there I will deal with him," Shamil said. Shamil insisted that they gave their bay'at to Aslan. This is how our "negotiation process" [*peregovornyi protsess*] ended. [4:]

On the second day they came with new arguments. They said that this is not a jihad, since the war is being fought with the wrong 'aqida. The major speaker [of the opponents] was Hamzat Gelaev,³⁸ who said that we were fighting for the republic, for Ichkeria, and not for Shariat, not for an Islamic state.

At that time I was not much into these issues, I did not reflect on them. For this reason I [just] listened, for I was the amir of the Southwestern front, a member of the majlis.³⁹ That was very important to me.

³⁵ [According to some reports, Umarov had once enjoyed the protection of Zakaev, and it was Zakaev who recommended Umarov to Aslan Maskhadov for the position of chairman of Ichkeria's Security Council, which Umarov obtained in 1997.]

³⁶ [Vakha Arsanov (1950-2005), a former deputy of Maskhadov and field commander; Abdulmalik Mezhidov, field commander and for a time head of the "Shari'a Guard".]

³⁷ [Arabic, "oath of allegiance", especially to the Caliph as the leader of the Muslims.]

³⁸ [Khamzat (Ruslan) Gelaev (1964-2004), a major Chechen military/guerilla leader in all wars.]

³⁹ [Arabic, "council".]

Back then Shamil convinced them. He said that this is jihad, that it is difficult to change everything in just one moment, that this needs more [preparational] work. He said that already in 2002, in Duba-Iurt, it was proposed to Aslan to carry out the decisive step [to proclaim the Islamic state]. But the decision in this question was postponed, fearing that many might go into different directions, might leave and fill up the ranks of the munafiqs. Therefore it was suggested to achieve the transformation of the state towards Islamic positions only gradually.

But today it is obvious that such an approach was a mistake. Had we taken the decision to proclaim the Islamic state already at that time, then we would have already back then exposed the fitna,⁴⁰ and by today we would perhaps already have purified ourselves, and what has happened [more recently] would not have happened.

After long talks they declared that they would give the bay‘at to Dokku. But what does Dokku have to do with this? Dokku is just the amir of one front. The bay‘at must be given to Maskhadov. And to Shamil, as the military amir [*voennyi amir*]. After this they gave the bay‘at to Shamil, and we sent them home.⁴¹

At that time we planned an operation in Ossetia, but it did not take place. Here we will not reveal the reasons why it did not take place. We leave this all to be decided by Allah. The operation did not take place. After this Hamzat [Gelaev] said that he would go. I was sent after Hamzat and reached him at the river Gekhi [in Chechnya]. I asked Hamzat where he was intending to go. He said he would go to Iraq. I asked: “How, you are going to Iraq, with whose permission are you going to Iraq?” He replied that he does not need a permission. Hamzat declared that our war does not have an Islamic foundation. “You are fighting for Ichkeria, under the flag of Ichkeria. But in Iraq there is a real jihad, and they proclaimed an Emirate.” I was very stunned. I said, in that case what you say is that we are not fighting for the sake of Allah, we are [just] militants [*boeviki*], and you are the only mujahid?!

⁴⁰ [That is, it would have come to light that some fighters do not have “the right belief”.]

⁴¹ [Seemingly, the oath to Basaev could also be interpreted as an oath to Maskhadov, whom Basaev here represented.]

A heavy dispute broke out between me and Hamzat. Many from the people of Gelaev who were present [at this dispute] are still alive. The Algerian Abu Amr, without feet. We sat down. From my side there was Sayf Islam, from Hamzat's side there were many 'alims, and there were many Arabs. During the discussion Mansur, who [later] perished, took my side, and said: "Abu Usman is right, after all this is still jihad, even if we have something else on our tongues. In any case, if Maskhadov promised, gave his word, that some day he proclaims the Emirate [*Emirat*], then we have no right to leave today, since what we are currently doing [by not yet proclaiming an Islamic state] is just a stratagem [*khitrost'*]."

Mansur stood on my side. Hamzat said: "In this case I will stay with you." What happened later is well-known. And also this we leave to Allah [to judge], here we will not talk about it.

This is how I learned about the issue of the Imarat. After this I started to think about it a lot. I did not have the occasion to discuss this with Aslan, and to ask him about all this. Aslan was killed, may Allah give him the Shahada.⁴² [5:]

Then I met with Shamil. I informed him that Abdulhalim had made me his na'ib. Shamil immediately said that he had to quickly go to another place, although he had come just the day before. I tried to talk him out of this, but he insisted that he had to go.

After two days Shamil returned unexpectedly. He approached me, gave me his salam, asked for my pardon and congratulated me with my appointment [*naznachenie*]. I asked Shamil, "What is going on?" Shamil replied that he had a contract [*dogovor*] with Abdulhalim, [according to which Abdulhalim] will proclaim the Emirate, and he will appoint Shamil as his na'ib. And after this Shamil would organize the work so that everyone in the Caucasus would give the bay'at to Abdulhalim.

Shamil explained the situation to me. [He explained] the mood of the mujahids in other regions of the Caucasus who do not want to give the bay'at to Abdulhalim. I said to Shamil that in this case I am not the amir, I lay down my

⁴² [That is, to accept him as a martyr (*shahid*). Maskhadov was killed in a special operation of the FSB in Tolstoi-Iurt in Chechnya, on March 8, 2005.]

office [*dolzhnost'*] of being a na'ib, I will from now on be your mujahid. Shamil replied, "No, what has been done is already done." He told me that he had a meeting with Abdulhalim and that everything has already been clarified. Abdulhalim had told Shamil that he was carrying out Maskhadov's testament, which he simply had to carry out. Abdulhalim promised that he would proclaim the Imarat in any case, and that he would finish the transformation of the state.

Further there was the Kabardinian operation (in Nal'chik).⁴³ Shamil returned from there. We met, and when we sat down to discuss the situation Shamil informed me that with great difficulties he managed to convince Seifullah, the Amir of Kabardino-Balkaria,⁴⁴ and his mujahids to give the bay'at to Abdulhalim. And with Daghestan the same thing. Amir Maksharip⁴⁵ and his mujahids told Shamil that it cannot continue like this and that changes are necessary.

I asked Shamil about which changes he was talking. Shamil replied: "The Imarat. When Maskhadov, Abu Umar, and Abu Valid [were still alive] we all agreed that we would proclaim the Imarat, that we would completely eliminate the taghut,⁴⁶ that we would eliminate all worldly laws, and that we would completely proclaim the Shariat. This was the agreement [*dogovorennost'*]. But this contract [*dogovor*] was not fulfilled, and the mujahids are worried about this situation."

I said, I do not really understand what you say, but I know one thing for sure, I have full trust in Abdulhalim, and he will do better what is necessary for Islam than you and me, and I have no doubts about this. I also told Shamil that if he spoils his relation with Abdulhalim, this would also mess up my relation to him [i.e., Basaev].

⁴³ [The attack of probably more than 200 militants on several administrative buildings and the airport in Nalchik, 13-14 October 2005.]

⁴⁴ [Seifullah is the Islamic name of Anzor Astemirov (1976-2010), the leader of the Yarmuk Jama'at in Kabardino-Balkaria, regarded as one of the masterminds behind the proclamation of the Emirate, next to Movladi Udugov.]

⁴⁵ [Rasul Makkasharipov (1972-2005), leader of the Daghestani Jennet, then Shariat Jama'at organizations.]

⁴⁶ [Arabic, "idol", historically the term for the idols in the shrine of Mecca in pre-Islamic times; later taken as a pars pro toto for everything non-Islamic, and particularly for non-Islamic political rule.]

I was really worried on this issue and sent an audio tape [*kasetta*] to Abdulhalim with my question. He replied by sending a tape back to me. At this moment I was together with Shamil. Abdulhalim spoke on the tape, and turned to me: “Abu Usman, they are right and our brother Abu Idris (Shamil) is also right; but today we do not have the strength and we need at least a little respite. [With some respite] we would re-equip ourselves with weapons and other things that we need, and we would do da‘wa⁴⁷ among the people and stir them up. At present I have a negotiation process going on with Islam Khalimov and Zakaev (I remember perfectly that he mentioned these two names). If that does not bring any results, then we will make the changes, carry out the transformation of the state, and proclaim the Imarat.”

Shamil and me listened to this tape together, and I have witnesses for this. When the topic of the negotiation process was mentioned, Shamil jumped up, although he had an artificial limb, and said: “Aaa, this one [i.e., Abdulhalim] has also already prepared himself to die, they will kill him as well, no doubt about it.”

Then Shamil turned to me and said: “When you become amir, will you proclaim the Emirate?” I replied: “You will become amir, and I will make the bay‘at to you.” Shamil said: “There can be no talk about this, for us there is no difference who of us will become amir, you or me, we have to work together.” I said: “No doubt, if you are at my side, and if this is right, if this path is what Allah wants, then we will proclaim it.” Shamil replied: “I will send you a man, our brother who is now in NaI’chik,⁴⁸ he will help with the preparation.”

A short time after this they killed Abdulhalim.⁴⁹ I became amir, and almost immediately after this also Shamil was killed⁵⁰ (may Allah reward our brothers with the Shahada).

We have to remember the situation that we were in after all this happened. What was our situation in Chechnya, how many weapons did we still have, how

⁴⁷ [Arabic, “call to Islam”, “propaganda”.]

⁴⁸ [Obviously the above-mentioned “Seif Allakh” Anzor Astemirov.]

⁴⁹ [Abdul-Khalim Sadullaev was killed on 17 June 2006 in a gun fight with FSB special forces in Argun, Chechnya.]

⁵⁰ [Shamil Basaev was killed on 10 July 2006, probably by an accidental explosion.]

many men were still with us, in what kind of situation did we find ourselves? I can say precisely, and I can support my words with an oath, that on the Southwestern front there were not even a few dozen mujahids left.

And when, after Shamil's death, they brought me the papers and documents that he had with him, I found among them all seals [*pechati*] of the Imarat Kavkaz, of the highest amir of the Caucasus, of the military amir of the Caucasus. It was Shamil who had produced them all. The papers had already been formulated, had been prepared. We just edited them, completed them by [adding] hadiths to them, and I proclaimed the Imarat.

Why did we proclaim it? At that time Amir Seifullah sent me a tape from Nal'chik, in which he informed me: "Brother, we had made an agreement with our brother Abu Idris (Shamil) that this year, when he comes to Nal'chik, we will proclaim the Imarat. Abu Idris [in turn] made an agreement with our brother Abdulhalim, but today you do not honor this contract, and thus the question emerges whether your 'aqida is correct. If you do not proclaim the Imarat, then I will be forced to proclaim it myself, and to call upon the fighting brothers in the Caucasus to make the bay'at to me." If all that had happened this would have been a real split [*konkretnyi raskol*]. In any case I know that the Daghestanis would have done the bay'at to Seifallah, and the Ingush [7:] would have done the bay'at, and we would have been left out.

It was already obvious that people would not come to join us, our ranks do not get replenished [if we are fighting] under the flag of Ichkeria, because the Zakaevs and others made out of this Ichkeria their feeding trough [*kormushka*] for their lives abroad. Others went with Kadyrov. In this situation the youth, which has never heard about Ichkeria, is not ready to come under the flag of Ichkeria and to make jihad. This is what I saw. The situation had changed. We do not need those who go out ['into the woods', to join the mujahids] just in order to take revenge for the murder of their father or for their abducted sister, nor the romantics who go out to demonstrate their bravery. We need only those who went out with the pure intention [to fight] for the sake of Allah, who love His religion, who have the right 'aqida, who went out in order to follow the order [*prikaz*] of Allah, who love

His Messenger (*'alayhi salat wa-salam*) and who love Paradise. Only this youth, only these people we could call to Jihad, Allahu Akbar!

This is why it was the time [that we live in] and the new generation of the Islamic youth that forced us to proclaim the Imarat.

AlhamduliLlah, not only do I have no regrets about this decision, I am proud of it. AlhamduliLlah, today we witness all the barakat⁵¹ that we get from Allah for having made this decision. We see how Jihad and the religion of Allah are now expanding and strengthening, inshaaLlah, and there will be more consequences, no doubt about it.

Today none of us knows where and when his life will be interrupted. AlhamduliLlah, I am ready for death at any minute, I am tranquil and do not worry about this. I am ready for death at any place, even behind the steering wheel of a "Kamaz" [truck] with explosives. At my side are very good mujahids, who have a good iman. They do their work sincerely, from the heart [*ot dushi*], and I think that we are purifying ourselves.

Four years have passed since we proclaimed the Imarat on 25 Ramadan 1428. It was Allah's will that we proclaimed it exactly in Ramadan. So that for us this is a double event.

I congratulate all Muslims with the Ramadan, congratulate them with the coming of the 'Id al-Fitr feast, and I remind the Muslims that the mujahids who give their lives for the sake of Allah have a right to obtain your support. And you have a duty before Allah to help the mujahids, and about this you will be asked on Judgment Day; and we will testify for or against you. I remind the Muslims of [the necessity to show] piety [*bogoboiaznennost'*] and responsibility, and of the importance to settle accounts for themselves before the Day of the true account will come. And may Allah help all his sincere slaves on His straight path.

Allahu Akbar!!!

Amir Imarat Kavkaz Dokku Abu Usman

[End of the document.]

⁵¹ [Arabic, "blessing".]

Analysis of the language and style

At first glance this text (and many other texts of similar provenance) strikes the reader by the multitude of Arabic expressions that are not translated or explained; the texts thus speak to an “insider reader” who shares the conceptual apparatus of the writer. As Alexander Knysh has already noted, on sites like Kavkaz Center “Arabic is deployed as an alternative symbolic capital aimed at setting its users apart from the Russophone ruling elites of the Northern Caucasus republics as well as [from] the local ethnic nationalists anxious to revive their local vernaculars in order to reassert their newly discovered and reimagined national identities”; this leads to the creation of “a new, Islamic (Arabophone) linguistic community”.⁵² “Arabophone” here refers to the use of literary Arabic for composing Arabic texts, but it also refers to the integration of Arabic terms into Russian texts (and the latter phenomenon is not restricted to the web, as we have seen in the preceding chapters with Valishin’s samizdat brochures and Abu Maryam’s audio messages that are also distributed on cassettes).

The electronic library of Kavkaz Center has indeed a lot of Arabic materials of Caucasian provenance, and also a huge amount of Russian texts with heavy borrowings from the Arab lexicon. However, a closer look at the lexicon and phraseology in the document translated above suggests a somewhat more nuanced picture.

a) Islamic phrases and conventions:

The “message” begins with the traditional introduction (*basmala*, “In the name of Allah, the Merciful...”), followed by the praise of the prophet Muhammad, his family and his companions. The main text is introduced by the formula *A zatem*, which is a literal translation of the standard formula in Arabic epistles, *Amma ba’d* (in the sense of “Now we come to the content of what this message is about”). Other formulas repeated in the text are *al’khamduliLlakh* (Arab. *al-hamdu li-llah*, “Praise be God”), *inshaaLlakh* (*in sha’a Llah*, “God willing”), *Allakhu Akbar* (esp. at the text’s end), and every time the prophet Muhammad is mentioned the traditional Arabic eulogy follows in brackets, in Cyrillic without

⁵² Knysh, “Virtual Emirate”, 208; slightly differently phrased in Knysh, “Islam and Arabic”, 330.

Russian translation. Allah, by contrast, is never given a eulogy. Also, Allah is never translated as “God”; and in general Allah is always referred to as Allah, never by any other names. The Russian word “god” (*bog*) only occurs in *bogoboiaznennost’* (“god-fearing, piety”).

Like in traditional epistles, sometimes a formula is personalized, in the first person singular or plural: *Ia voskhvaliaiu Allakha za te sobytiia...* (“I praise Allah for those events...”); *My delaem dua, chtoby smert’ pogibshikh...* (“We make a prayer to Allah that the death of those who died...”), or in the second person plural (*delaite za nas dua* [“do a prayer for us”]). While the text talks about past events, it intermittingly also directly addresses the listener: *esli ty ikh ne ispravliaesh’, to uzhe vstaet vopros o tvoei akide* (“if you do not correct them [i.e. the pillars of your faith], then your correct belief is already under question”).

The field commanders – most of whom had many years of military experience from two wars and various guerrilla operations, and most of whom found a violent death in recent years – are referred to by their Russian names as well as by their Arabic *noms de guerre*: Dokku Umarov is also “Abu Usman” (“father of Uthman”), while Shamil Basaev is “Abu Idris”, and Anzor Astemirov is “Seifullakh” (Arab. Sayfallah, “Allah’s Sword”).

b) Islamic terms in the form of Arabic loanwords:

A significant number of Arabic terms are used in the text without any further explanation of what they mean, thus assuming that the reader is familiar with them. These terms come from various semantic fields:

Jihad-related:

- *Dzhihad* (Arabic *jihad*; mostly with a capital [D], seemingly to emphasize its importance as a central tenet, and *mudzhakhid* (*mujahid*, “jihad fighter”).
- *shakhid* (Arabic *shahid*, “martyr for the faith”) and *Shakhada* (*shahada*, “status of being killed as a martyr, to be bestowed upon someone by Allah”, again with capital letter).
- *fitna* (Arabic *fitna*, “strife among Muslims, civil war”).
- *daavat* (*da’wa*, “missionary call to Islam, propaganda”).

- designations for enemies are: *kafir* (“unbeliever”, here used interchangeably with Russian *nevernye*), *murtad* (Arabic *murtadd*, “apostate of Islam”), *munafik* (*munafiq*, “hypocrite [in religion]”, interchangeably used with Russian *litsemery*, the widespread denunciation of Muslims who are regarded as loyal to Moscow).
- Terms from the field of Islamic state theory are: *Imarat* (Arabic *imara*, “emirate”, interchangeably with the Russian form *Emirat*); *amir* (“leader of the emirate”); *madzhlis* (*majlis*, “[leading political] council [of the jihadists]”).
- A curious case is *khalifat*, “the caliphate”. This Russian form – just like the English “caliphate” – is not an Arabic loan word but a derivative from Russian “khalif”, going back (just like the English “Caliph”) to Arabic *khalifa*, “caliph”. The correct Arabic word for “caliphate” would be *khilafa*, thus pronounced and written very differently. *Khilafa* does however not occur.

Broader religious items:

- *shariat* (Arabic *shari‘a*, “Islamic law”);
- *khadis* (*hadith*, tradition of the prophet Muhammad);
- *akida* (*‘aqida*, “faith/dogma/doctrine”, here in the sense of “having a correct understanding of Islam”), closely related to *iman* (Arabic *iman*, “faith”);
- *barakat* (*baraka*, “Allah’s blessing”);
- *dua* (*du‘a*, prayer for someone);
- *alim* (*‘alim*, “scholar”);
- *tagut* (Arab. *taghut*, “idol of the pagans”).
- Not given in Arabic terms are crucial concepts like “Paradise” (given only in the Russian form, *rai*), “resurrection”, and also “Prophet” (*prorok*, not *nabi*) and “companions of the Prophet” (*spodvizhniki*, not *sahaba/sakhaba* or *ashab/askhab*).
- The Quran is not mentioned in this text, nor are suras and ayas referred to.

What we see here is that the semantic pool of Islamic terms is limited to about 20 terms that are constantly reoccurring. Most of these terms are directly related to jihad contexts.

The words of Arabic origin are in most cases subjected to Russian declination (e.g. the accusative of *fitna* is *fitnu*, the genitive plural of *alim* is *alimov*). The subjection of the Arabic terms to Russian laws of flexion indicates that they are accepted as loan words; this can also be inferred from the parallel use of Arabic and Russian forms (like *munaḥḥik* and *litsemer*), where the reader is supposed to know that they are synonyms.

Many Arabic feminine nouns ending on [-a] are used with the -at ending instead: *barakat* instead of Arabic *baraka*, *baiat* instead of *bai'a*. Curiously, this leads to a gender transformation from Arabic femininum to Russian masculinum. In literary Arabic the [-t] is above all added in *status constructus*, when the word is followed by a genitive (*baraka*, but *barakat Allah*, “the Baraka of Allah”). Here the explanation of this phenomenon seems to be that in the Chechen language (as well as in most Turkic languages) some feminine Arabic loanwords are having the [-t]-ending, with the result that also the Russian forms have an [-at] ending (e.g. Russian “shariat” versus English “Sharia”). This suggests that the Russian text here obtained part of its terminology via the local vernaculars of the North Caucasus. This is supported by the circumstance that the Arabic *fitna* is not presented as *fitnat*, as could be expected, but as *fitna* – the form this word also has in the local vernaculars. Also the fact that all Arabic vocals are rendered in their Arabic form (a, i, u are not turning into e or o, as is the case in some Turkic languages of the region)⁵³ supports the assumption that at least a part of the Islamic lexicon is used as in Chechen forms, since in Chechen the vocals of Arabic loanwords are largely unchanged.

Notable is furthermore that the Arabic letter ‘ayn [‘] (in *bay'at* or *du'a*) is consistently ignored, leading to a certain change of phonology (*baiat*, *dua*). Only in *daavat* (Arab. *da'wa*) the ‘ayn is represented, in the form of a second [a]. On

⁵³ The only exception being the variant *modzhakhed* parallel to *mudzhakhid*, which might be accidental.

the other hand, Arabic hamzas ['] in middle positions (where they function as “glottal stops”) are preserved in *ia”zhudzh* and *ma”zhudzh* (on which see below), curiously in a rather sophisticated form through the Russian “tverdyi znak” ь (like in Russian *ob”iavlennie*). In *naib* (“deputy”, *na’ib*) the hamza is however not represented – the Russian [ai] indicates the hiatus sufficiently (as long as it is not written with i-kratkoe).

Arabic irregular plural words are sometimes used, for instance in *arkany* (“the pillars [of faith]”). This is strictly speaking a double plural, reflecting an insecurity in the usage of an Arabic loanword: in the Arabic language *arkan* is already the plural of *rukn*; the author added a second Russian plural marker [-y] to it.

Some terms used in the text are accompanied (by the editor, obviously) by a translation in brackets, which indicates that their knowledge cannot be presupposed: *veset* (*zaveshchanie*) [Arab. *wasyyat*, “testament”; the shorter form *veset* is current in the vernaculars]; *baiat* (*prisiaga*) [*bay’a*, oath of allegiance to an Islamic ruler]; *ia”zhudzh i ma”zhudzh* (*gogi i magogi*) (the monsters Gog and Magog/Ya’juj and Ma’juj from the Bible and the Quran); the readers are supposed to know the monsters but maybe not the Arabic form, so the editor just added the Russian version of them – interestingly in a plural form.

c) Terms of other origin:

While the text is thus heavily “Islamicized”, it also contains other elements that make it very “Russian”, and even “slangish”: *kontora* (“the office”, for the KGB/FSB secret service), *efesheshniki* (for FSB agents), *kormushka* (“a safe and well-paid place in the West that someone has chosen by turning away from jihad”), *romantiki* (“youngsters who want to fight but do not realize the purpose of jihad”). The use of slang expressions contrasts with phrases in the reported conversation that could be taken from newspaper Russian: *U menia seichas idet peregovornyi protsess s Khalimovym Islamom i Zakaevym* (“I am now in a process of negotiation with....”, instead of, for instance, “I am in contact with”).

Conclusions:

The strong use of Arabic words is obviously meant to imply “Arabic authenticity”; this corresponds to the fact that the text mentions the presence of many jihad

fighters of Arab origin among the Chechen war leaders. There is thus a certain contact situation with native speakers of Arabic that might have influenced Umarov's style. At the same time the pool of Arabic terms is rather small, and the Islamic phraseology is unsophisticated; this means that the "core language of jihad" does not presuppose a deeper Islamic education. The semantic analysis shows further that most Arabic terms are directly related to military contexts; and although a central topic of the text is "a question of dogma ('aqida)", this boils down to a political issue – the establishment of an Islamic state. With other words, we can say that the text requires insider knowledge (and this is supported by the mentioning of a number of personal names of Caucasian jihadists), but this insider knowledge is easy to learn. This might reflect the limited Islamic education (if any) that the author had obtained; it might also be a conscious strategy to attract followers. The Islamic style of the document contrasts with the use of pejorative Russian slang words to denounce the enemies; the combination of Islamic terminology and slang seems to be characteristic for the environment of the *boeviki* ("fighters").

While other texts on the same website are full of references to the Quran, the traditions of the prophet, and Islamic dogmatic and legal literature, Umarov's "message" makes no direct reference to any Islamic sources; a hadith is vaguely referred to but not even quoted or identified, and in general the individual field commanders discuss the issue of an Islamic state from rather pragmatic viewpoints. Here we should keep in mind that the "messages" of the various militants are often taped and filmed somewhere in the woods, where no literature is available. There is good reason to assume that the political messages are first produced and then "brushed up" by adding references to the Islamic tradition: Umarov himself gives an example when he explains that Shamil Basaev had already prepared the political document of the proclamation of the Islamic state, but that Umarov's team still regarded it as necessary to "fill them up with hadiths" (*popolnit' khadisami*) before publishing it.

PART IV:
“RUSSIAN MUSLIMS”

SHII ISLAM FOR THE RUSSIAN RADICAL YOUTH: ANASTASIIA (FATIMA) EZHOVA'S "KHOMEINISM"

Michael Kemper

The article below, "Russian Islam: Environments, Motifs, Tendencies and Perspectives", comes from a very different environment – that of ethnic Russians in Moscow who converted to Islam, mostly for political convictions. As the publication tells us, its author, Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova (b. 1983), is a very active Islamic journalist in Russian radical newspapers and was at the time of writing a PhD student at Moscow State University. The article of twenty-three pages, published in 2011 in the Islamic literary journal *Chetki* (Moscow), is a stylistically very sophisticated claim that there is a strong affinity between Russian left- and right-wing political radicalism and Islam, especially in its Shii version.

The strict structure of the article in five chapters ("Can a Russian be a Muslim?", "Russian Islam: The First Swallows and the 'Second Generation'", "The Islamic Committee and NORM", "The Russian Shiites", "Russian Muslims and the Muslim Community of Russia (MOR)") leads the reader through a history of "Russian Islam" since the beginnings in the 1980s. The most striking feature of the article is its sharp polemics against a multitude of Islamic groups, in addition to Orthodox Christianity and "the Jews". In the course of her article Ezhova attacks almost all existing trends of Islam in Russia:

(1) the traditional "ethnic" Islam of Tatars of the old generation who allegedly connect Islam only to their Tatar ethnicity, and who therefore have little understanding for Russian Muslims,

(2) the Islam of Arabs in the Near East, which the author regards as corrupted by customs (*'adat*) that run counter to the rulings of Quran and Sharia,

(3) the Russian Muslims of the "first wave" of the 1980s who dropped Orthodox Christianity and accepted Islam in search for "pure spirituality", and who thereby ignored Islam's political message,

(4) the Islam of the “diaspora” in Russia (esp. Central Asians and Caucasians in Moscow) who antagonize the Russian nationalists and patriots with their particularist claims,

(5) the intellectual Islamic project of Ezhova’s former teacher, the Moscow-based leftist Islamic intellectual of Azeri origin Geidar Dzhemal’ (b. 1947), the chairman of the “Islamic Committee” platform (*Islamskii komitet*), whose views are, as the author admits, “sometimes ingenious” and had a deep impact on her but lack an integral character and a solid fundament in the Islamic tradition,

(6) the “National Organization of Russian Muslims” (*Natsional’naia organizatsiia russkikh musul’man*, NORM) of Dzhemal’s other major disciple, Vadim Sidorov (alias Kharun ar-Rusi) who subsequently parted from “Dzhemalism” first to Salafism and then to the Murabitun Movement of the Scotsman Ian Dallas Abdalqadir as-Sufi (linked to Sufism) and to Sunni Orthodoxy, representing a very vocal right-wing Russian nationalist version of Islam (see the following chapter in this volume),

(7) “Ikhwanism” (of the Muslim Brotherhood type), which is dismissed as a “mish-mash” of various tendencies, and also “Salafism”, above all because it supports (North Caucasian) separatism from the Russian Federation,

(8) the apolitical “Muslim community of Russia” (i.e., mainstream Islamic associations, probably referring above all to the Tatar-dominated Muftiates in the belt from Moscow over Nizhnii Novgorod to Kazan and further) which is attacked for its “Islamic centrism”, i.e., its blind obedience towards the Russian government,

(9) ethnic Russians who converted to Shiism like Ezhova herself but did so only out of spiritual or philosophical interests, and thus represented “Akhbarism”, rejecting the centrality of the political element in Shiism (“Usulism”), and who therefore form a non-viable “dead-end branch”, plus some Russian hippies who converted to Shiism during their travels in the Middle East but who did not develop political convictions.

This wholesale critique accompanies the defense of what is allegedly the only true project, namely political “Khomeinism”, which Ezhova presents as the

natural choice for the radical patriotic Russian youth, and which seems to be above all her personal enterprise.

Ezhova's own entry into the study of political Islam came, reportedly, when her "maitre" Geidar Dzhemal' asked her in 2002 to prepare an article on the well-known Iranian Islamic sociologist Ali Shariati. In the following she and Vadim Sidorov (the later Kharun ar-Rusi) and some others formed a "scientific group" under Dzhemal's guidance to discuss Islamic thinkers of the 20th century. Later their ways split: while Ezhova got more into political Shiism, Sidorov chose the opposite (Sunni) way, and in 2005-2006 a propaganda war ("*smuta*" / "*fitna*") burst out between the Russian Sunnis of NORM and Russian Shiis.

Still, Sidorov's right-wing nationalist Orthodox-Sunni Islam and Ezhova's "Khomeinism" have something in common, namely their background in radical oppositionist circles of the Russian youth of the 1990s and early 2000s and their stated concern for the Russian national interest. Russian Islam therefore results from the understanding that the "old schemes" of left and right "outlived themselves", but also that it is not possible, as the National-Bolshevik Party and others attempted, "to unite leftists with right-wingers, the red with the white, communist-atheists with Christian Orthodox monarchists, Hitlerists and Stalinists, Evolaists with Trotskists" (108). "But after having actively participated in their activities the understanding came that all these strategies and ideological dogmas (*ideologemy*) resolve neither the urgent problems nor the questions of worldview" (109). Islam was chosen as the solution to this dilemma because it offers "an integrated system of sacred origin that provides an understanding of reality in all its layers and aspects, as well as of reality's relationship to God" (109).

Combining the religious with the political, Islam as a system is thus "organic" (*organicheskii*) and "integrated" (*tselostnyi*); these two terms appear no less than eighteen times in the article and form the core argument. Obedience to the Sharia, the Islamic law as formulated by jurists on the basis of Quran and Sunna, is paramount when it comes to determining who is a Muslim and who not, says Ezhova, with a quote from the current leader of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Ali Khamenei; and with Ayatollah Khomeini she underlines that "the Islamic religion has a political character, everything in it is connected to politics,

even the divine service (*bogosluzhenie*)” (112), and that Khomeini’s Shiism is the religion of the downtrodden masses (*zabitye massy*, 120).¹

The problem is that “patterns of paganism” (*patterny iazychestva*) have remained, or returned, in the practice of most existing Islamic societies, which Ezhova criticizes especially with regard to gender issues: in many societies girls do not enjoy their Islamic right to education, are forced into marriage against their will, are deprived of their fair Quranic share of inheritance, are brutally mutilated by female incision – all in violation of clear statements in Quran and Sunna. In a word, Muslims all over the world have corrupted Islam by placing local customs (*‘adat*) higher than the Sharia.

Against this background Russian Islam needs to stand out by its full implementation of Islamic law. The author does not discuss how Islamic law can be achieved in Russia, except in the individual Muslim’s duty to pray and fast and stick to regulations for food and dress (104); her article is certainly not intended as a blueprint for a Sharia system. Obviously, the emphasis on the “complete” acceptance of Islam is needed to demarcate Russian Islam from other Islamic trends. If all over the world Islam is corrupted by non-Islamic elements of the national traditions, then why would it still make sense to add another “national Islam” to it?

Here Ezhova points out that the fight against local or national “pagan” customs does not mean to give up one’s national identity, for Islam is not a melting pot of nations; she quotes from the Quran 49:13 to show that Allah created mankind purposefully in the form of tribes and peoples, and as men and

¹ A word on the use of sources in Ezhova’s article. There is no scientific bibliographic apparatus. Two Quranic verses are given in translation, embedded in Ezhova’s analysis; more often Quran and Sunna are referred to summarily, without specification. Khamenei and Khomeini are each quoted only once directly, for Ezhova’s definition of the “core of Islam”; there is no in-depth discussion of the Iranian model. Ezhova mentions two authors of Russian books on Shiis, D.A. Zhukov’s translations of some of Khomeini’s works and his biography plus Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr’s *History of the Science of the Foundations (Istoriia ‘ilm al-usul)*, on Shii theology. Funnily, the longest quote in the entire text is from the New Testament, a section from Apostle Paul on the God-given nature of all authority on Earth (underlining Ezhova’s argument that Christianity offers no room for resistance against an unjust ruler while Islam does).

women (105). For her, national mentality (*mental'nost'*) “emerges through the system of interior concepts of thinking, which are set by the language [of the given people], as a result of genetic specifics, historical experience, and geographic conditions – that is, of that what is given by Allah” (106-107).

On this basis Ezhova outlines a “core” (*sut'*) or “formula” of Russian Islam, which is: “*to be true to the national [element] while giving unconditional priority to the religious identity and to Sharia, and the aspiration to break completely with the system of 'adat, which is understood by the Russian Muslim as a harmful ballast that stands in the way of realizing the potential of the nation.*”² The worldview and actions of a Russian Muslim are therefore based upon Islam and the law that Allah gave; yet [the manner] how this all-encompassing system of worldview and comport is filled will be typical Russian – from the angle of behavioral stereotypes as well as from the angle of the style of life perception.”

Islam, so Ezhova, is so attractive for the radicalized Russian youth because it is “the religion of non-conformists and of people who do not wish to resign themselves to their own humiliating situation”, “a religion of justice”, “a symbol of protest”. The agent of this new Russian Islam is “the passionaric (*passionarnaia*) and thinking youth” (108; cf. 123); the term “passionarity” obviously stems from Lev Gumilev’s well-known Eurasianist concepts, where it stands for the (cosmic, ultimately God- or nature-given) energy that an individual “ethnos” or a combined/complementary “super-ethnos” displays for a certain period when it is on its historical ascent in world history. That the article is embedded in the contemporary Russian Eurasianist discourse is also clear from a reference to Aleksandr Dugin’s journal *Elementy* (109), and again at the end of the article, when Ezhova changes from a focus on the Russian people to the concept of “Northern Eurasia”, which also comprises the Tatars as another autochthonous people in this region.

² Italics in the original.

Terminology

Ezhova completely omits the Islamic phraseology found in most other Islamic texts from Russia – there is no *basmala* at the beginning, there are no eulogies for the Prophet, no prayers or moral exhortations. Instead, and as the quotations above have already indicated, the article is written in a very academic social-studies style, reflecting Ezhova's being at home not only in Islamic studies but also in Western discourses (which does not prevent her from continuously denouncing Western concepts of religion, humanism, liberalism and democracy). Her social studies jargon is very prominent in the way she designates groups: she speaks of "circles" (*krugi*), "environments" (*sredy*), "spaces/fields" (*prostranstva*, e.g. "the Russian Shiite field that did not belong to NORM", 122), and especially of *sotsium* (only used in the singular). The latter term allows her to zoom in and out: thus *sotsium* designates at times the society as a whole (e.g. in her statement that the young Russian Muslims "could have obtained everything from society (*sotsium*)" had they not chosen for Islam, 113), or an ethnic group that adheres to their particular 'adat' (105), or in a more narrow sense one particular and small group in society ("a *sotsium* of Russian people came to the fore who made their choice for Islam", 101). The term seems to go back to Geidar Dzhemal's terminology (who used to discuss with his students "about Islam, God, man, the *sotsium*, and politics", 116). *Obshchestvo* is never used in the sense of a close-knit Islamic *jama'at* or a particular mosque community; rather, in Ezhova's text *obshchestvo* stands for the type of society as a whole, in historical perspective: "primitive society" (*primitivnoe obshchestvo*, of pagan idol-worshippers, 106), "traditional society" (*obshchestvo traditsionnoe*) and "contemporary society" (105). This ranking of societies into "primitive", "traditional" and "modern" in historical stages seems to be derived from Eurasianism, which in turn has links to Soviet (Marxist) concepts of ethnogenesis.

This terminology evokes the impression that today's society is atomized, composing only individuals and small vanguard groups that stand out against the apolitical "grey mass" stultified by "American globalism" and television (122). The term Muslim "society" (*obshchestvennost'*) is used when Ezhova speaks about the mainstream Muslim associations and communities of Russia, mostly

composed of Tatars and Caucasians. She even reifies this wide spectrum into what she calls *the* “Muslim Community of Russia” (*Musul'manskaia obshchestvennost' Rossii*), for which she even introduces an acronym (“MOR”), thus placing millions of Muslims into the same “factional” category as the other group that has an acronym in her text, the tiny NORM. All Muslims in Russia together form the “Islamic [broad] community” (here: *soobshchestvo*) of the Russian Federation (124), but as indicated above, the article focuses on the differences among the various Muslim groups, reducing their commonality almost to nil.

Striking is also the anthropological terminology for describing Islamic practice, sometimes reminding of Soviet phraseology: the Islamic rite is called *obriadnost'* (102) or *veroispovedanie* (105), ‘adat is defined as a dogma that is “sacralized by the authority of the *sotsium*, usually accepted without reflection” (105), and as “harmful ballast” (*urednyi ballast*) (107). Such terms also appear in Soviet anti-Islamic propaganda texts of the 1960s, which reflects the curious convergence of atheist and Sharia-minded argumentations that has already been noted in chapter two of this book. Also the dialectical thinking is still obvious: thus when discussing the relationship between Islam and national character, Ezhova detects “a paradoxical and at the same time harmonic dialectics” in Islam (105). This could of course also go back to her reading of Ali Shariati.

Ezhova’s vocabulary is particularly rich when it comes to the construction of group categories and designations of collective mentalities. The whole article is based on two fundamental differences, namely that between, on the one hand, the “newly-converted” Muslim (*новообращившиеся*, 105), and, on the other, the “ethnic” or “born” Muslims (*этнические / урожденные мусульманы*, 102, 103), that is the “historical Muslim peoples” (*исторические мусульманские народы*, 105). The other major divide is between the “real Muslim” (*настоящий мусульманин*, 104) who embraces Islam in its totality, and “diasporas and migrants who are not always characterized by an Islamic mentality” (*Исламская ментальность*, 109), as well as Muslims of other nationalities who suffer from an inferiority complex and try to integrate into mainstream society by all available means (113). Collective mentalities thus relate to religion as well as to the status of a group in broader

society. Similar, Christians who discover Islam for themselves often still stick to their “Christian system of coordinates” (108).

The central claim of the article is the particular role of the ethnic Russian (or “Slavic”) Muslims for the future of Russia. If the Russian Muslim manages to combine the national with the Islamic, he will have “a clearly outlined mission within the *umma* itself”, namely to carry out the call “exactly among those people who speak the same language as he does, and who have the same mentality”. Difference and isolation from the other Muslims in the Russian Federation – the Tatars, Caucasians, diasporas – is therefore not a disadvantage but their big plus.

As we have seen above, “mentality” is based on a “system of interior concepts of thinking” set by language, genetic specifics, historical experience, and geographic conditions, with the idea that all these elements together make this mentality “organic” or integral” (106-107). “Mentality” thus seems to be derived from Allah’s will (who constructed mankind the way it is, as nations and in genders). Note that religion is not linked to mentality here; seemingly, a Russian convert to Islam does not violate the integrity of his Russian mentality when he builds up an “Islamic mentality”. Here a primordial (genetic etc.) approach seems to conflict with one that is admittedly constructed, namely through the conscious change of religion. Just as religious mentality needs to be maintained by a conscious effort, so also the Russian mentality of the Russian Muslim can disappear if they do not “pay attention to the preservation of the particular national identity”, and just fuse with the broader Muslim society.

The whole issue of Ezhova’s article is thus, paradoxically, the construction of a new identity by primordial claims. The article is embedded in iconic ideas of Russian culture, and in essentialist views of the alleged Russian character.

To be sure, even within one nation Ezhova detects big differences. The Russians fall into two categories “with a different psycho-type, mentality, ethical system, and worldview” (114): one that “drew itself into serfdom (*zakreposhchenie*)” and is blindly obedient to the authorities (113), and on the other side “the notorious ‘Russian boys’ of Dostoevskii, the inventive, inquisitive scholars, the fearless discoverers, the heroic madmen who dream of carrying out a great mission, the selfless servants of the great Idea” (114) – obviously a nice

summary of how Ezhova sees herself. “The Russian Muslims were longing for an integrated and fundamental system, as an expression of the Russian person’s primordial (*iznachal’nyi*) strife to be not superficial and to proceed to the very last foundations of every issue” (116), and also the much-beaten Muslim converts of the “first wave” “demonstrated the full inquisitiveness of the Russian mind” in their spiritual search (107). Next to the icon Dostoevskii, also the immensely popular singer of the late Soviet period Viktor Tsoi (d. 1990) embodies Russianness, and Ezhova illustrates the isolation of the newly-converted in his society with some stanzas from a Tsoi song: “I feel, closing my eyes – the whole world is going to war against me” (112).

These allusions already hint at the generational aspect in Ezhova’s construction of “Russian Islam”. When talking about self-chosen social exclusion, the author claims that “due to their latent Russian nihilism, the newly-converted Muslims could not seriously worry about the odd looks of the people who passed by” (113), and also the ostracized Russian Muslima who, in her *hijab* combined with military trousers, enjoys to frighten the philistines in the metro, “remained a typical Russian girl from the radical environment – a girl who renounces this world, a rebelling women, internally independent from society and distancing herself from it, a heroine from [the works of] Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii” (113). Heroism and self-sacrifice is a recurrent topic as well, and it is generated by resistance. “From the perspective of the Russian mentality”, so Ezhova, HAMAS and Hizbollah are not terrorist organizations but “heroic fighters who resisted the Zionist occupation” (111).

The Russians of course have their own history of heroism and martyrdom. One that Ezhova briefly alludes to is the fate of the Old Believers (who, the reader knows, in the 17th century severely suffered from persecution by state and church for their non-conformism; and note that Aleksandr Dugin converted to Old Belief). The other event of Russian martyrdom is Yeltsin’s shooting and storming of the Russian Parliament in 1993, as a dramatic violation and humiliation of the national interest. This event is of special importance for creating an affinity to Shiism: “The drama of the shooting of the parliament, the mourning of the fallen heroes of the insurrection, became a peculiar sacred mystery for the Russian

opposition, a mysterium that was, in an archetypal and existential form, very close to the mysterium of Ashura – the mourning of Imam Husayn and his fallen warriors who had rebelled against the tyrant Yazid” (121).

Curiously, while Ezhova emphasizes her break with left-right dichotomies, and with the “eclectic post-modern ‘mish-mash’” (112) of the various left-right radical alliances of these circles, in the end she comes back to a left-right distinction, stating that Sidorov’s Murabitun proselytize among the right-wing Russian nationalists, and stand for “estatism, monarchism, anti-democratism, and anti-modernism”, while Ezhova’s “Khomeinism” is presented as “the Red Face” of Russian Islam, with a focus on justice and the struggle against oppression, and attractive to what she somewhat vaguely calls “Russian patriots” (123).

How does Ezhova describe the ultimate goal of Russian Islam – will Russia be rescued through Islamization? Her competitor Sidorov, Ezhova approves, “understood that the Russians as the ‘big people’ almost ceased to exist, and that accordingly one would have to create a renewed Russian nation on new fundamentals” (117). Her own “prognosis” is that the Russian Muslims, with their developed national consciousness, will in general develop partnership contacts not with MOR [that is, with the other Muslims of the Russian Federation], but with their co-religionists abroad, and with their brothers in blood – the Russians” (125). She sees Russian Shiites therefore as a bridge to Iran (a country that is also in Dugin’s concepts close to Russia); and paradoxically, this bridge to Islamization requires the rejection of all existent forms of Islam in Russia.

Russian Islam: Environments, Motifs, Tendencies and PerspectivesAnastasiia Ezhova¹**Can a Russian be a Muslim?**

Islam is a religion that is open to people of any nationality and of any cultural self-identification (*kuľturnaia samoidentifikatsiia*). If someone pronounced the *shahada* – the testimony of Allah’s unity and Muhammad’s prophethood, convinced of the truthfulness of the demands of the faith as they are laid down in the Quran and the Sunna, and if that person acts in accordance with the obvious demands of the Sharia (*shariat*) – then he is without any doubt a Muslim. The phenomenon that “non-ethnic” Muslims actively accept Islam is not a Russian specialty but has many analogies in other countries of the world, including in Great Britain, Germany, the US, Japan, and others.

Still, when a social group (*sotsium*) of Russian people came to the fore who made their choice for Islam, many observers began to judge them in a very improper manner, convinced that “a Russian Muslim is impossible”. In the beginning such a view of the newly converted was typical both for Russian and for Tatar environments (*sredy*). People with a distorted view of the nature of religiousness (*religioznost’*) continued to make a strong connection between confessional adherence and nationality, and understood religion as an appendix to popular folklore, putting it into the same category as singing and dancing groups, as *kokoshniki* or lace *tiubeteiki* [the traditional Russian and Tatar female headgear].

In this context one still remembers the Tatar grandmas who sat in the mosques in the 1990s; all their conscious life they had struggled to uphold the

¹ Anastasiia Ezhova, “Russkii islam: sredy, motivy, tendentsii i perspektivy”, *Chetki: Literaturno-filosofskii zhurnal* 1-2 (2011), 102-125; rubric “Tolkovatel’ strastei”. Translation with kind permission by the author. [Footnote by the editors:] Anastasiia Aleksandrovna Ezhova (b. 1983) is a PhD student at the chair of Philosophy of Religions and Religious Studies at Moscow State University. She is editor of the analytical section of the journal *Musul’manka* and one of the authors of the rubric *Islamskaia mozaika* in the newspaper *Zavtra*.

Islamic rite (*obriadnost'*) in the name of protecting Tatar national culture, and they were thoroughly convinced that the term "Muslim" is synonymous with the term "Tatar". The Tatar language they called "the Muslim language" (*musul'manskii iazyk*), and they believed that it was sinful to use any other language in the mosque – ignorant of the fact that in the Holy Quran (*Sviashchennyi Koran*) the multitude of languages is called a sign of Allah Almighty (*Vsevyshnii Allakh*). They thought that "the Tatars call God Allah, and the Russians call him Jesus (*Iisus*)", not suspecting that Jesus was a Prophet of Allah and that they themselves continued to produce those patterns of paganism (*patternny iazychestva*) according to which each ethnos is linked to "their own god", or even a group of gods. [102:]

In fact, the position of those who deny Russian Muslims their right "to call themselves real Muslims" is also pagan, in a sophisticated manner: already the Roman Empire conducted a religious policy according to which every people could pray to their own Pantheon as long as they acknowledged the sacral nature of the Emperor. Any consequential Christian and Muslim would loath this idol and this logic, since both the Christian and the Muslim share the holy conviction that the two world religions which they profess have a supranational character (*nadnatsional'nyi kharakter*).

In today's Russia the Tatar environment has almost overcome these prejudices, as a result of the active Islamization of a big number of young Tatars who find the delusions of those grandmas infinitely absurd and even comical. Russian society, by contrast, has not yet freed itself from those biases towards Slavic Muslims. Next to accusations of "having betrayed" the Orthodox faith – though it is hard to imagine how one can betray something that did not exist (and this is the case with at least a huge part of the Russian population in the post-Soviet period) – Russian Muslims are being told that their Islam is "not organic" and that "real Muslims will never accept them as their brothers in faith anyway".

This last statement needs further inspection. It is true that such feelings do exist in some environments of born Muslims (*urozhdennye musul'many*), though by far not in all; these are, as a rule, those who follow the Islamic prescriptions not very diligently, who do not have a sufficient knowledge and understanding of

their own religion, and who put their ethnic and diasporic solidarity higher than their religious identity (*samoidentifikatsiia*). At the same time not only in Russia but also beyond her borders a very big part of the “ethnic” Muslims (*“etnicheskie” musul’mane*) finds itself in a full-blown crisis of faith – a crisis that is connected to the serious circumstance that the norms of the Sharia have been replaced by local *‘adat*, that is, by customs that had currency already in the pre-Islamic period and that contradict Islam. Already Sayyid Qutb, a well-known leader of the “Muslim Brothers”, analyzed this in his historic work *Milestones*, for which he was hanged [in 1966] by a tribunal that was directed by Anwar al-Sadat.

What one observes in the various corners of the Muslim world only confirms Qutb’s diagnosis. In the Pushtu environment it is regarded as “improper” to teach a girl how to read and write – with such an arsenal of “sinful skills” nobody would take the adolescent bride as his wife; and this while the *hadith* of the Prophet says that every Muslim and every Muslima is obliged to obtain knowledge. In a number of Near Eastern countries daughters do not obtain their share of inheritance – against the prescriptions that are clearly explained in the Quran! Also against what the Sharia defines as the conditions that need to be met for concluding a marriage, fathers all too often give their daughters into marriages against their will, and also take for themselves the *mahr* (marriage gift) which, according to Islamic law, is supposed to be the inviolable property of the new bride; and husbands use to spend the wages of their wives for their own personal needs – in spite of Sharia not giving them the right to do so. Furthermore, the female incision (*zhenskoe obrezanie*) that occurs in most barbaric forms in a number of African and Asian countries violates the fundamental Islamic ban on injuring a person’s health; and it also contradicts the *hadiths* according to which a husband is obliged to give sexual satisfaction to his wife, and according to which a woman has a right to pleasure. [104:] Many husbands beat their wives and children cruelly, against the Sunna of the Prophet which rejects this categorically. The violence of the *‘adat* is dispiriting, and its variants [in the various countries] have little gratifying about them – only academics from the humanities, who demonize “the dark Middle Ages” and idealize “joyful paganism” can seriously be

distressed when somewhere [in the Muslim world] folk customs are repressed by Sharia!

In the opinion of the critics of Russian Islam, the people who follow their *'adat* and ignore the norms of the Sharia are to be regarded as the “real Muslims”, for whom Islam is “organic”. Yet when we read the works and decrees (*postanovleniia*) of the majority of the authoritative Islamic scholars, then we see that their opinion is different, and that in their view, the adherents of *'adat* in fact risk stepping outside of Islam. This is what we find in the book *Islamic Law* by the contemporary leader (*rahbar*) of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the status of *marja' at-taqlid* (in Shii Islam, literally, “the source of emulation” in questions of *fiqh* [Islamic law]): “The acceptance of the prophethood of Muhammad – the seal of the prophets – alone is not enough to call a person Muslim. Accordingly, those persons from the people of the Revelation (*Pisaniie*) who accept the prophethood of Muhammad, the seal of the prophets, only from an ideological standpoint but continue to live according to the traditions of their forefathers, cannot be called Muslims.”

Thus in order to become a real Muslim (*nastoiashchii musul'manin*) a person does not only have to formally pronounce the *shahada* but needs to start to live in accordance with the norms of the Sharia: to conduct the *namaz*, to keep the fasting in Ramadan, to observe the food regulations, the clothing demands, and so forth. From this point of view the observing Russian Muslims are by no means “fancy” (*riazheny*): on the contrary, [as they follow the above-mentioned norms] they reveal their serious and truthful strife to live according to the Islamic prescriptions, which is the real criteria for the authenticity of their Muslimness (*podlinnost' ikh musul'manstva*).

Khamenei's decree (*postanovlenie*) also sheds light on another unusual phenomenon of our days: some Christians who repudiated the Orthodox understanding of God as Trinity (*Troitsa*) and acknowledged the truth of Monotheism (*Edinobozhie*), as well as the prophethood of Muhammad, still do not pronounce the *shahada* due to some internal barriers. These persons say that they accept the Islamic religious teaching (*verouchenie*) but that they live according to the *sunna* of the prophet Jesus, and therefore they try to sit on two

chairs. Sometimes people say that they are secret Muslims, but as we see, their status is too ambiguous to include them without hesitation into the canvas of Russian Islam proper (*sobstvennyi russkii islam*).

At the same time the *fatwa* above also has another side: many “ethnic Muslims” cannot call themselves true adherents of Islam in the full sense of the word if they put *‘adat* above Sharia, if this is their position out of principle and not just a token of their weakness and carelessness in the observation of Islamic norms. In this sense the approach that is usually ascribed only to the *Salafist* environment is indeed to some degree characteristic also for other trends of Islam. For instance, when you are travelling in the countries of the Arabic Orient (*Arabskii Vostok*) and asking people why they do not leave a part of the inheritance to their daughters, you sometimes hear the following “argument”: “This property belonged to my father and my grandfather, so what – I should give all that we have worked for to some son-in-law – to a stranger?” These people usually disregard the reasons that are given [105:] in the Holy Quran, although they are Arabs and, according to [their] philistine logic, “the most real Muslims”.

This approach stems from the Umayyad period when the Arabs began to regard themselves as Muslims “of the first sort”, and when Muslims of other nationalities (*natsional’nosti*) were seen as being of “second” sort or even as “not real Muslims”. This is especially true of how they treated the Persians: an old people of civilization (*kul’turnyi narod*) that had adhered to Zoroastrism for twelve centuries before they accepted Islam, a people that, next to other non-Arabs, was discriminated against in the Umayyad period – even though this approach contradicts the practice of the Prophet. Yet in the following they played an important role in the formation of the Arabo-Muslim civilization (*arabomusul’manskaia kul’tura*), and one of them, the Persian Sibawayh, even became the founder of Arabic linguistics. And in our days – even if some people may not like it – Iran is one of the leaders of the Islamic world. There is good reason to assume that Russian and Europeans who accepted Islam will in the historical future (*v istoricheskoi budushchem*) also become the vanguard of the Islamic *umma*, contributing to the *umma* a wealth of development strategies.

Anybody who seriously studies the Quran and the *sunna* will conclude that there is no national census for “entering Islam”: the companions (*spodvizhniki*) of the Prophet were people of all possible nationalities and all of all colors of the skin. Both Quran and *sunna* repeatedly underline that the Islamic call (*islamskii prizyv*) is addressed to all people (*narody*) on Earth. Noteworthy is that the first Persian who accepted Islam was the former Christian Salman al-Farisi, and he is respected as one of the most righteous (*pravednyi*) companions of the Prophet, [a person] who attained the heights of the intuitive-mystical cognition (*intuitivno-misticheskoe poznanie*) of Allah.

According to the *hadith* of the Prophet, the only criteria for the Islamic confession (*islamskoe veroispovedanie*) of a person is not his nationality and race (*rasa*) but his God-fearing (*bogoboiaznennost'*). This pertains to people who belong to the historical Muslim peoples (*istorichiski musul'manskie narody*) as well as to the newly-converted (*новообратившiesia*).

At the same time Islam – and this is what constitutes its paradoxical and at the same time harmonic dialectics (*dialektichnost'*) – does not level the national [element], it does not call for mixing all peoples in one melting pot; it does not destroy and unify the cultures of the various people who developed under different conditions of formation, in a different environment of their habitat (*sreda obitaniia*), with [their specific] genetic features (*geneticheskie pokazateli*), with [their own] inclinations and abilities, with [their] mentality (*mental'nost'*) and so forth. To the contrary, in the Holy Quran the national-cultural differences are regarded as Allah's miracle and sign (*chudo i znamenie Allakha*), just like also the division of the human race into two genders, into men and women, is regarded as a wonder and sign: “**O people! Truly, We created you as men and women, made you peoples and tribes, so that you become familiar with each other, and amongst you the one whom Allah respects most is the most pious and God-fearing (*naibolee blagochestivyi i bogoboiaznennyi*). Truly, Allah is the Knower, the One Who is Informed (*Znaiushchii, Sveduiushchii*)” (49:13).¹**

¹ [Bold in the original.]

This assertion that the national [element] can be combined with Islam, how does it relate to what we said above about '*adat (adaty)*'? In this case it is necessary to understand the nature of the '*adat*', which is nothing else but a dogma that society enforces [upon its members], and that is provided with a sacred status (*naviazannaia obshchestvom dogma, nadeleennaia sakral'nym statusom*). As this dogma is sacralized by the authority of the society (*sotsium*), it is usually accepted without reflection, blindly. In contemporary society there are usually more dogmas of this kind than in traditional society (*obshchestvo traditsionnoe*). [106:]

Any attempt to subject such a dogma to an analysis or to a rational critique provokes, as a rule, a very angry reaction, as if a member of a primitive society (*primitivnoe obshchestvo*) defends his stone-made idol statues. In the moment of such an aggressive outburst even the most intelligent and educated person demonstrates an extreme degree of unpreparedness for [engaging into] a process of reflection, as if within just one minute he degraded in his intellectual capabilities. Why can a modern girl not wear a head scarf, and why would this be bad? "This is not accepted", is what this citizen will shout, and he will add in passing that it is ugly (although in most cases this is not rue), that it degrades the women (although the meaning of the *hijab* is, from the perspective of Islam, the complete opposite), that this is "medieval" or "superstition" (*mrakobesie*) (although if one regards these two concepts as negative, then one should remember how science was hunted in medieval Europe – while Islam welcomes science, and nothing will prevent the girl in the *hijab* from studying and from engaging with scientific research).

There is a similar reaction to [the issue] of polygamy: this cannot be accepted, because it is immoral; this is a thesis which, as is very obvious, has its roots in Christian concepts about morality. But then we see that the same person who regards polygamy as immoral detects nothing shameful in the case when a husband divorces from his first wife, drops her and their children and marries a new woman: the main thing is that he has only one wife at a time! Although it would be quite logical that the complete opposite approach is ethical: to accept the responsibility for two families, for why should the children of the first marriage suffer so much just because their father began to love a second woman?

An enforced parting from a loved one can also be torturing. An even more powerful argument is that the quantity of women is higher than the quantity of men, and also that the period of youth and the time when he can produce children is for men much longer than for women. From whatever perspective one looks at polygamy, it appears as a phenomenon that is absolutely healthy and that is able to heal many diseases of contemporary society. Only the blind following of 'adat, of patterns and stereotypes of thinking (*shablony i stereotypy myshleniia*) blocks all attempts at reflecting on this phenomenon without bias.

For the sake of justice let us remark that these two (and many other) clichés (*klishe*) have special currency not only in the non-Muslim society but also in the society that is Muslim (by composition, not as a matter of fact). In exactly the same form also the 'adat that we described above, and that contradict Sharia, have their origin in the pagan cult (*iazicheskii kul't*) of society. As to Sharia, its source is God's Revelation (*Bozhestvennoe Otkrovenie*), understood through the prism of man's reason, that is the abilities to understand and reflect upon, and not on the automatic acceptance of the Islamic norms. Of course, already the Revelation itself is the reason for accepting the indisputable character [of these norms], but a Muslim who consciously relates to his religion will always try to reach the meaning of the norms, to see their wisdom and multifaceted character, and to connect [them] with his own life experience.

On the other hand, the national mentality is broader than the state of being conditioned by ethnic 'adat – although not every people has overcome these frameworks of 'adat and achieved the level of forming a national culture (*uroven' formirovaniia natsional'noi kul'tury*). This mentality emerges through the system of interior concepts of thinking (*sistema vnutrennykh smyslovykh poniatii*), which are set by the language [of the given people] [107:], as a result of genetic specifics, historical experience, and geographic conditions – that is, of that what is given by Allah, and of that what, by contrast to 'adat, cannot be rejected without a loss for the integrity (*tselostnost'*) of the personality of the individual. In this [relation] the national identity (*natsional'naia identichnost'*) is similar to the gender identity (*identichnost' gendernaia*) – what has already been pointed out by the *ayat* that we reproduced above.

We needed such a long preamble in order to not just describe but also to understand the phenomenon of Russian Islam (*russkii islam*), to reveal its core (*sut'*), its formula. Because this is the formula of Russian Islam: *to be true to the national [element] while giving unconditional priority (bezuslovnyi prioritet) to the religious identity and to Sharia, and the aspiration to break completely with the system of 'adat, which is understood by the Russian Muslim as a harmful ballast (vrednyi ballast) that stands in the way of realizing the potential of the nation (realizatsiia potentsiala natsii).*² The worldview and actions of a Russian Muslim are therefore based upon Islam and the law that Allah gave; yet [the manner] how this all-encompassing system of worldview and comport is filled will be typical Russian (*tipichno russkii*) – from the angle of behavioral stereotypes (*stereotypy povedeniia*) as well as from the angle of the style of life perception (*stil' vospriiatiia zhizni*). Let us try to understand this with more concrete examples.

Russian Islam: The First Swallows and the “Second Generation”

The first Russian Muslims – at the time when the cases of accepting Islam were still very few – had somehow different motivations than the following generation of Russians who began to enter Islam more massively, and in a later period. In the late eighties and early nineties of the last century there was a boom (*bum*) in the publication of religious literature that in the preceding years had been difficult to obtain for most citizens. In this context the environment of the intelligentsia (*intelligentskaia sreda*) was driven by a wave of “spiritual search” (*“dukhovnye iskaniiia”*), when people began to study the sacred texts of various confessions that were traditional or not very traditional for Russia; and [in their studies] they demonstrated the full inquisitiveness of the Russian mind (*pytlivost' russkogo uma*). In this period the Islam of Russian people resulted largely from their painstaking study of the Bible and Christian theological texts (*verouchitel'nye teksty*), in which they found contradictions, and also the lack of a basis for many arguments. Understanding that Christianity cannot satisfy their spiritual and intellectual demands, these people began to study other religions, to read the

² [Italics in the original.]

relevant literature and to talk to representatives of these religions. The acquaintance with the Quran, a comparison of its statements (*polozheniia*) with Christian doctrines (*dogmaty*), their visits to mosques and their lively contact with those whom they met there – this is what brought the first Russian Muslims to the bosom of Monotheism (*Edinobozhie*). Representatives of this generation of Russian Muslims were, for example, Iman Valeriia Porokhova, Ali Viacheslav Polosin or the Russian Shiite Taras (Abdul Karim) Chernienko.

Another fact is that the fate of this type of Russian Muslims was to quickly leave the proscenium (*avansstena*) of Russian Islam, by making themselves outdated and untropical (*ustarevshii i neaktual'nyi*) [108:], both because of the historical situation and because in the environment of the newly converted, the understanding of the specifics of Islam had been growing. The first generation of Russian Muslims was searching in Islam for the “pure spirituality”, and saw Islam only as a religion in the understanding that is traditional for the Christian world. Disappointed by Christianity, these newly converted did not yet leave the Christian system of coordinates (*khristianskaia sistema koordinat*) in their religious quest.

Very quickly – and again by virtue of the quick and dramatic changes in the history of contemporary Russia – these “first swallows” were replaced by Russian Muslims of a new type. And this process went so quickly that a part of [the second generation of Russian Muslims] was practically of the same age as some Muslims of the “first wave”, or that some of them were just five or eight years younger.

These were the children of the nineties – of the epoch of the sad and well-known “democratic reforms”, when the infrastructure of the country was actively destroyed and looted, when companies were privatized, when the defense system and industry broke down, when Western mass culture (*mass-kul'tura*) was imported, and when the Russian population was brought into poverty to such a degree that their situation in the country, where the major achievements had been accomplished by their hands, began to be humiliating. These were the children and adolescents who with their own eyes – on TV or even in person – saw how the White House [in Moscow] was shot at in 1993, who saw the destroyed city of Grozny in 1994, who observed the lies and cynicism of the democratic politicians on TV, who felt on their own bodies the delights of the liberal experiments in the

field of economy, who became witnesses of their own country's torturing agony produced by a clique of Jewish oligarchs and by a gigantic wave of former CPSU members who rhythmically poured into the various "parties of power" that followed each other.

This passionaric (*passionarnaia*) and reflecting youth could not accept the humiliation of their dignity, of their people, and actively went into politics – into right-wing nationalistic organizations as well as into left-wing patriotic organizations. Yet as they delved deeply into practical political life, these young people very quickly understood that the old ideological recipes for the rescue of the country and the world did not work anymore. Not only did they feel that these old schemes (*skhemy*) outlived themselves – a latent understanding of this was alive in all oppositionist circles, and this is what explains the fashion to set up contradicting alliances [between extreme left and right groups] and to [strive for] a synthesis of things that cannot be united (*sintez nesochetaemogo*). The opposition was driven by the attempt to unite leftists with right-wingers, the red with the white, communist-atheists with Christian Orthodox monarchists, Hitlerists and Stalinists, Evolaists with Trotskists – as reflected in the experience of the newspaper *Den'* (later: *Zavtra*) and in the phenomenon of the National-Bolshevik Party. Yet already in the Putin epoch the evolution of these environments (*sredy*) and organizations confirmed that those skeptics were right who doubted that it is possible to "crossbreed the snake with the hedgehog" (*"skrestit' uzha i ezha"*) and that this would give birth to some integrated (*tselostnyi*) project that meets the demand of the future generation and that can provide a real alternative.

The vanguard-like (*avangardnaia*) and at times indeed talented eclectics (*eklektika*) à la "love the Aurora and the Reichstag" did not satisfy a part of the thinking young Russian people, and they searched [109:] for the grain of truth in more homogeneous environments and organizations that was more consistent in its political preferences. What is meant here are above all nationalist parties, and to a lesser degree leftist radical groups; both the first and the latter (and these even to a higher degree) absorb a significant part of the Jewish youth. But after having actively participated in their activities the understanding came that all these

strategies and ideological dogmas (*ideologemy*) resolve neither the urgent problems nor the questions of worldview (*mirovozzrencheskie problemy*).

This is how a part of the young oppositionists came to Islam, [which they experienced] as an integrated system of sacred origin that provides an understanding of reality in all its layers and aspects, as well as of reality's relationship to God.

It was not difficult for the Russian patriot of those days to get acquainted with Islam, since the patriotic press liked to throw light on topics related to Islam, and Muslims were actively present on the pages of the newspapers and journals of this direction. Also, bright and gifted people were working in this niche, and their intellectual and propagandistic level was much higher than that of Russia's present-day Muslim journalists – while their understanding of Islam was rather original (*originalnyi i samobytnyi*) than completely based on one of the branches of the Islamic tradition. The publications of Shamil' Sultanov and Geidar Dzhemal' in the newspapers *Den'* and *Zavtra* (in the rubric "Fiery Islam" [*Ognennyi islam*]), and also in the journal *Elementy*, Dzhemal's programs *Minaret* and *Nyne* on TV, his journal *Tavkhid*, the newspaper *Al'-Kods* that was edited by the brothers Shamil' and Kamil Sultanov, the Islamic rubrics in the almanac *Volshebnaia gora* – all of these created a sufficiently intellectual basis for enabling a Russian nationalist, a Russian patriot to get acquainted with Islam. More than elucidating particular and – no doubt – important nuances of *fiqh* (law) and ritual practice, these articles rather enabled the reader to understand Islam as a system of complex philosophy (*miroponimanie*) built on Monotheism and uniting in itself deeply religious as well as political aspects. Yet we cannot say that Islam was treated in these publications in a non-authentic (*neautentichnaia*) and superficial way. In any case, the intellectual perspective of these publications differed very favorably from today's quasi-liberal discourse of the Muslim public in Russia (*kvaziliberal'nyi diskurs musul'manskoi obshchestvennosti Rossii*) which does not attempt to get access to various layers of the population but which aims at proving the trust of the political elite, and which also wants to associate Islam with the factor of diasporas and migrants who are not always characterized by an Islamic mentality.

All of these publications, and equally the practice of foreign Islamic movements and the religious-political thinking of the Muslim world, attracted the attention of the future Russian Muslims. They felt a need for a coherent methodology (*tselostnaia metodologiia*) for explaining the relationship between God, the world, and man, and also to give answers to the question what needs to be done here and now, under concrete historical and political conditions. They did not need a distraction to “pure spirituality” but they were searching for a religious system that provides a sacral meaning (*sakral'naia smysl'*) to the existence of the mortal human being, but that also treats topical aspects of man's being in this world: of politics, economy, gender relations, and of social life (*zhizn' sotsiuma*). They were looking for a political ideology for themselves, but one that would explain the metaphysical [110:] goal of human life that goes beyond his functioning as a little wheel in the empirically touchable reality.

Such an all-encompassing religious-political system of reference points (*orientir*) these Russian people found only in Islam.

They are often confronted with the reproach that they “accepted the religion only for the solution of worldly tasks”. That they “use Islam for their political goals”. That they “replaced the service to God by an ideology”. And so forth.

All of these accusations are absolute baseless, because they are grounded in a fundamental lack of understanding of the essence (*sut'*) of Islam, which they mistakenly judge as just “one of the [many] religions”.

Yet Islam characterizes itself with the help of the term *din* – a noun that is formed from the verb *dana*, which in translation from the Arabic means “to submit to”, “to resign to”, “to borrow (money)”, “to judge”, “to confess”, “to accuse”, “to hand over to a judge”, “to find guilty”, “to condemn”, “to sentence”. Also the name of this religion – Islam – is a *masdar* (a noun derived from a verb) of the verb *aslama*, which is translated as “to submit to”, “to resign to”, “to hand over”, “to deliver”, “to give out”, “to throw [something or someone] to its own fate”, “to bring”, “to lead”.

Thus the verbs *dana* and *aslama* are united by a number of common meanings, like: “to submit to” and “to resign to”; and also other semantic aspects of the verb *aslama* are related to such terms as politics, authority (*vlast'*), submission,

leadership (*liderstvo*). In particular, the term *imam*, which is important in both Sunni and Shii Islam, means not only the person who stands in front of the praying congregation (*predstoiatel' na molitve*) but also the religious leader (*vozhd'*). Islam thus implicitly contains legal and political aspects, for it encompasses all sides of the human existence, not just those sides that are related to the “spiritual sphere” in the European understanding. Politics is therefore the very core (*serdtsevina*) of Islam, and not just one of its spheres; [and this core] is also regulated by Sharia. The object of politics is the question of authority, and this is one of the cornerstones of Islam, according to which all authority on the creation (*mirozdanie*) belongs to Allah, and man is His deputy (*namestnik*) on Earth. Accordingly, Allah the Almighty laid down the Law (*Zakon*) that is mandatory for all humanity – the Sharia, and as for implementing any law there must be an executive authority (*ispol'nitel'naia vlast'*), Allah endowed certain people with the right to carry out this mission.

Right since the beginning the scholars and common representatives of the various directions in Islam have been quarrelling about who exactly is supposed to have this authority. In any case the Christian principle that “any authority comes from God”, as voiced in the Epistles of apostle Paul, is rejected by Islam. Islam does not admit such a position, since a ruler who openly disregards God’s prescriptions – both in the sphere of law and in the moral-ethical field (for instance, in Shii Islam the uprising against an unjust tyrant is a pious deed) – is evaluated in Islam as a rebel against Him, and the authority of such a person is therefore illegal. [111:]

Such a position regarding the unjust authority radically changed the idea of a number of future Russian Muslims about religion. Many of them felt by intuition that God exists, yet they rejected the existing clerical forms of Christianity – since, with the exception of Russian Old Belief (*staroobriadstvo*), Orthodox Christianity does not offer an adequate platform (*platforma*) for showing non-conformism (*nonkonformizm*). In the framework of Christianity there is only a limited possibility to resist injustice with all available means, which would include to react [to violence] with violence, which is at times the only means to defend the right and the dignity of man or of a whole people. And this is not a question of high

morality, as semi-official Christianity (*ofitsioznoe khristianstvo*) would have it, but completely the opposite. To see the Orthodox priests (*poppy*) in rich gold-embroidered cassocks extolling the ruling regime and singing the Hosanna of any authority, drove many Russians spontaneously away from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Yes, there can be no doubt that the opposition also included more than a few Orthodox priests, and many Old Believers, who accepted neither the official church nor the Satanic authorities. But their position appears to be not fundamental enough (*slyshkom nefundamental'naia*), perhaps more based on a moral feeling than on their own sacral texts, taking into consideration the words of the apostle Paul: "Every soul should be obedient to the highest authorities, since there is no authority that does not come from God: the existing authorities have been installed by God. For this reason the one who opposes authority also opposes what has been installed by God. And the ones who oppose will themselves find condemnation. For those who govern are terrifying not for good deeds but for the bad ones. Do you want to not fear the authority? Do what is good, and you will be lauded for this, for the ruler is a servant of God, for your [own] good. If you do bad deeds, then fear, for it is not in vain that he carries a sword: he is God's servant, the avenger in punishing those who do bad deeds. And for this reason it is appropriate to be obedient not just because of fear of punishment but also because of your conscience. For this reason you should also pay taxes, for they are the servants of God, always busy with this [mission]." (Rom. 13:1-6).

In Islam, by contrast, the one who opposes unjust authority is a righteous man (*pravednik*). The most outstanding example of such a righteous person is Imam Husayn, the beloved grandson of the Prophet who is especially revered in Shii Islam; he started an uprising against the caliph Yazid and died the death of a martyr on this path. The future Russian Muslim saw that in the contemporary Middle East the rebellion against unjust rulers often runs under Islamic banners, and that the leaders of these uprisings and revolutions are sometimes the religious activists themselves – as was the case in Iran in 1979. This was uncommon and attractive for people who were used to the fact that religion and the clergy

(*dukhovenstvo*) teach to be obedient and to not resist the authorities, [and who were used to] social and political conformity. This clear feature of Islam that makes it different from Christianity was enough to ignite the true interest among a part of the radical youth, from the right as well as from the left. This [feature] made Islam as fascinating and attractive as other anti-liberal ideas that win the admiration of the banned and extremists – since it is well-known that from the perspective of the Russian mentality such epithets are more of an advertisement for this or that ideology than that it would repel people. Russian people were always told that Hizbollah and HAMAS are terrorist organizations, but what they saw in them was heroic fighters who resisted the Zionist occupation. And in this context they remembered that the Jewish lobby is strong in their home country, [112:] that Oligarchs and politicians, among them many Jews, pillage the people's property, pressing the Russians to the edge of life. Russian patriots saw how Muslims struggle against the American aggressors – and became enthused by their courage, for the image of the fearless Islamic fighters and martyrs (*mucheniki*) corresponded completely with the ideas of heroism that had already been formulated in the Soviet cinema, and that were close and understandable to the Russian person.

In summary, Islam was topical and in demand, attractive for the politicized youth that was at home in the leftist-patriotic or rightist-radical niche of the Russian opposition. It has also to be mentioned that the factor of ethnic diasporas and migration was not yet very palpable in the 1990s and in the first years of the new millennium; today, by contrast, it is this factor which alienates Russian people from Islam.

Compared to the leftist and right-wing ideas that inevitably obtained the image of an eclectic post-modern “mish-mash” (*eklektichnyi postmodernistskii “vinegret”*) in the patriotic environment of the 1990s, with an accent on aesthetics and with a touch of theatricality (*teatral'nost'*), Islam had the advantage of an integral character (*tselostnost'*).

This integrated character, just as, again, the organical inner connection with politics, is dictated by the very understanding of Monotheism – *Tauhid* – in Islam. According to Islam, Allah the Almighty is transcendent and at the same

time also immanent in the reality, and His authority encompasses all aspects of the creation. For this reason Islam and politics form together one whole, so that it is impossible to dissect the one from the other – it is not for nothing that Imam Khomeini once said that “the Islamic religion has a political character, everything in it is connected to politics, even the divine service (*bogosluzhenie*)”. As Allah’s authority is total (*total’na*), and He is at the same time not similar to everything created, [but] immanent in it, his authority and that of His religion cannot be limited to the sphere of eulogy (*slavoslovie*) and to ritual services (*ritual’nye uslugi*). Allah is not “the God of spirituality” or “the God of prayers”, as are pagan idols – gods for war, gods for love, gods for the family etc. Allah is the Lord of all worlds, of everything created. And this is why statements according to which the “political Islamists” (*politislamisty*) – including the Russians – “use religion for their political goals” or “mix the spiritual and the worldly” reveal the incompetence of such “accusers”.

Islam as an encompassing religious-political system, Islam as the religion of non-conformists and of people who do not wish to resign themselves to their own humiliating situation, Islam as a religion of justice (*spravedlivost’*), Islam as a symbol of protest – this is how Islam was depicted in the Muslim columns of the patriotic press. And this beneficial presentation of Islam soon began to bear fruit.

The Islamic Committee and NORM

Initially the Russians who accepted Islam or who intended to do so were somehow individual heroes, whose situation can be described with the words of Tsoi: “Again a white day beyond the windows, the day calls me into battle, I feel, closing my eyes – the whole world is going to war against me.” Sometimes not only the narrow-minded (*obyvateli*) did not understand them (this goes without saying) but also their former companions (*soratniki i edinomyshlenniki*), who looked at those who made their choice for Islam with suspicion (although, to tell the truth, [113:] in most cases the Muslims managed to maintain their relations with friends from the protest environment). It would be a mistake to assume that only the society rejected the Russian Muslims; the “second generation” [of Russian Muslims], whose entry into Islam coincided with the end of the nineties

and the start of the new millennium, paid society back in its own coin. While Muslims of other nationalities went through some heavy “inferiority complex” (*“krizis vtorichnosti”*) and saw as their major task to integrate into the “big society” by all available means (even if this was only possible in secondary or tertiary roles), Russian Muslims, by contrast, already possessed this much coveted status of “full citizens” (*polnotsennye grazhdane*) but broke with society, consciously and without regret. They could have safely made a career and could have obtained everything from society (*sotsium*), but the typical Russian Muslim of the early and mid-2000s deeply despised the society that surrounded him, regarding his outcast status (*otverzhennostʹ*) as resulting from his own superiority over the majority, not as a defect.

Due to their latent Russian nihilism the newly-converted Muslims could not seriously worry about the odd looks of the people who passed by, or about the moaning of the grandmas sitting on park benches. Could they, the former nationalists, national-bolsheviks (*natsboly*), leftists (*levaki*), suffer from the lack of understanding or the malice of the grey, despondent crowd, when all these people were educated by publications that were full of fervent sarcasm, such as the clearly anti-philistine pamphlets (*anti-obyvatel'skie pamflety*) in the newspaper *Limonka*? While the “ethnic” Muslims did not wish that their headscarf irritated their environments, and were distressed when they were taken for terrorists, the female Russian Muslims of “the second wave” were rather seriously amused by the panic and fear of the narrow-minded residents that their *hijabs* evoked. Some of them even entertained each other with funny stories about the ridiculous questions and hysterical reactions of passengers in the public transport, and sometimes they deliberately included elements of militarized aesthetics in their costumes.

Some people might regard such behavior as an expression of showing off, of kitsch and bravado, and from this they might conclude that such “fancy” female Russian Muslims were, from their point of view, “not serious”. Yet – paradoxically – their behavior clearly testifies to their sincerity and, on top of this, to the organic character (*organichnostʹ*) [of their views]. In Islam, and in her *hijab*, a Russian Muslima of the “second generation” remained a typical Russian girl from the radical environment – a girl who renounces this world (*mirootritsatel'nitsa*), a

rebellious women (*buntuiushchaia zhenshchina*), internally independent from society and distancing herself from it, a heroine from [the works of] Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevskii. A proof of these girls' extreme seriousness in their Islamic choice (*islamskii vybor*) is that when they became older they did not turn away from Islam – to the contrary, Islam became the inalienable fundament of their lives, of their fates. These Russian girls, irrespective of how demonstrative their behavior might appear, nevertheless seriously fulfill the Islamic prescriptions. Eccentricity was replaced by solidity and indifference (*otstrannennost'*), but as they became older and wiser, the Russian Muslimas still do not attempt to please society; to the majority's lack of understanding they now react not with provocation (*s vyzovom*) but simply with deep indifference (*ravnodushie*).

Russian Islam, just like Russian Old Belief several centuries earlier, became, in essence, a symptom for the old sickness of the Russian society, and of the deep crack that was produced in Russia by the phenomenon that the Russian people drew itself into serfdom (*zakreposhchenie*). The line of demarcation between those Russians who [114:] still carry the imprint of their former slavery, and those Russians who did not accept this lot for themselves and rebelled against it, has been preserved even in our days. Already too big is the difference between [on the one hand] the downcast majority, which accepts with gigantic submissiveness any experiments introduced by the people in power, lulled by the edifying speeches of the official church, by the television that permanently heeds to those who yell and sing and tell lies, the “voting heart” for any party of power, those who have their skins burned in places like Hurgada, and who drink themselves brutally into beast-like oblivion; and [on the other side] the notorious “Russian boys” of Dostoevskii, the inventive, inquisitive scholars, the fearless discoverers, the heroic madmen who dream of carrying out a great mission, the selfless servants of the great Idea.

The Russian people is thus not at all of one sort but falls into at least two parts that do not complement each other all too nicely; [two types] with a different psychotype (*psikhotip*), mentality (*mental'nost'*), ethical system, and worldview. No doubt that the Russian Muslims very organically fitted into the second group, and the outcast strangers have, in effect, almost disappeared. And in this sense

they were, and still are, an organic part of their people. [The Russian Muslims] were never at home in the first group.

But they were confronted with the logical question how to integrate into the *umma* – a question that was rather acute because at that moment the Islamic mentality (*mental'nost'*) of the Russian “ethnic” Muslims was still insufficiently developed; as we mentioned above, they saw Islam just as a part of their national culture or, even more, placed the national [identity] above the religious one.

For many Russian Muslims, the Islamic Committee (*Islamskii komitet*) of Geidar Dzhakhidovich Dzhemal' became the door to the *umma*. For this there are a great many objective reasons. Not only the openly non-conformist direction of his texts played an important role but also that while he is an Azerbaijani, he is above all a refined Moscow intellectual. He grew up in one of the side streets close to Ostozhenka, in a Soviet elite family surrounded by a high-positioned grandmother and grandfather; he had limitless access to rare philosophical works in all languages of the world, and he used to have conversations with thinkers and intellectuals of the highest caliber that were just like him. In this context he addressed his audience in a language that was easier to understand for a well-read young Russian from the radical environment, or for a Tatar from an educated family who grew up in the capital or in another big megapolis, than for representatives of the diasporas (for in most parts of the Russian Federation the Tatars are an autochthonous population, and it would be wrong to identify them with the diaspora); although it is above all them [i.e., the diasporas from the Caucasus and Central Asia] who regard themselves as the active subject in the historical project that Dzhemal' formulated. As to the Russians, the people close to Dzhemal' must have noted his biased and at times even hostile relation to the Russian (including the Muslim) factor. Ironically, the works of Dzhemal' were met with interest in the first place in the Russian environment and, oddly, also in its opposite, the Jewish environment (and here one should think not only of leftist Trotskists but also of thoroughly liberal-minded Jews). [115:]

From a technical side it was not difficult to get close to Dzhemal' from a leftist-patriotic and rightist-traditionalist environment, for he stood in regular contact with journalists from the paper *Zavtra* (whose editor's office is also open

for guests), where he published his materials; and he also showed up at presentations of the almanac *Volshebnaia gora* and in *Falanster*, the shop of intellectual (above all, left) literature.

In 2003, on the basis of the Islamic Committee, a scientific group was created which was slightly later restructured into the Center for Studies on Conflict, Split, Opposition and Protest (*Tsentr issledovaniia konflikta, raskola, oppozitsii i protesta*, TsIKROP). The idea to set up a research group developed spontaneously. After the author of these lines got acquainted with Geidar Dzhemal' in 2002 he suggested to me to write an article on Ali Shariati, the second most important ideologist of the Islamic Revolution in Iran – about his life, his philosophical and political conception, his anthropology, religious and historical philosophies. Dzhemal' was quite satisfied with the material [produced by the author], and he decided to carry out research in the field of political thinking (*politicheskaiia mysl'*). The idea occurred to him to bring together young intellectuals who were able to carry out such studies, on the basis of the seminars given in TsIKROP. Gradually a group came into being that comprised among its discernable members, next to the author of this article, the student of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) Anton Shmakov, the Russian Shiite Maksim Trefan who was an old friend of Dzhemal' and had formerly played as keyboarder in the group *Vezhlivyi otkaz*, and also Vadim Sidorov, the later Kharun ar-Rusi who would become *amir* of the National Organization of Russian Muslims; at that time Sidorov was a disciple of Dzhemal' and not yet a Muslim (he accepted Islam in 2003). Next to these also some other people attended these meetings, persons like the head of the publishing house *Umma* Aslambek Ezhaev and the son of Geidar Dzhemal', the well-known journalist Orkhan Dzhemal', in addition to the leftist publicist Aleksei Sakhinin and the journalist of the *Nezavisimaia [gazeta]*, Kira Latukhina. The seminars took place in Dzhemal's old apartment in the Mansurovskaiia Pereulka that had been transformed into the office of the Islamic Committee, in a relaxed atmosphere, with talks and tea: Dzhemal' explained his views, and the members of the group discussed the concepts that he brought up. In addition, for each seminar one of the participants produced an article and a lecture about one of the Islamic

political thinkers of the 20th century, including Ali Shariati, Ayatollah Khomeini, the ideologist of the “Muslim Brothers” Sayyid Qutb, and the contemporary British political theoretician of Indo-Pakistani origin Kalim Siddiqui. In one seminar Vadim Sidorov held a lecture with a vivid speech about the *Nation of Islam* and the Black Muslims in the USA, and one could feel that this topic was emotionally close to him, and it was found interesting that this controversial organization went over to a position of Orthodox Islam.

Along the results of these seminars the publishing house *Umma* published in 2005 a volume entitled *The Islamic Intellectual Initiative in the 20th Century* (*Islamskaia intellektual'naia initsiativa v XX veke*). But the major achievement was something else: while in the beginning only two participants were newly-converted Muslims, by the end of the seminars practically all of the most active members of the scientific group had accepted Islam. Dzhemal' conceived of TsIKROP as a laboratory for a leftist-Muslim alliance, for a progressing Islamic International (*griadushchii islamskii internatsional*) in which the diaspora could take the position of a vanguard power (*avangardnaia sila*). Yet in reality it rather became the factory (*kuznitsa*) for producing the intellectual elite of Russian Islam. [116:]

However, very soon *dzhemalizm* as a doctrine stopped to completely satisfy these newly-converted intellectuals, some of which later became important figures of Russian Islam. First, while *dzhemalizm* did contain a systemic, deep understanding of the meaning (*smysl'*) of Islam, it was not based on the fundamental Islamic Tradition (*fundamental'naia islamskaia Traditsiia*) in this or that of its interpretations, but on inner illuminations, insights and conceptual mentalities (*kontseptual'nye umopostroeniia*) of Dzhemal' himself – even if they were sometimes ingenious. But the Russian Muslims were longing for an integrated and fundamental system (*tselostnost' i fundamental'nost*), as an expression of the Russian person's primordial (*iznachal'nyi*) strife to be not superficial and to proceed to the very last foundations of every issue. One can say that precisely this became the clearest characteristic of Russian Islam. Soon, when they delved deeply into the study of the Islamic sciences, into the history of the Prophet, into the methodology of Islamic law, the newly converted intellectuals

discovered more and more points where they could not link up with Dzhemal's discourse. These were of course [Dzhemal's] private [opinions], but there were too many of them. And second, in Islam there are no "insignificant" prescriptions that one could easily leave aside. Islam is an integrated system in which every element – be it "primary" or "secondary" in nature – is important, so that to leave out one of them would be harmful to Islam as a complex phenomenon. And the Russian Muslims realized this fact more and more as they got deeper into the study of the Tradition.

Nevertheless Geidar Dzhemal' had a tremendous influence on the members of the scientific group – so powerful that the imprint of *dzhemalizm* is to a certain degree still present in his disciples' attitude (*mirooshchushchenie*) towards their life, providing the parameters less for a rationally formulated discourse but for the style of how they see the world (*mirovospriatie*). Dzhemal' had an especially serious relation with two members of the scientific group – these are Kharun ar-Rusi (Vadim Sidorov) and the author of these lines, Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova. This discipleship (*uchenichestvo*) was more shrouded in traditional than in modern academic forms, and it is for this reason that it left such a deep trace in the fate of those who went through the "school" of Dzhemal'. He preferred to meet his disciples often, almost every day (and also his followers attempted to do so), in the unconstrained atmosphere of one of the Moscow coffee houses, where he took the time to talk with them about Islam for hours, about God, man, the *sotsium*, and politics.

This is why when in 2004 the National Organization of Russian Muslims (*Natsional'naia organizatsiia russkikh Musul'man*, NORM) was founded, its members still remained for a certain time under the influence of Dzhemal's ideas. The maitre himself (as he was called by some of his disciples) took the opportunity to honor the first press-conference of NORM with his presence. This was seen by many as just a PR-action from Dzhemal's side, who wanted "to keep his hand on the pulse" of the affairs in the newly-baked Muslim organization in order to derive benefit from it for the needs of the Islamic Committee. But there is no reason to treat the presence of Dzhemal' in some of NORM's events in such a superficial manner. Anyway, NORM "left the mantle of the Islamic

Committee”, comparable to a baby that was not planned and somehow even not wished, and not very much expected, although it came forth from a legal wedding; but once the baby entered the world it would have been strange [for the father] not to participate in its fate.

To be sure, the child grew and emancipated itself from its parents not in the course of days but even by the hour. [117:] Naturally, from the moment of its creation until the present time NORM has changed so much that it is hardly recognizable. The trajectory (*traektoriia*) of its development followed its own distinct inner logic, and was in a sense traced out from its very beginning.

The persons who attended the first press conference as NORM’s *de jure* or *de facto* leaders had, from the start, little to do with the real leadership of this organization. These were for the bigger part either decorative figures, one could say “wedding generals” (*svadebnye generaly*), or persons about whom it was known that they were weak, but who from the perspective of information [policies] were active and experienced, whom one could use as a “decoy duck” for the journalists and then throw them off board when they were not needed any more. In a third variant they were diligent, disciplined executors, devoted to the real but not the nominal head of the organization.

In essence, NORM was always and completely a project of Kharun ar-Rusi (Vadim Sidorov), and the evolution of this organization reflects the ideational evolution of Kharun himself on various stages of his path within Islam.

Sidorov is often depicted as a mere careerist who, in his search for personal fame, is ready to endlessly change his mimicry (*bez konechno mimikrirovat*) and to become a devotee of various theological schools, only to keep himself “swimming”. Probably such a view of this activist is in its root not correct, and in spite of [our] full antipathy towards a number of Sidorov’s ideological positions and propagandistic maneuvers one has to concede that he has always been a person of principle and, probably, of sincerity. His way from nationalism through Dzhemalizm to *Salafism* and, finally, to Sufism can be seen as having inner consistency and as being integral. In effect, Sidorov developed within the framework of the rightist discourse – let us not call it “the white face of patriotism” because this would be a serious simplification and vulgarization of his

views. After his disappointment with contemporary political nationalism, and having understood that the Russians as the “big people” (*“bol’shoi narod”*) almost ceased to exist, and that accordingly one would have to create a renewed Russian nation (*obnovlennuiu russkuiu natsiiu*) on new fundamentals (by the way, back then this idea had currency in oppositional circles in so far as this truth had been understood), Sidorov delved into further ideological and religious inquiries in the framework of that same right-wing fascist, anti-liberal discourse.

These searches brought him to Dzhemal’ and into Islam. But also in *dzhemalizm* it was the right-wing aspects that attracted Sidorov. The internationalist fundament of the Islamic Committee, the diasporic discourse of Dzhemal’ and his alliance with leftists used to repel Sidorov. After having read Henri Corbain’s *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Sidorov rejected for himself the possibility to become a Shiite, because the classical Shii doctrine was incompatible with the metaphysics of Dzhemal’ himself, whose disciple Sidorov was at that moment. Sidorov chose for himself the *Salafi* path, and even after the official demarcation (*razmezhevanie*) with Dzhemal’ in early 2005 on the grounds of political disagreements (his refusal to accept a union with leftists, in particular with Trotskists), the Sunni section of NORM continued for a considerable time to defend *Salafist* positions. But also in *Salafism* Sidorov did not like the same lack of fundamental character (*fundamental’nost’*) and the vulgar internationalism. [118:] For initially, when he turned to *Salafism*, Kharun ar-Rusi was searching for the “pure Islam” (*“chisty i islam”*) of the companions of the Prophet, but in the following he realized that Salafism is a “modernist innovation” (*“modernistskoe novedelo”*), that it does not provide an adequate methodology for exegesis and jurisprudence (*ekzegetika i pravovedenie*) based on the traditional Islamic sciences, and that its manners of interpretation do not go back to the companions and the *tabi’in*³ but are “made up opinions” (*“otesebiatina”*) of persons who are not competent in the field of reading the Holy texts. And in vulgar internationalism Sidorov saw the same reminiscences of leftism

³ [In the Islamic tradition, the *tabi’in* (“followers”) are the generation that immediately followed the generation of the *sahaba* (“companions”).]

(*levachestvo*) that he hated so much. This is what eventually led him and his followers to Orthodox Sunnism. And more concrete, to entering the Sufi brotherhood and movement called *Murabitun*, which unites in particular newly-converted Europeans, and which is led by the Scottish aristocrat Ian Dallas (Abdulqadir as-Sufi), and which is characterized accordingly by estatism (*soslovnost'*), monarchism, anti-democratism, and anti-modernism.

The views of Sidorov have thus in effect remained unchanged – they just developed in a way to bring the presentation of God and His religion into harmony with the political convictions that he held already long before he accepted Islam. Another question is whether this is good, taking into consideration that Islam is not a religion of “spirituality” that one could combine with these or those political views, but an integrated system that also includes the regulation of political nuances. But here the issue is about methodology and about the *madhhab*, and in this case Sidorov’s political preferences of the Sunni Orthodox type fit together very organically. Another question is of course whether this all is authentic Islam. But this would be the topic of a completely different research...

The only principal question in which Sidorov sharply changed his position in the course of the time is the question of the unity between Sunnis and Shiis. Originally the *National Organization of Russian Muslims* contained a Shii and a Sunni section, and Sidorov himself respected the choice of Russian Shiis. In the following period the Russian Shiis, who were more busy with the question how to attract (*prizyv*) people to their direction, began to distance themselves from the Sunni section of NORM. Sidorov explained this by the latent hostility of the “treacherous Rafidites”⁴, who [allegedly] already at that point wished to direct his own followers (*storonniki*) into “the networks of their propaganda”. Alas, this was not at all the reason for the isolation (*obosoblenie*) of the Shii sector; we will come back to this topic in the following chapter on Russian Shiites.

Gradually all of these people left NORM – some because they lacked an interest in the activities of the organization, others because they disliked the line

⁴ Rafidites [“rejectors” of the first three caliphs] is one of the most well-known terms for the Shiis.

that Sidorov took. By the way, in 2006 and 2007 the latter's followers carried out a propaganda trick (*triuk*), and expelled all Shiites from NORM. Although there was already nobody left to expel – all had already gone [by themselves].

Still, for a long period Sidorov's NORM, now fully isolated from the Shii section, was still loyal to the Shiites as to brothers in Islam. [119:] This situation continued until the summer of 2006, when Sidorov's group "burst" into a frenzy of anti-Shii propaganda, and they created in the "Live Journal" (*ZhZh*) a community (*soobshchestvo*) for this purpose, spreading real as well as fabricated Shii *hadiths* and *fatwas*, plus resolutions of the *Murabitun* and *Salafist* authorities against Hizbollah, as well as anti-Iranian publications, often from the "yellow" press and of slandering nature. In the following the level of [their] anti-Shii propaganda improved a bit: Sidorov's group tried to convince the audience that the Shiism of Khomeini's interpretation (*khomeinistskii shiizm*), and *Usuli*-Shiism (*usulitskii shiizm*) in general, are just a "modernist innovation", and that the authentic Shiism is the *Akhbari* trend (*akhbaritskoe napravlenie*). Such a propagandastic trick (*ulovka*) had an effect on some Russian-speaking Shiites only because [they] had limited access to research on Shii literature. In the subsequent period the emergence of the *Istok* publishing house corrected this situation in many respects, for they produced a good number of books that elucidated those nuances of Shiism that [the enemies of Shiism] had been speculating about as long as they knew many Shiites did not have enough knowledge about these issues. In particular, Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr's book *History of the Science of the Foundations* (*Istoriia 'ilm al-usul*) sheds light on the fight between the *Akhbari* and the *Usuli* schools, with arguments in defense of the latter.

The information war between the Shiis and NORM on their internet blogs (*v blogakh*) continued for around one and a half year, until it became clear that it brought serious damage to both sides, and that it spoiled the image of the major publicists who obtained the fame of being troublemakers and as starters of sedition [*smuta*] (*fitna*) among the Muslims. This reputation became an obstacle for raising the discourse to a higher level, including its representation in the media (*v informatsionnom pole*). When they had grown up a bit and cooled down, both camps started to concentrate not on the fight against each other, but on a more

effective call (*prizyv*) to their particular trend [in Islam], on the elaboration of a platform that would suit the existing conditions, and on the study of the Islamic sciences and on making the public acquainted with their own religious teachings and their positions on the urgent questions.

The Russian Shiites

In contrast to the Sunni face of Russian Islam, Russian Shiism is a double-sided phenomenon, for it contains two tendencies, one of which is currently gaining strength and has a serious potential, whereas the other presents a false start (*fal'start*) of Russian Shiism, a dead-end branch of development that leads nowhere.

While the first of these two tendencies is extremely topical today, strangely enough the Shii section of NORM was above all represented by those who already at that time did not fit into the historical development logic of Russian Islam, nor of Shii Islam as a whole. Possibly there is some deeper sense in this false start, for the non-viable version of Shiism has the chance to be disposed of in time, in the course of the historical and organizational struggle within the Muslim environment of the Russians and of the [other nations of the] Russian Federation.

World history proceeds via specific “points of no return”, for in the various phases of history scientific discoveries, wars, the emergence of new states and ideological systems, and also simply of cultural phenomena, [120:] change the fate of mankind in such a way that it can already not be imagined differently any more. Such “points of no return” are, for instance, the emergence of Christianity and of the religion of the last Revelation – of Islam, the appearance of Marxism or Bolshevism; a number of inventions, like television, aviation, Internet; the creation of the USA, the falling apart of the USSR, and so forth. “Point of no return” here means that mankind can already not live any more as if these phenomena or events had not taken place – one has to deal with them, one has to reflect on them, one has to take their existence into consideration.

For contemporary Shiism such a “point of no return” was the emergence of Khomeinism (*khomeinizm*). One can extol Khomeini or hate him, one can regard him as a great renewer of Islam (*obnovitel' islama*), or one can reproach him of

being not authentic and of adhering to “*Usuli* modernism”. But from the perspective of the objective historical development one thing is clear: the further development of Shiism is only possible on the basis of Khomeinism and by taking into consideration what he said to the *umma* and to the world.

It was Khomeinism that led Shiism out of its marginal situation, and it is thanks to Khomeini that Shiism, as a religion of the downtrodden masses (*zabitye massy*), or, to the contrary, of the refined philosophers and mystics, turned into an important factor in the global historical process, and on its basis a global project was formulated.

In Islam, politics are indissolubly connected to theology, conditioned by theology. Khomeini was not only an ingenious politician but also an outstanding theologian (*bogoslov*), a revolutionary coming from theology. The true revolution is the return to the fundamentals (*osnovy*). And in this sense the authentic Shiism is by no means *Akhbarism*, but *Khomeinism*.

In particular, Khomeini eliminated the deep contradiction that existed within the Shii theology in the form that it had at that moment. On the one hand, the Imams of Shiism preserved the Sharia of the Prophet from distortions and served for the Muslims as an example for the fate (*sud'ba*) that the Muslim has to live. The *hadiths* of the Imams were already written down during their lifetime, and they also transmitted the *hadiths* of the Prophet, without adding anything to the law – the Sharia – that he had formulated. These laws also defined the political side of life, questions of governance, jurisdiction, and so forth.

On the other hand, when Khomeini appeared on the forefront (*avanstsena*) of Shiism most theologians (*bogoslovy*) stated that these laws should not be implemented before the coming of the hidden *Imam*,⁵ in contradiction to the *aya* of the Holy Quran: “Oh those who believe! Accept Islam completely, and do not follow in the footsteps of Satan! Truly, he is for you a clear enemy!” (2:208). Importantly – and this needs to be emphasized for those who do not cease to declare that “Shiism has a lack of internal strength” (*vnutrennaia nesostoiatel'nost'*) – this all-encompassing acceptance of Islam also contains the recognition of the

⁵ [In Shii theology, the last Imam is going to come back from “Hiding” to lead the *umma* before Judgment Day; the last Imam of the Twelver Shiis disappeared in 872 CE.]

imamate of the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*), what is demonstrated by many reliable *hadiths* in the Sunni and Shii collections [of traditions].

To refrain from taking part in the political life and from translating the prescriptions of Islam into real practice (including in the field of jurisprudence), the refusal to fulfill a number of the foundations of belief, like to order the approvable (*povelenie odobriaemogo*) (*amr bi-l ma'ruf*) and to forbid what is to be condemned (*zapreshchenie osuzhdaemogo*) (*an-nahy 'an al-munkar*), to refrain from opposing the oppressors in the fight for justice (*spravedlivost'*) [121:] – all this erased much of what the imams gave their lives for, in the wish that these principles would not lose their topicality.

From the point of view of *Khomeinism* the meaning of the hiding and return of the Imam Mahdi is far deeper than just the appearance of the good Tsar who would punish the evil Boyars. Khomeini pointed out that the Imams did not strive for personal authority, for to them personal authority was just a means to implement the laws of Allah, to oppose the tyrants and to fight for justice. If their Shiites [sic] reject to fulfill all that is listed above, then they in fact deny the *imamate*, under the pretext that the only legitimate authority is that of the imam [who, however, is still absent]. Therefore Khomeini decreed that the Sharia must be followed, and the *hadiths* demonstrate who should be doing this in the period of Hiding (*Sokrytie*); these are the righteous, just and competent Shii theologians and jurisprudents (*bogoslovy i zakonovedy*). Khomeini's revolutionary doctrine, which turned into an innovative model for state organization and into a global project, had the effect of an exploding ideological bomb, and it changed the outlook of the whole region, if not more than that.

After the destruction of the Soviet project, *Khomeinism* attracted the sympathy of a multitude of Russian patriots who became engrossed in reading the books of D.A. Zhukov, who wrote an outline of Khomeini's political biography and also published his speeches and his "Religious-Political Testament" (*"Religiozno-politicheskoe zaveshchanie"*), as well as his letter to Gorbachev. *Khomeinism* turned out to be tremendously attractive, just like any teaching that was demonized by the liberal forces, for the readers of the newspapers *Den'* and *Zavtra*, for those who in the nineties saw the TV programs of Dzhemal'. At the

same time Khomeinism, just like any Islamic teaching, not only talked about the worldly (*posiustoronnye*) aspects of politics but also disclosed the inner meaning of the human existence and man's relation to God. And these aspects of Shiism were also displayed, for example, in the traditionalist almanac *Volshebnaia gora*.

The Russian Khomeinists (*russkie khomeinisty*) were the spiritual children of the year 1993, even if at the moment of those events they were too young to participate in them. The drama of the shooting of the parliament, the mourning (*pominovanie*) of the fallen heroes of the insurrection (*vosstanie*), became a peculiar sacred mystery (*misteriia*) for the Russian opposition, a mystery that was, in an archetypal and existential form (*arkhetipicheski i ekzistentsial'no*), very close to the mystery of Ashura – the mourning of Imam Husayn and his fallen warriors who had rebelled against the tyrant Yazid [and died as martyrs in 680 CE]. The inner affinity (*srodstvo*) between these two phenomena gave the Russian patriots the opportunity to feel deeply and with their hearts for Ashura, and precisely this deeply intimate religious experience was the starting point for many Russian Shiites for their way into Islam and *Khomeinism*.

They are quite numerous, these newly-converted Shiites. Their hearts are burning, they are not indifferent neither the lot of their country nor the fate of the world, and also not the citadel of the Khomeinist project – the Islamic Republic of Iran. And these people will definitely tell their opinion.

Yet it turned out that in NORM the Khomeinists were represented only minimally. Most Shiites in NORM were typical searchers for “pure spirituality”, archaic fossils (*arkhaichnye iskopaemye*), representatives of the “first wave” of Russian Muslims, adepts of the pre-Khomeini version of Shiism who had, historically, already lost against their internal competitor. These newly-converted [of the “first wave”] saw Islam and Shiism just as “one of the religions” in a purely European sense of the word, while Islam, as we already demonstrated above, is in all its varieties [122:] clearly not a religion of “pure spirituality”. Next to this, these citizens were orientated towards a liberal humanism as an ideology and as a model for the organization of society, which forced them to put their hopes on integrating (*vpisat'*) Shiism, in its apolitical and “purely spiritual” version, into the contemporary European civilization in the framework of democratic institutions.

But this is, let us phrase it like this, problematic, even if one takes as guidance not the political and legal but only the moral-ethical Shii principles.

Due to their inadequate understanding of the essence (*sut'*) of Islam, and as they clung to versions of Shiism that were already outdated and began to rot, these people showed no talent and lost all positions in NORM, in the environment of Russian Muslims, in the broad Islamic media, and even in the Iranian structures; on the latter, and on the Islamic Republic in general, they then began to pour all kinds of slanderous dirt, via their marginal internet resources – although the Iranians had just done a good job, whereas Russian Shiites of that sort did not recommend themselves as useful and effective partners.

While in the middle of the first decade of the new millennium it was popular to speak of a “rotting away” (*zagnivanie*) of the Iranian state system, of a “degeneration” (*vyrozhdenie*) of Iran’s elite, similar and according to the model of the analogous degradation of the CPSU, about the “oblivion” of the ideals of the Islamic revolution, it is clear today that such categorical conclusions are inappropriate, and that it would be too early, to put it mildly, to write off the Islamic Republic Iran, the stronghold of *Khomeinism*.

But this is not the whole story, for the non-Khomeinist segment of Russian Shiism went through a whole epidemic of cases of apostasy (*otstupnichestvo*) from Islam, which had no precedent and was unthinkable in any other Islamic environment in Russia. It may sound cynical, but what occurred was a peculiar natural elimination (*estestvennaia vybrakovka*) of the cadres with liberal and apolitical views, who became terrified when they suddenly discovered the essence (*sushchnost'*) of Islam and realized that it is not “just a religion”, similar to Christianity, Buddhism and other confessions.

By the way, the Shii section of NORM was in close contact with the Russian Shii space (*prostranstvo*) that did not belong to NORM, [an environment] that one could perhaps characterize as “a club of hookah-smokers and hitchhikers” (*“kal'ianno-avtostopnyi klub”*). In principle, the Russian hitchhikers who accepted Islam are an interesting environment that would deserve further study. It is a specific subculture that produced not a few Russian Shiites – personalities who are in their own ways bright and sincere. Hitchhikers cannot simply be called

party-goers (*tusovshchiki*), for in their free travelling across Asia and Africa they have an underlying philosophy – a certain romanticism, an escape from the high-tech civilization (*tekhnogennaia tsivilizatsiia*) into those corners of the planet that have so far remained untouched by the modern (*modern*) and by the American globalist model of unification, a lively contact with the reality of countries and peoples bypassing the media and the “blue screen”. Such a relation to the world can characterize the hitchhikers as people with an independent type of thinking that has not yet been stuffed with garbage. But in most cases they are apolitical, and thus they were little interested in the goals and tasks of NORM. In general, the Russian Shiites of this type grouped around Anton Vesnin – a young guy and a polyglot who thanks to his free travels in the countries [123:] of the Near East accepted Shii Islam, studied for one and a half year in a madrasa (*medrese*) in the Iranian city of Qom, and then opened Islam courses in Moscow.

Since those years the Russian *Khomeinists* have not disappeared. And although this area (*prostranstvo*) is still not structured, it is their fate, due to Russia’s historical perspective, to become, if they attain the necessary level of self-organization, one of the bright phenomena within Russian Islam, its “red face”, while the Russian *Murabitun* have already become its “white face”. By the way, an alliance between the two, in analogy to the eclecticism of the opposition, is not in sight. Russian *Khomeinism*, or *Neo-Khomeinism*, is potentially the most viable tendency, one that is also able to achieve the same echo in the leftist-patriotic environment that the *Murabitun* have found in the circle of nationalists.

Russian Muslims and the Muslim Community of Russia (MOR)

Both the Russian *Khomeinists* and the Russian Sufis from the *Murabitun* movement are more complementary to their Russian environment than to the Muslim Community of Russia (*Musul'manskaia obshchestvennost' Rossii*, MOR), which is made up of Tatars and of those Caucasians (*kavkaztsy*) who link their fate not with a separation [of the Caucasus] from the Russian Federation but with the attempt to integrate into Russia.

The reason for this is not the somehow imaginary (*mnimaia*) bias of the environment that is usually called the Muslim community of Russia, against Russians who accepted Islam. On the contrary, the structures that translate (*transliruiut*) the community's position into the media – Islam.ru (and now www.ansar.ru), Islam.News – have completely freed themselves (*abstragiroyalis'*) from the prejudices towards the newly-converted that exist in the environment of their brothers by blood who are further away from Islam, and have cordially embraced the Russian Muslims who did successful work in the niche of the MOR-supervised institutions.

Of course by far not all of these Russian Muslims were related to NORM, since NORM does in principle not express the opinion and will of all Russians who accepted Islam. What is more, most of the newly converted Slavic [Muslims] of Russia are not members of NORM and do not associate themselves with this organization. NORM is probably more of an experimental project to give structure to the Russian Islamic space on the basis of the *Murabitun* and the *Maliki madhhab*, with special reference to the historical perspectives of Russia and the Russian people, than an association that would automatically absorb every Russian who accepts Islam. With the example of the Russian *Khomeinists* we already see that even a part of the passionaric Russian Muslims categorically rejects the positions (*ustanovki*) of NORM in its present outlook. The environment of those newly converted who never had any relation to the activities of NORM is dominated most probably by cosmopolitan positions that strive for the infusion (*vlivanie*) [of Russian Islam] into the Islamic *umma* of the Russian Federation without any palpable attention for the preservation of the particular national identity. But this position is notoriously weak, for Muslims of other ethnic backgrounds do not, as a rule, forget about their national identity. In this case the Russian Muslims run the risk of [124:] being a group that is “hung up in the air” without a clearly outlined mission within the *umma* itself. And this while it is not by accident that Allah Almighty created mankind in the form of peoples and tribes, and that He ordered [Muslims] to admonish, in the first place, their own closest kinsfolk (*rodnia*) – and a Muslim can lead the most effective call

(*prizyv*) exactly among those people who speak the same language as he does, and who have the same mentality.

This explains the fact that the environment of MOR brought forward a number of bright Tatar and Caucasian publicists, while the Russian Muslims who simply merged in this environment became something like a “faceless crowd” (*“massovka”*), and became average participants in roles that may be important but are always secondary, without becoming an independent factor. An example for this are the club *Golubushka* (“Little Dove”) and the foundation *Solidarnost’*, which include many Russians. At the same time this is a rather dangerous position, and this not just because of personal ambitions but because of the continuing *Jahiliyya*-like (*dzhakhiliiskie*) national positions of many diaspora groups (who are powerful in lobbying for their interests through MOR-structures that are by themselves not *Jahiliyya*-like and not chauvinistic but that are loyal to them [i.e., the diaspora groups]); these diasporas are able to make use of this Russian “crowd” in order to further their by far not Islamic goals. Well-known activists of Russian Islam have not taken root and have not stayed in MOR, even though Tatar and Caucasian brothers have a sincere and good relation to them.

The reason for this is that MOR adheres to the ideas of *wasatiyya* (*vasatiyya*) (Islamic centrism) and of the *al-Ikhwan al-muslimin* [Muslim Brothers], whose platform, in fact, is rather eclectic. Yet those among the newly converted whose mentality remains to be Russian tend, as we have already noted, towards integrated discourses (*tsel’nye diskursy*). Coming from radical protest environments, they have already more than enough of the “red-white patriotisms”, of “swastikas on red flags” and of “Auroras with Reichstags”, and they understood that such attempts to combine what cannot be combined only lead to nothing. This is why the *Ikhwan*-type “mixed soup” (*“sbornaia solianka”*) of Sufism, *Salafism* and elements from the Shii worldview could not seriously attract them. As to the concept of *wasatiyya* one has to see that the Prophet’s call for moderateness (*umerennost’*) is understood very differently in the predominantly “ethnic” environment of MOR and in the field (*prostranstvo*) of Russian Islam. While Russian Muslims understand this moderation as a rejection of extreme liberal and also of too rigid interpretations of the regulations of

Muslim law, *wasatiyya* is interpreted by MOR as political moderation and political centrism. The latter is latently not very sympathetic to the Russian heart, which uses to tend towards more radical forms of political ideology, whether this is a sharp leftist or a sharp rightist discourse, socialism or conservatism. Moderateness in the form of a cautious petty bourgeoisie (*ostorozhnoe meshchanstvo*) has always been organically disgusting to the Russian person.

When evaluating the present-day situation of the Russian *umma* we can ascertain that the centrist and “prudent” policy of MOR did not bring the results the Islamic community (*soobshchestvo*) of the Russian Federation had wished, but to the contrary that it brought it to a very dangerous line (*cherta*). The Muslim community (*obshchestvennost'*) of Russia was catastrophically unprepared for those challenges that the Russian *umma* is today confronted with, and unprepared for the historical situation in which the whole country finds itself today. Here we mean in the first place the very real (though categorically undesirable) perspective of a dissolution (*razval*) of the country, and of ethnic conflicts. Through its thoughtless display of solidarity (*bezdummya solidarizatsiia*) [125:] with the diasporas – and as we have already shown in the first chapter, a “Muslim” nationality is not automatically equivalent with a de facto Islamic confession – the MOR-structures have antagonized a multitude of Russian people from Islam. They have sharply incited Russian nationalists against Islam, people who still five years ago maintained in general a rather loyal position towards Islam, and who now in their majority come out in favor of an alliance with the West, “Israel” (*Izrail'*), and against a strengthening of the Islamic factor in the space of Northern Eurasia (*Severnaia Evraziia*). In a situation where the Russian nationalist movement is taking steam, such a state of affairs is deplorable. Russian patriots who strive for the preservation of Russia and of the tradition of Soviet foreign policy are also alienated by MOR when it gives unlimited support to the regime only because of its foreign policy course (and in essence because it fears punishment), for unpopular steps of the Russian government arouse no less rejection and criticism in the patriotic environment than in the nationalist environment. Yet by contrast to the nationalists, the Russian patriots are not yet lost for the Muslims.

Under these conditions the Russian Muslims can play a very important and positive role, both in the fate of the *umma* of the Russian Federation and in the history of the country as a whole – they are able to become a bridge between the Islamic community (*soobshchestvo*) and the Russian majority, and thereby prevent that the whole area of Northern Eurasia glides into bloody and uncontrollable chaos. In this constellation one can make the prognosis that the Russian Muslims, with their developed national consciousness, will in general develop partnership contacts not with MOR, but with their co-religionists abroad and with their brothers in blood – the Russians. While the *Murabitun* have their “second home” in Turkey, the light-house and point of orientation of the Russian *Khomeinists* is Iran. While the call of the *Murabitun* is mostly directed at nationalists, the environment that has the potential to be complementary to the Russian pro-Iranian *Khomeinists* is the Russian patriots.

Of course the Russian Muslims will anyway maintain contact with MOR, since this environment comprises their brothers and sisters, but they will do this as an independent subject that is somehow standing apart (*obosoblennyyi sub"ekt*). Here one can surmise that the main partner of Russian Muslims in this dialogue will be the Tatars, who are an autochthonous population in the biggest part of Northern Eurasia that stands in terms of mentality closer to the Russians than the Caucasians.

Remains the question of the Russian *Salafists*, since taking into account Buriatskii (1982-2010) [i.e., the Buryat convert to Islam from Buddhism, Said Buriatskii, who joined the Chechen militant Islamists] one has to admit that this is also a palpable phenomenon that has a right to exist. Yet we did not discuss this question in our article simply because the Russian *Salafists* do little to bring themselves into the sphere (*prostranstvo*) of Islam of Russia and of the Russian Federation. The Russian *Salafists* are today, alas, completely absorbed within the vector of the anti-Russian Federation and anti-Russian discourse – although it is possible that among them are also not a few honest people who long for justice and who do not understand who exploits them for which purposes.

ANASTASIJA (FATIMA) EZHOVA

By the way, all forecasts about the future development of Russian Islam and of the *umma* of the Russian Federation have only a relative character, given the foggy perspectives of Russia herself..

Translated from the Russian by Michael Kemper

VADIM (HARUN) SIDOROV, “WE ARE NOT FASCISTS, WE ARE SUFIS”

“We Are Not Fascists, We Are Sufis’. An Interview with the Leader of the Movement ‘Murabitun’ in Russia Kharun Sidorov’ (2009).¹

[Q:] What is the “Murabitun”?

[A:] First of all it is necessary to note that the “Murabitun” are no contemporary political party or movement, not like the “Muslim Brothers” or the Hizb ut-Tahrir. Rather, the “Murabitun” is a social phenomenon that is deeply enrooted in the history of the Islamic Maghreb, and that is well-known and respected, especially in Morocco, where it has the strongest roots. Even more, it is in principle impossible to think of the Maghreb without considering the “Murabitun”.

There is a very important hadith which says: *“In the Maghreb there will always be a group of my Umma that will stand on the way of the truth up to Judgment Day.”*

We are convinced that the way of the truth, or the way of the Sunna, is of course in the first place the way of Medina (*medinskii put’*), that is, the way of the collective practice (*kollektivnaia praktika*) of the Medinan community (*obshchchina*) of the Prophet, peace be upon him and the prayer (*mir emu i molitva*), of his sahabas [i.e., his companions who supported him] and the generations of their followers. It was them who, as a community in Medina, practiced the Islamic social pattern (*islamskii sotsial’nyi pattern*) in the most integrated form (*tselostno*). This is the position of the Malikis, but, by the way, not only theirs. In particular the Hanbali scholar Ibn Taymiyya demonstrated the superiority (*prevoskhodstvo*)

¹ “My ne fashisty, my – Sufii’: Interv’iu s liderom dvizheniia ‘Murabitun’ v Rossii Kharunom Sidorovym”, *Chetki: Literaturno-filosofskii zhurnal* 2/2009, 132-139. Translation with kind permission by the author.

of this way of following the Sunna in his book “The Way of Medina”, which, unfortunately, is little-known.²

So, when the noble tradition of Medina began to be destroyed, first under the impact of the ‘Abbasid civil strife (*smuta*), and then when the carriers of the Medinan tradition, the Maliki ulama [i.e., Islamic scholars] of Sham [Syria], were increasingly eliminated and expelled by the Shii dynasty of the Fatimids, it was the Maghreb that became the refuge for the Sunni muhajirs [exiles] from all over the Muslim World. The extreme West – Andalusia – was the only place where a legitimate Islamic authority survived, but very important processes also took place on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean; in the difficult but successful fight with the Shiis and the [early Islamic radical sect of the] Kharijis the Maghreb gradually became purely Sunni. In this context it was precisely the Maghreb that became the center of attraction for the Ahl al-Bayt (*Akhl’ Beit*) – the offspring of the Prophet, peace be upon him (*mir emu*), who fled there from the civil strife in many Islamic countries. The result of this was that in those lands [of the Maghreb] one can probably find the highest concentration of Ahl Bayt, and in the Magrebinian society (*obshchestvo*) they obtained a [special] status and [enjoy a special] respect that is strengthened in the institute of the Sharifs (*institut sharifov*).

What is the “Murabitun”? Our point of departure is that the Medinan model of integrated Islam (*medinskaia model’ tselostnogo islama*) constantly reproduces itself in the historical course of the Umma, just as it has been promised in the hadith that says that in every epoch this community (*obshchina*) will have a renewer (*obnovitel’*) of religion. The “Murabitun” became the political and civilizational design (*oformlenie*) of these processes. In the fourth century of the hijra the leader (*vozhd’*) of one of the North African tribes, Yahya ibn Ibrahim³,

² [Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) was a provocative scholar of the Hanbali school, famous for his concept of *siyasa shar’iyya* (“Sharia politics”), an Islamic critique of the politics of his time in Syria and Egypt; he is generally regarded as a prime reference for political Islamists (“fundamentalists”) of the 20th century.]

³ [Yahya ibn Ibrahim (d. 1084), leader of a tribe of the Sanhaja Berbers, made an alliance with the Maliki theologian ‘Abdallah ibn Yasin, the founder of the Almoravid (in Arabic: al-Murabitun) movement that subsequently gained control of huge parts of the Maghreb and Islamic Spain.]

met, on his way back from the hajj, with the carriers of the Medinan tradition that had survived in the Maghreb, with the foremost scholars of that time. Transformed by their teaching and enjoying their support, he began to select the sincere young people from his tribe and from the ones in his neighbourhood, and he gathered them in *ribats* – in ascetic religious convents (*obiteli*) where they practiced the *dhikr*, obtained shariat knowledge and were trained in military affairs (*voennoe delo*). In the course of one century these ribats became the weapon of a consequent Islamization [133:] on the wide territories of Northern Africa, and then in Andalusia, where they gave Islamic life a new breath. The Muslims who were educated in these *ribats* became famous under the name “Murabitun”. In spite of the ups and downs of the various Murabitun movements, this phenomenon did not disappear with the time but developed solid roots in Northern Africa, where ribats were continuously set up and where Murabitunism (*murabitunizm*) as a movement became an important part of social reality.

It was precisely the convents – the ribats – that became the striking power (*udarnaia sila*) of the anticolonial fight against the French occupants. The contemporary “Murabitun”, about which we are talking here, are the lawful, so-to-say blood-related, carriers of all these lines: of the Medinan line – through the continuity of the scholars of the Maliki *madhhab* and of Sufism, represented by the shaykh of our shaykh, Muhammad ibn Habib,⁴ and of the social model of the Murabitun, which the leaders of our movement practised in the ribats/zawiyas of Morocco, and also of the political line, since precisely the Darqawiyya tariqat was, during the lifetime of Muhammad ibn Habbib and his disciples, one of the pillars of the spontaneous (*stikhiinii*) Islamic anticolonial movement.

I would like to stress that the shaykh ‘Abdulqadir as-Sufi⁵ and the majority of his followers (*soratniki*) in the “Murabitun” of our days have European roots, but that this does not place him outside of this sequence (*riad*) [of Darqawiyya leaders]. The “Murabitun” is a phenomenon of the Islamic West, including such a

⁴ [Muhammad ibn Habib (in the Russian text: Khabbib) al-Amghari al-Idrisi al-Hasani (1876-1972), a Moroccan shaykh of the Darqawiyya brotherhood.]

⁵ [Abdalqadir as-Sufi is the Scottish-born convert to Islam Ian Dallas (b. 1930), founder of the Murabitun World Movement, now residing in Cape Town, South Africa.]

unique phenomenon as Islamic Andalusia, which was not a purely Arabic region but a cosmopolitan fusion (*kosmopoliticheskii splav*) of Arabs, Vandals and Romans, [a fusion] that emerged on the Islamic basis of the universalist traditions (*universalistskie traditsii*) of the Mediterranean area. And it was with the mission to preach [to Europeans] that the Moroccan scholar and shaykh Muhammad ibn Habib had sent our shaykh [‘Abdulqadir as-Sufi], who had back then been his trustee [here: *mukkadam*, i.e., *muqaddam*], [to Europe].

[Q:] In this case, what is the meaning of the “Murabitun”, and what does it see as its tasks?

[A:] Let me repeat another time that the “Murabitun” is no political movement in the contemporary sense of the word – it does not have a program, no leading organs, no sections and committees, no special symbols. For this reason one can say that the “Murabitun” is a movement not in the structural-political sense but in the direct, literal sense of the word. Also, “movement” is a very important component of the Sufi spiritual way. One of the previous shaykhs of our tariqat even gave us a *du’a* [i.e., a prayer] that our shaykh very often pronounces when he is meeting his murids: “O Allah, make me always being in movement.”

The Sufis have always been in movement, and this not just as separated, isolated individuals as people often believe today, but also as a social group. In their lives they constantly visited shaykhs, the graves of *awliya’* (*avliia*) [i.e., Sufi saints], met with their brothers, had the maximum of communication with preachers (*pravedniki*) and scholars (*uchenye*). This intensive spiritual experience went hand in hand with their constant work for making a living in – this is important to underline – a halal way, as a rule by means of trade. A person could go on a travel with the aim of visiting a shaykh, a scholar or simply the brothers-fukara [Ar. *fugara’*, lit. “the poor”, here: ordinary Sufis], and this was combined with a trade operation (*torgovaia operatsiia*) that brought them benefits. This was a very special existential type of life (*kachestvo zhizni*), and not a *downshifting* (*daunshifting*) as it takes place in our days, no escape from reality but a specific social reality. This reality presupposed the existence of a whole number of institutions, some of which were generally Islamic (*obsheislamskie*) – such as the

establishment of markets, of caravans and guilds, of *kiraats* and *shirkats* (*kiraaty i shirkaty*) [i.e., renting/leasing operations and companies] – and others were Sufi by nature, but also having a social component – including *zawiyas* and *ribats* (*zavii, ribaty*).

The “Murabitun” is a Sufi movement. Its center (*iadro*) is composed of people who strive to lead, and who already do lead, for many decennia, a full-fledged Sufi way of life (*polnotsennyi sufiskii obraz zhizni*). However, under conditions when the Islamic social pattern (*islamskii sotsial'nyi pattern*) is destroyed, the social [134:] institutes of Islam, this is practically impossible, at least for the majority.

Even concerning the attainment of one's *rizq* (the means for life) – in a society of the absolute rule of *riba* [usury], under the conditions of capitalism – a person who wants to avoid *riba* has almost no possibility to obtain food, a roof over his head, and his material necessities. And *riba* can make all noble aspirations of a Muslim null and void, can take away the *baraka* [i.e., Allah's blessing] from his property and his life.

The tariqat – the spiritual way (*dukkhovnyi put'*) – begins with the following of the shariat. There can be no full spiritual life if the Sufi has no possibility to follow the shariat in the first place. The usury (*riba*) is only one, albeit very important issue, but in a broader perspective the religion, honor and property of a Muslim cannot be defended without shariat. And shariat, in turn, is impossible without an Islamic authority (*islamskaia vlast'*). Islamic personality (*lichnost'*), Islamic society, Islamic authority: this is not just a political slogan (*lozung*), this is what we need in order to search for Allah's consent (*odobrenie*). This is especially true for the Sufis who demand from themselves an extraordinary high level of spiritual demands, and for this reason the great Sufi shaykhs and murids, such as Shaykh Darqawi or Imam Rabbani,⁶ devoted a huge part of their lives to the fight for the shariat and for a shariat order in society.

Our communities (*soobshchestva*) are united by a single spiritual task (*zadanie*) – the *vir'd*, and they practice the same forms of the *dhikr*. This is what

⁶ [The Moroccan Sufi Muhammad al-'Arabi al-Darqawi (d. 1823) is the namesake of the Darqawi branch of the Shadhiliyya order. Imam Rabbani is the honorific title of Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), the Indian namesake of the Mujaddidi branch of the Naqshbandiyya brotherhood.]

characterizes us as a tariqat. But at the same time our shaykh says: You cannot talk about *dhikr* if you do not pay the *zakat* (Russ. *zakiat*) [i.e., the alms tax], since this is the third pillar of Islam, but you cannot pay *zakat* if you do not have an *amir*. You cannot have a full *jum'a* [here: *dzhuma*, i.e., Friday congregation] if you do not have an *amir*. You cannot fulfil a huge amount of the shariat prescriptions that you are obliged to do, and you cannot enjoy your shariat rights if you do not have an *amir*, if you are not in the *jama'at* [here: *dzhamaat*, i.e., community]. Today only the *jama'at* can attempt to stand up against *riba*, to work for the renaissance (*vozhrozhdenie*) of the Islamic currency (*valiuta*), of the Islamic trade and financial institutions. This is impossible not only on individual level but also on national level, and therefore all *jama'ats* that share these goals should join forces in this strife. And this is one of the key directions of the activities of the “Murabitun” on global scale, and in this field we are cooperating with the broadest range of forces.

[Q:] The “Murabitun” are well-known for their radical economic ideas to abolish the capitalist system and to renew the Islamic economy, and in particular [to re-introduce] the Golden Dinar [coin]. Yet many economists, including Muslims, regard your ideas as an obvious utopia. What would you like to say on this matter?

[A:] I would like to say that a huge majority of those who call us utopians or idealists have an absolutely perverted understanding of our economic views. The basic problem is that the economic views of the “Murabitun” are regarded in isolation from the social world view of the movement, which is characterized by its close links to the reality of *tawhid* [here: *taukhid*, i.e. monotheism] and the problem of the relationship between man and creation [or existence, *bytie*].

It would be completely inadequate to believe that it is possible to establish a superstructure (*nadstroika*) in the form of Islamic economic relations and institutions, especially in the original form (*v podlinnom vide*), on top of a civilizational – and I would even say: anthropological – basis (*basiz*) that is completely alien (*chuzhdyi*) to it. By the way, the same is true for the problem of establishing an Islamic state on the basis of contemporary civilization, which is the agenda of a wide array of forces, from the Hizb ut-Tahrir people over the Ikhwan

to the Jihadists [here: *khizbuttakhrirovtsy, ikhvanovtsy, dzhikhadisty*]. Exactly these are utopias – economically and politically. [135:]

In the best case, the Islamic movements of today are in their activities oriented towards the positions of Islamic scholars in the fields of hadith and fiqh – the purely religious sciences. The “Murabitun” also have their scholars of fiqh and their students of shariat knowledge, and they maintain close relations with many of the most prominent scholars (ulema) of our time. But while we have at our disposal the heritage of Western humanitarian thought (*my vladeem naslediem zapadnoi gumanitarnoi mysli*), in our understanding of social and historical problems we pay special attention to the conception and methodology of Ibn Khaldun.⁷ Next to being a prominent scholar in the field of shariat sciences, a qadi and a researcher of hadith, Ibn Khaldun was also a sociologist whose thinking reveals a fascinating breadth, a social and political philosopher. Thus his views in particular matters were [always] based on the shariat, yet not just piling up stock phrases of fiqh but deeply elaborated through the prism of social analysis.

Following Ibn Khaldun we subscribe to the cyclic logics in the development of a person, of society, of a civilization. And each of these cycles is characterized by its own specifics, which are spiritual and political as well as economic and social in nature.

The capitalistic technocratic civilization is a form of existence (if one can call it like that at all) that has outlived itself, that is agonizing and stinking (*izzhivshaia sebia, agonizirushchaia i istochaiushchaia slovonie forma bytiia*). We are convinced that when this civilization is finally bankrupt, we will witness, on a

⁷ [Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), the well-known North African historian, scholar and diplomat who is famous for his concepts of dynastic circles – the eternal struggle between the Arabic city states in the Maghreb and the (mostly Berber) countryside. In his Muqaddima (“Introduction”), Ibn Khaldun explained the rise of new dynasties through the concept of tribal and religious solidarity (*‘asabiyya*), through which a tribe from the rural periphery at times manages to defeat the corrupted cities and establish a new dynasty that then again embarks upon a path of civilization and eventually of decay of mores and military prowess, only to be replaced by a new powerful tribal family. Note that Ibn Khaldun’s model of civilizational rise and fall shows a number of similarities with Lev Gumilev and Aleksandr Dugin’s Eurasianist ideas about the force temporarily inherent in upcoming “ethnoi” or peoples.]

new healthy basis, from healthy people who practice a natural social pattern (*estestvennyi sotsial'nyi pattern*) towards each other, first the birth of a society, and then of a civilization, that give mankind a renewal and a continuation of history. For this reason one cannot speak of a utopia, since utopians believe in the attainment of a static ideal (*statichnyi ideal*), be this “the end of history” or a pre-historical “golden age”; but we believe that history, just like the whole universe (*mirozhdanie*), is in constant movement, where [movements of] rise and fall will follow each other continuously until the day comes for which Allah has determined the end of the world.

The choice that mankind has in the foreseeable future is not big. It is either the end of history, or its continuation. In the latter case a new round [*vitok*] of civilizational development will be started. Within the Islamic Umma this can only happen through people of a special quality, through a victorious group who – through determination [or: by fate, *po opredeleniiu*] – will have to practice the economic, social and political relations that are natural for a young, renewed and healthy society. There is no utopia in this, it would rather be utopian to assume that healthy relations can exist among sick people in a sick society. But it would also be absurd to assume that a healthy person and society will live according to the norms and relations of an exhausted civilization (*vyrodivshaiasia tsivilizatsiia*) or make compromises with the latter. What we are doing today in the field of economic research and in [our] projects is only to create the preconditions (*predposylki*) for the social reality of that which is to come, but to make this reality happen a person (*chelovek*) has to emerge who is suitable for this [future], on the level of his personality (*lichnost'*) as well as on the level of the social type. And for him all that we are talking about today will not be a utopia but a natural necessity.

[Q:] Do you agree with those who characterize the “Murabitun” as a right-wing, fascist and monarchist movement?

[A:] Let me start with fascism, since this is the question that, as a rule, worries people most. This problem has two aspects. On the one hand, our opponents (*nashi protivniki*) fill the term “fascism” with a content that is in our understanding much too positive, in order to prevent us from giving in to the temptation to accept this accusation for ourselves. Into the heads of this category

of people the liberal and leftish chimeras have been hammered so profoundly that for them, we will always be fascists, no matter what we actually say or think about fascism [136:].

For a long time we thought that it is useless to try to defend ourselves against our critics and enemies, and that we could, with a certain challenge (*vyzov*) and an element of intellectual provocation (*provokatsiia*), position ourselves as “Islamofascists”.

Now I want to say that we decisively leave this phase behind. And not because we want to be white and fluffy (*pushisty*) and to please everybody. Rather, the reason for this is that when we entered the “Murabitun” in 2008 we came with our own formulated ideational settings (*ideinye ustanovki*) and had not yet completely realized the social pattern of the “Murabitun” and the essence (*sushchnost'*) of the Medinan model, the model of Sufi Salafism, in its full range. Our understanding of these issues came when we got acquainted with the many works of Shaykh Abdulqadir as-Sufi, as well as with the immersion (*pogruzhenie*) in the living environment of the “Murabitun”, with the exchange of experience with its various communities (*soobshchestva*), especially with its veterans (*veterany*).

About this [development] I recently wrote the work “Saying Good-Bye to Fascism” (*Proshchaniye s fashizmom*), where I gave an explanation why we are not on the same road as fascism, neither for tactical reasons nor out of principle. Fascism was a reactionary movement, a hopeless attempt to save the traditional values of the old civilization from the attack of the technocratic society. The only possible solution to this problem was the creation of a totalitarian state. Our premises are principally different. To enforce healthy values onto a sick society is a useless thing. A healthy society can only be created in the natural way of the Medinan model, and it does not need a totalitarian, structuralist state (*totalitarnoe strukturalistskoe gosudarstvo*). We are talking about a community that is situated in dynamic relations with reality on all levels – this model was present in the worldviews of early fascism, but eventually [fascism] took a different way, for it had neither a true spiritual basis (*istinnaia dukhovnaia osnova*) nor a correct methodology (*pravil'naia metodologiya*).

We have them. For this reason I can say with complete sincerity: We are no fascists, we are Sufis.

Coming to the question whether we are left or right: for us this division is not interesting any more. For God's sake (*radi Boga*), people can consider us to be rightist as much as they like, but just as one may manage to find fascist elements in our model one will also find libertarian (*libertarianskie*) and even anarcho-syndicalist elements. We have as many people who came to us from the right wing as from the leftist movement – former Marxists, Socialists and even Hippies (*khippi*). The Mexican community (*soobshchestvo*) of the “Murabitun” has good contacts with the most, if one can say that, leftist separatist movement, even though [that community] originated from former Spanish fascists. This is the best example to show that the left-right division has lost its actuality for us.

One also has to bring clarity into the issue of monarchism. We agree with the position of thinkers like the above-mentioned Ibn Khaldun who argue that a [newly] emerged society (*sformirovavsheesia obshchestvo*) will be able to attain a stable existence and to reproduce itself only if it has a government in the form of one person (*edinolichnoe pravlenie*) that is being transmitted by inheritance. In this sense we are convinced that a monarchy is the most natural form of government for a healthy society that has come to fruition. Yet today the first point on the agenda is not how to found such a government for such a society but how to create that very society. And this is already not a task of the *sultaniyya* [i.e., monarchical government] but one of the *‘asabiyya* [i.e., social solidarity] – in the sense of Ibn Khaldun.

Our task today is to create a vigorous community (*obshchnost’*) of people who are capable of practising and reproducing the integrated (*tselostnyi*) Islamic social pattern. Today such a community can only emerge on the basis of a voluntary streaming together of people who are united by their oath (*prisiaga*) to the leader (*lider*) who has emerged from among themselves. For this reason in the stadium of *‘asabiyya* the leadership has charismatic, not dynastic character. The [question of] monarchy will only become topical at a time when there already is something to be inherited. The task of our generation is to create this. [137:]

[Q:] Please tell us, why do you maintain such a radical position towards the Shiis? Because they use to put forward arguments for their opinions (*suzhdeniia*), including from Sunni sources; and even among the Sunnis themselves there is no unity in such questions as, for instance, how to relate to Mu‘awiya, the Umayyad dynasty⁸ and so forth.

[A:] I would say that the degree (*gradus*) of our enmity towards the Shiis depends directly on their attempts to interfere with inner-Islamic affairs (*vnutriislamskie dela*) and to misrepresent our religion. I mean, it would of course be wrong to say that we have nothing against the factual existence of Shiism, just like we are against any other sort of *kufr* [unbelief]. Yet Allah has said in the Quran that if He had wished to make all people adhere to one community (*obsbchina*), then He had done so, and [the Quran] also says that there can be no force in belief issues when the clear path has already clearly distinguished itself from the path of error. For this reason, as the Shiis now have their own state in the form of Iran, then it would be good if Iran allowed its Sunni Muslims to perform the hijra (*khidzhra* [emigration]) from Iran, since the shariat forbids Muslims to live under the authority of those who insult the *sahaba*. In return, the Muslim countries could then help with the resettlement of their Shii minorities to Iran, and then one could build up pragmatic relations with Iran on an interstate basis, without always looking at the ideological antagonism.

Concerning the second part of your question I want to say that it is categorically not acceptable to put the disagreement between Islamic scholars on the same level as the argumentation of the Shiis. To seriously enter into a dispute with the Shiis about our religion, to allow them to refer to our sources – that is absolutely the same thing as entering into polemics with any anti-Islamic missionaries. They all, including [the Orthodox priests] Sysoev, Maksimov⁹ and

⁸ [The first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty Mu‘awiya (r. 661-680) is highly controversial because of his fight against the group that later became the Shiis; his son Yazid killed the third Shii Imam, ‘Ali’s son Husayn, at Kerbelā in 680. The Umayyad dynasty (661-750, not counting the continuation of Umayyad rule in Cordoba) is often regarded as the one that introduced monarchy into Islam, and is thus favored by present-day Sunni monarchies in the Middle East.]

⁹ [This is the controversial Moscow-based Orthodox priest Daniil Sysoev (1974-2009). Sysoev, author of “The Orthodox response to Islam” (*Pravoslavnyi otvet islamu*) and several other works,

others, do exactly this, they turn to our sources [when they polemicise against Islam]. So why then do we not accept their arguments? Because when they turn to [our sources] they do not see in them the same thing that Islamic scholars see – the heirs of the prophetic knowledge; rather, they interpret them in their own way, take them out of context, accept some sources but reject others, and so forth.

We cannot enter into dispute with the Shiis about our religion, even if they turn to our sources, because they accept our sources only in those cases when these are in agreement with their own position. But the most important point is that they do not accept the methodology of the Muslim community (*obshchina*) for understanding these sources. Instead, they are guided by their own sources which we do not accept, but which are their own priority, and they use their own methodology, through the prism of which they view our sources, trying to take out of the original context all elements which they find useful. The main thing is that they are perfectly aware of this, but again and again use lies under the flag of objectivity, in order to confuse the Muslims who are no experts, and to destroy our religion.

The reasons for the categorical character of our relation to the Shiis has to be seen in the very origins. As Ibn Taymiyya said, when the Muslim community is in crisis it is necessary to start from the very beginning, to go back to the sources.

And for us, the Malikis, the origin is the community of Medina. If we recognize the Medinan community, then we accept the victory of the messenger's mission of our lord Muhammad (*torzhestvo poslannicheskoi missii nashego gospodina Mukhammada*), peace be upon him and the prayer, and we accept that he brought us the approved religion (*vverenaia religiia*) not in the form of books and not in particular persons, as the heretics (*eretiki*) attempt to demonstrate, but in the form of his community, which is the personification of the victory of Islam and which is also its embodiment on earth (*zemnoe voploshchenie*). In spite of the fact that after the times of the sahaba the Islamic scholars began to disperse in the new lands of Islam, where various schools emerged, for the scholars of the Sunna

conducted missionary work among non-Orthodox and Muslims, and was killed in Moscow by unknown assailants. Also Iurii V. Maksimov (b. 1979) is an Orthodox priest engaged in public controversies with Islam in Russia.]

and for the Muslim community it was absolutely obvious that Medina had superiority (*prevoskhodstvo*), since it was not individual sahaba who lived there but the whole prophetic community (*prorocheskaia obshchina*), [138:] [a community] which continued to reproduce the undiluted understanding of religion from generation to generation in a closed environment (*v zakrytoi srede*). For this reason scholars from all over the caliphate used to travel to Medina in order to investigate [legal] positions that had come up [in their home lands], and that they found dubious, by comparing them with the practice of the inhabitants of Medina, that is, with the Medinan *madhhab*, the one that was later elaborated to form the Maliki school.

We have to understand what the *‘amal* of the Salaf of Medina [*Amal’ Salafov Mediny*, i.e. the “living practice” of the Medina community of Medina] constituted, since this is the key to many problems. We hold that Islam in its fullness, and in its non-distorted form was the flesh and blood of these people and the basis for their existence as a community. Therefore they in principle did not need the written fixation and systematization of the sources and of the branches of knowledge, [the fixation and systematization] that occurred after Islam had been spread to new lands. The circumstance that these attempts [at a systematic fixation of the tradition] did indeed take place do not change the issue, since we are talking here about a community that came to a single united opinion (*mnenie*) that had been formulated in its social practice. The practice of these people after the death of the Prophet, peace be upon him, is for us what it is – the Sunna.

Now let us look at the emergence of Shiism. The Shiis see their origin in their alleged following of the Ahl al-Bayt,¹⁰ but why would one have to believe them, and not us, the Sunnis, if we also regard ourselves as followers and lovers of the family and descendants of the Prophet, peace be upon him? The best method to understand Shiism is to see where it emerged. Did it emerge in Medina, is it a trend from within the Medinan community? In no way it is. Shiism emerged in Kufa [in Iraq] among people who did not have an integrated understanding of Islam, but who were ready to dispute against the superiority (*verkhovenstvo*) of

¹⁰ [Ahl al-Bayt (“the People of the House [of the Prophet]”), all who claim to be descendants of the prophet, through his daughter Fatima.]

Medina. Let me repeat once more: there was no Shiism in Medina, it did not develop at all in Medina, but instead it flourished among the people of Kufa, and became the source for a great civil strife (*smuta*) for the whole Muslim community and in particular for the Ahl al-Bayt.

The followers of the Medinan tradition understood the essence of Shiism perfectly, even in those times when people in other schools supported some sorts of illusions or were ready to compromise with them. This is why the Shii dynasty of the Fatimids¹¹ cruelly suppressed (*repressirovala*) in particular the Maliki scholars, and in fact even cleansed Egypt from them, using for these goals the short-sighted representatives of other *madhhabs*. What kind of Sunni-Shii brotherhood can there be if the Shiis, any time that they come to power, treat the real Sunnis (*nastoiashchie sunnity*) without mercy, just as had happened under the Fatimids, then under the Safavis¹², and as it is now happening in contemporary Iran?

Shiism is a challenge to our religion, the negation of its basic values. If one accepts the logics of Shiism, then one would have to see the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, not as the perfect teacher and leader who successfully educated the community of his followers and who transmitted his work into the hands of his devoted disciples, but, Lord forgive (*prosti Gospodi*), as a bankrupt and a loser! When they declare that towards the end of his life the Prophet, peace be upon him, was betrayed by almost all of his comrades-in-arms (*soratniki*), and even by his wife 'Aisha, Allah be content with her, the heretics treat what was in fact a favour for the worlds as something that resembles the humiliated godless Ul'ianov-Lenin, who faced a fiasco at the end of his life when he was helpless and

¹¹ [The caliphate of the Fatimids covered, in the 10th to 12th centuries, huge parts of North Africa, and especially Egypt. Their caliphs belonged to the Isma'ili ("Sevener") branch of the Shia, meaning they regarded the historical seventh Imam as the last one (in contrast, above all, to the Twelver Shia that is today found in Iran and Iraq).]

¹² [The famous Isma'ili (Sevener Shi'a) caliphate of the Fatimids (909-1171) in Northern Africa and parts of Arabia was the major rival to the Sunni 'Abbasids in Baghdad. The Safavis (1501-1722) of Iran (and adjacent territories) was the dynasty that elevated Twelver Shiism to the rank of state religion in Iran.]

isolated in Gorki¹³ and betrayed by his comrades. Truly, to claim this with regard to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and to his *sahaba* and his wives is great unbelief and the negation of the very essence (*sut'*) of our religion, of the second part of the *shahada* which says *Muhammadan rasulu Llah*.¹⁴

Just like in all those fourteen centuries since the moment when the Kufian civil strife started, also today there is an unending confrontation between the community of the Sunna, and especially that part of it which periodically revitalizes (*obnovliaet*) the Medinan tradition, on the one hand, and the Shiis on the other. Ideologically this confrontation appears in the attempts to artificially exaggerate the contradictions (*protivorechia*) within the Islamic community over the interpretation of sources, and to use them, first, for supporting the legitimacy (*zakonnost'*) of Shiism as one of the Islamic schools, and then to argue for its rightful character (*pravota*) and its superiority over Sunnism, [139:] which would [then, if Shiism was acknowledged as the “fifth *madhhab*” of Islam] be deprived of its integrated character (*tselostnost'*) and defenceless against an opponent who follows his own logics. By necessity the political result of such behaviour would be that the Shiis take power over the Islamic Umma. While we, the Sunnis, are striving towards a repetition of the scenario of Medina, they, the Shiis, strive for a repetition of the Fatimid scenario, and this is what predetermines our relationship with them.

Enough has been said on this issue, yet let me put the dot on the “i”. There were indeed disagreements among the traditional Sunni scholars with regard to the Shiis. But these disagreements were all about the question whether one has to regard all of them as unbelievers or just a part of them. In result, the middle position was taken by the Imam al-Shafi'i, Allah have mercy on him, who said that the [common] Shiis are people who went astray (*zabludshie*), but that their scholars are indeed unbelievers. Thus one would indeed not be able to pose that each individual Shii is an unbeliever, especially if these are ethnic Shiis (*etnicheskie shiity*). Yet also true is that the more an individual Shii is becoming a real and consequential [Shii], the closer he gets to *kufr*. There can be no doubt that the

¹³ [Today Gorki Leninskie, then a village close to Moscow.]

¹⁴ [Arabic, “... and (I testify) that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah”.]

teaching of Shiism itself is *kufi*, and any person who regards himself as a Sunni is obliged to protect the Muslim community from its influence.

[Q:] Lastly, what would you like to wish the readers of our journal?

[A:] I wish them, and all of us, that Islam be their whole life, and not just an intellectual hobby. The great *‘arif* [Gnostic] Hasan al-Basri once spoke about the time when Islam in the understanding of the *sahaba* and the *tabi’in* would be replaced by bookish knowledge: “Islam in the books, Muslims in the graves”. One can understand this saying in the sense that Islam remained only in the books because the real Muslims are all [already] in the graves. But when reflecting about this saying we can also arrive at the reverse idea: when Islam is reduced to the level of books, or, let us say, the Internet, that is, when it is in one form or another turned into naked information, into a discourse (*diskurs*), then the real Muslims (*nastoiashchie musul’mane*) disappear. I want to wish all of us that Islam be for us not a discourse and an object of useless discussions, but our life, the *‘ibadat* and *mu‘amalat*.¹⁵

The interview was conducted by Aleksandr Kazakov.

[Translated from the Russian by Michael Kemper]

¹⁵ [In Islamic law, *‘ibadat* are all human actions related to Allah while *mu‘amalat* are the social regulations (e.g. trade)].

RUSSIAN MUSLIMS: A MISGUIDED SECT, OR THE VANGUARD OF THE RUSSIAN UMMA?

Renat Bekkin¹

On Terminology

In 1881 Ismail Gasprinskii (1851-1914) published his famous work “Russian Islam: Thoughts, Notes and Observations.” In this essay the Crimean Tatar “father of Jadidism” called upon the authorities of the Russian Empire to work more towards the rapprochement between ethnic Russians and Russian Muslims. The best instrument for achieving this goal was, in his mind, the development of education among the faithful in their native language. “The Russian Muslim community [*musul'manstvo*] does not know, does not feel the interests of the Russian fatherland [*otechestvo*],” Gasprinskii wrote, “it is almost ignorant about the fatherland’s pain and joy, it does not understand what the Russian state is generally striving for, its ideas. Their ignorance of the Russian spoken language keeps them in isolation from Russian thought and literature, not to mention that they find themselves in the highest degree of isolation from human civilization in general [*obshchechelovecheskaia kul'tura*].”²

What Ismail-Bey subsumed under “Russian Muslims” was the representatives of all Muslim peoples who were subjects of the Russian Empire. Here we have to remember that in his time the term “nationality” did not yet exist. The only population census that was ever carried out in the Russian Empire, in 1897, took

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² Ismail Gasprinskii, “Russkoe musul'manstvo. Mysli, zametki, nabliudeniia”, in: I. Gasprinskii, *Rossii i Vostok* (Kazan, 1993), p. 21.

into consideration only the confessions and the native languages of the individual subjects. According to this census, Russia counted a population of 125.640.021 persons, of whom 13.906.972 were Muslims (which amounts to approximately 11 percent). The Muslim population of the Empire comprised representatives of various peoples: Azerbaijanis (“Transcaucasian Tatars”), Bashkirs, Kirgizs, Tatars (of the Volga, the Crimea and Siberia), Turkmens, Uzbeks and others.

The majority of the Muslim population was speaking Turkic languages. This allowed Gasprinskii to regard the Muslims of Russia as one ethno-cultural entity and to discuss the problems and the perspectives of the Russian Muslims as a whole, without differentiating them into individual peoples. He used the adjective “Russian” [*“russkii”*] to denote their position as subjects to the Empire, and by using it he did not express any intention to see the “Russian Muslims” assimilated by the Russians. To the contrary, Gasprinskii was decidedly against any Russification: “But while the current doctrine ignores all sympathies [that Muslims feel towards the Russian Empire] in the political field, and refers only to issues of expediency and usefulness of the policy of Russification in our Fatherland, we do not see any justification for a policy that is supporting the absorption of one people [*narodnost*] by another, if the term ‘Russification’ [*‘rusifikatsiia’*] has indeed to be understood as an absorption of the other peoples of the Empire by the Russians.”³ Such a policy, according to Gasprinskii, will only push the Muslims away from the process of coming closer to the Russians, and will increase the lack of mutual understanding.

In our days, if we refer to a representative of one of Russia’s peoples who traditionally confess Islam as a “Russian Muslim”, then we at least risk to be misunderstood. “Not *russkii* but *rossiiskii*” – “not a Russian but belonging to the Russian Federation” – will be what we get to hear in reply. Equally absurd would it be to speak of “a Russian Tatar” [*“russkii tatarin”*], or “a Russian Kumyk”. In the eyes of the representatives of ethnic minorities that have not yet lost their identity, the word “Russian” is associated with belonging to the Russian people.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

That Gasprinskii's expression cannot be used for the Muslims who are citizens of contemporary Russia results also from the fact that even formally these Muslims do not appear any more as one united entity. The representatives of the Muslim peoples put their national interests above the idea of Islamic unity. The elites of the Turkic peoples would also not rally behind the concept of Panturkism. This can be demonstrated by the example of the Bashkirization of the Tatar population in contemporary Bashkortostan.

But, as happens so often, the old term is not left without an owner, and in our days it obtained a new meaning. Over the past ten years we observe a growing number of ethnic Russians accepting Islam. As the newly-converted are very active in society, the term "Russian Muslims" (*"russkie musul'mane"*) has made its entry into the mass media as a designation for the ethnic Russians who converted to Islam. At the same time it has become customary to designate the representatives of peoples who have traditionally been confessing Islam as ethnic Muslims.⁴

So who are those Russian Muslims? Only people of Russian nationality or also the Russophone representatives of other peoples? And what about persons of mixed family backgrounds (*polukrovki*)? In this contribution we adopt the position of the National Organization of Russian Muslims (*Natsional'naia assotsiatsiia russkikh musul'man*, NORM): Russian is who regards himself as such.⁵

When they energetically burst into the contemporary Muslim life in Russia, the Russian Muslims soon proved to be an independent, self-sufficient force. Many observers have pointed out that the isolation of this group is a response to the lack of recognition that they experienced from the side of the ethnic Muslims. This observation is partly true. But the attempt to create a Russian "Nation of Islam" led to a situation where some ethnic Muslims began to regard the Russian Muslims as a lost sect (*zabludshaia sekta*) that put nationality higher than religion. By contrast, the Russian Muslims themselves – at least those who united in

⁴ There is one more category, that of practicing Muslims, that is, those who at least perform the major Islamic rituals. This category would include ethnic Muslims as well as Russian Muslims. Worth noting is that among the Russian Muslims the percentage of practicing believers is significantly higher than among ethnic Muslims.

⁵ A closer discussion of NORM will follow below.

NORM – regard themselves as the elite of Russia's *umma*, its intellectual vanguard. As is often the case in such situations, the truth is somewhere in the middle. No matter how one would look at this question, one thing is obvious: the Russian Muslims represent a phenomenon that deserves a very diligent study.

What we have so far is above all the attempts of some Russian Muslims to look at themselves from the inside.⁶ For obvious reasons these evaluations cannot pretend to be objective. Outside observers of Russian Islam have either provided journalistic materials that include the biographies of converts (*neofity*),⁷ or they produced scientific studies from the field of sociology that analyze the reasons why Russians accept Islam.⁸

In this article we will look at the phenomenon of Russian Muslims from a historical perspective, with a focus on institutions, on the major forms in which the Russian Muslims consolidated – not only politically (in NORM) but also in the field of literature (in the journal *Chetki*, “Chain of Pearls”, “Rosary Beads”); we also attempt at identifying the factors that shape the place of the Russian Muslims within the contemporary *umma*.

The First Muslim: A Very Fierce Besermen...

According to the historian of Russia Dmitrii (Ahmad) Makarov, already for the period before the Golden Horde (the Mongol Empire's successor state that ruled over most of what is now European Russia) we see that representatives of the Slavic and Finno-Ugric peoples of Eastern Europe developed intensive contacts

⁶ See, for instance, A. Ezhova, “Russkii islam: sredy, motivy, tendentsii i perspektivy”, *Chetki*, 2011, 1-2 (11-12), 102-125 [translated in the present volume]; G. Babich, “Protivostoianie: ‘etnicheskie’ protiv ‘russkikh’”, *Chetki*, 2011, 1-2 (11-12), 126-135; I. Alekseev, “Russkii islam: mezhdru teologii i istoriei”, *Chetki*, 2011, 1-2 (11-12), 136-141; A. Pobedonostseva, “CHERCHEZ L’HOMME”, *Chetki* 2011, 1-2 (11-12), 142-146; and others.

⁷ See for example A. Soldatov, “Islam po-russki”, *Ogonek*, 2005, No. 48, 4 December, www.ogoniok.com/4922/2/; O. Karaabagi, “Novye russkie musul'many”, *Nezavisimaia gazeta: NG-Religii*, 2006, No. 6 (178), 5 April, at: http://religion.ng.ru/islam/2000-04-26/4_new_muslims.html; and others.

⁸ Iu.M. Kobishchanov, “Musul'mane Rossii, korennyye musul'mane i russkie-musul'mane”, *Rossia i musul'manskii mir*, 2003, No. 10, 36-51; No. 11, 24-48; S.V. Kardinskaia, “Russkie musul'mane: interpassivnost' sovremennoi religioznosti”, *Vestnik Udmurtskogo universiteta, Seriya Filosofii – Psikhologii – Pedagogika*, 2010, fascicle 1, 66-69; and others.

with the population of Volga Bulgharia, the Muslim principality in the Volga region that is believed to have accepted Islam in the early 10th century. Some groups of the Eastern Slavs and of the Finno-Ugric peoples even settled in Volga Bulgharia's towns. Makarov also suggests that the Karolingian coins that have been found on the territory of Volga Bulgaria might have been brought there not only as war spoils but also by Scandinavians who served under the Bulghar rulers.⁹

The first documentary evidence of Russians (that is, Orthodox) who accepted Islam refers to the middle of the 13th century. The Chronicle of Iaroslavl mentions the killing, in 1262, of a monk (*chernets*) by the name of Izosima (Zosima) who was following Islam: "being a monk, he turned away from the Christian faith to become a very fierce Muslim (*besermen zol vel'mi*)."¹⁰ Little is known about this person; perhaps he was even from the Finno-Ugric population or a Turk. What is important is that he was a Christian Orthodox monk who embraced Islam in the mid-thirteenth century. Makarov emphasizes that this was Izosima's conscious choice, and that it was not motivated by the quest for any benefits, since the Orthodox clergy enjoyed huge privileges in the Golden Horde.¹¹

Izosima served in Iaroslavl under the local governor of the Golden Horde. The famous Lavrentii Chronicle testifies that the former monk helped to collect the tribute from the local population, and that the envoy of the Khan had given him the necessary authority for this.¹² It was the increase of these taxes – and not that Izosima might have suppressed the Christian faith in the area – that led, in 1262, to the rebellion in Iaroslavl in the course of which the former monk was killed. Such rebellions were frequent in the 1260s, as already the Soviet historian A.N. Nasonov mentioned.¹³ The chronicler does not hide his hatred for Izosima: he

⁹ A. Makarov, "Russkie musul'mane v istorii Rossii", *Chetki*, 2011, 1-2 (11-12), 153. Makarov comes to a number of more bold conclusions that are not supported by factual evidence but that appear only as logical conclusions based on a good knowledge of the medieval history of Eurasia.

¹⁰ V.N. Tatishchev, *Istoriia Rossiiskaia* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1965), vol. 5, 44.

¹¹ Makarov, "Russkie musul'mane v istorii Rossii", 154.

¹² Tatishchev, *Istoriia Rossiiskaia*, vol. 5, 44.

¹³ A.N. Nasonov, *Mongoly i Rus': Istoriia tatarskoi politiki na Rusi* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1940), 17, 53.

calls him a “drinker” and a “blasphemous person”, and he displays his satisfaction about the fact that Izosima’s corpse “was eaten by dogs and ravens.”¹⁴

The Golden Horde’s religious policies towards the Orthodox Church did not even change in 1313, when, under Khan Uzbek, Islam became the Horde’s state religion. As before, the Horde did not set up any impediments to pagans who wanted to embrace Orthodox Christianity. In the same year of 1313, when the Great Prince of Vladimir, Mikhail Iaroslavich, and the Metropolitan Petr came to the Horde (in order to display their submission to the Khan) they obtained the confirmation that all previous rights of the Russian Orthodox Church remained in force, including that the servants of the Church did not have to pay taxes. It was confirmed that anybody who insulted the Church would receive capital punishment: “All ranks of the Orthodox Church, and all monks, are subjected only to the court of the Orthodox Metropolitan, and by no means to the officers of the Horde or to any court of the Russian princes. Whoever commits theft or robbery from a member of the clergy will have to pay the threefold in recompense. Whoever shows the audacity to mock the Orthodox faith, or to insult a church, a monastery, or a chapel, is subject to death, no matter whether he is a Russian or a Mongol. Let the Russian clergy feel that they are the free servants of God.”¹⁵

After 1313 Islam did not suddenly become the religion of most of the Golden Horde’s population; it was above all pagans that converted to Islam. The information that has come down to us does not allow us to make conclusions about how many Christian Orthodox persons converted to Islam; still, Dmitrii (Ahmad) Makarov maintains that “judging from the above-mentioned facts we can conclude that both before and during the Golden Horde period in the history of Russia, Eastern Slavs used to embrace Islam, individually or in groups, and that they merged with the Muslim, generally Turkic or Turkified population”.¹⁶

Historians lack any documents that would allow them to support these assumptions by concrete evidence (as in the case of Izosima). Probably there were more cases where Orthodox Christians converted to Islam (just like Muslims

¹⁴ *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, chief editor E.F. Karskii (Moscow, 1962), vol. 1, rubrique 476.

¹⁵ Quoted from: F. Asadullin, *Islam v Moskve* (Moscow, 2006), 18.

¹⁶ Makarov, “Russkie musul’mane v istorii Rossii”, 155.

converted to Orthodox Christianity), but this was not a mass phenomenon. The Orthodox who embraced Islam did not leave us with any documents about their change of faith. As the first document for a conversion of this kind some scholars regard the “Journey beyond Three Seas” by Afanasii Nikitin, a merchant from Tver’ who travelled to India in the years 1468 to 1475.

***God is Allah, God is Akbar* (The “Journey beyond Three Seas” by Afanasii Nikitin)**

In their analysis of Nikitin’s text some scholars come to the conclusion that Nikitin accepted Islam.¹⁷ Gail D. Lenhoff and Janet L.B. Martin believe that Nikitin first pretended to be Muslim, in order to obtain benefits for his trading activity (less taxes and custom duties, among others), but that he then, against his own will, found himself embracing an Islamic worldview: “His initial intention, as he tells us, was to remain Orthodox while feigning a ‘formal’ conversion. In defining himself ‘socially’ as a Muslim, however, and fulfilling the minimal ritual obligations of social conversion (taking a Muslim name, praying as a Muslim, observing Muslim feasts and fasts), however, he gradually arrived at an Islamic worldview. By the end of his journey Afanasij Nikitin had crossed over into the camp of Islam”.¹⁸

Others assume that Nikitin remained true to his Christian faith, even though in his views he parted from the Orthodox understanding of belief.¹⁹ In the view of these scholars, the Islamic rhetoric in Nikitin’s text (including references to

¹⁷ Gail D. Lenhoff and Janet L.B. Martin, “The Commercial and Cultural Context of Afanasij Nikitin’s Journey beyond Three Seas”, *Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas* 37.3 (1989), 322-344; Russian translation: G.D. Lekhoff, Dzh. B. Martin, “Torgovo-khoziaistvennyi i kul’turnyi kontekst ‘Khozheniia za tri moria’ Afanasii Nikitina”, *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoi literatury*, 1993, vol. 47, 95-120. See also Z. Gadzhiev, “Afanasii Nikitin – musul’manin. Khozhenie za novoi veroi”, at: <http://www.islamnews.ru/news-7037.html>

¹⁸ Lenhoff and Martin, “The Commercial and Cultural Context of Afanasij Nikitin’s Journey beyond Three Seas”, 343-344.

¹⁹ The Soviet historian Klibanov argued that Nikitin adhered to ideas of the “Judaizers” (“Zhidovstvuiushchie”) who were popular in Novgorod, Tver’ and other places at that time; see A.I. Klibanov, *Reformatsionnye dvizheniia v Rossii v XIV – pervoi polovine XVI vv.* (Moscow, 1960), 185.

“Ollo” as God, and Islamic prayers in “creole Arabic”) is a mimicry, the attempt to immerse himself into the environment, what is also reflected in the circumstance that he adopted the name Yusuf al-Khorasani.²⁰ What is important to note here is that both the supporters and the opponents of the view that Nikitin became a Muslim take as their starting point the analysis of Nikitin’s own text; but the text does not provide an unequivocal answer to this question.

This dualism was clearly noted by another student of the “Journey”, P.V. Alekseev, who wrote: “... not taking into account the depth and complexity of the problem, Lur’e and Lenhoff provided answers to two very different questions: the question as what Nikitin regarded himself, or the question what he actually was in terms of religion. [...] On the basis of the existing textual information we have to agree with the conclusions of Lur’e [who argued that Nikitin did not see himself as a Muslim]. But when we ask: through the categories of which semiotic system did Nikitin perceive God and the creation, or, to what faith did he actually belong?, then we have to acknowledge that the Muslim side is dominant. With all this it is necessary to keep in mind that when we talk about Nikitin as an author what we have before us is not a real biographical person but a category of the text – a narrator.”²¹

The main problem in the study of the “Journey’s” author is that what has come down to us is not the first-hand source, not Nikitin’s own notes or the original manuscript of the Chronicle that contains his “Journey”. What the researchers have at their disposal is several redactions of the text as they were later included into larger Church chronicles, including the L’vov Chronicle, the Archive copy from the Sophia Chronicle, and the Trinity Copy (*Troitskii izvod*).

²⁰ The most prominent defender of this perspective was the Soviet scholar Iakov S. Lur’e; see his “Russkii ‘chuzhezemets’ v Indii XV veka”, in Ia. S. Lur’e and L.S. Semenov (eds.), *Khozhenie za tri moria Afanasiia Nikitina* (Leningrad, 1986), 76-86. Lur’e argued that Nikitin was no Muslim because he did not undergo circumcision. This argument does not hold water since the marker for converting to Islam is not circumcision but the *shahada*, the pronouncement of the monotheistic formula, which, by the way, can be found in Nikitin’s “Journey”.

²¹ P.V. Alekseev, “Musul’manskii kod ‘Khozhdenniia za tri moria’ Afanasiia Nikitina”, *Mir nauki, kul’tury, obrazovaniia*, 2009, No. 3 (15), 71.

All scholars agree that the chronicler had subjected Nikitin's text to some kind of editorship; and from the example given above, the part of the Lavrentii Chronicle about the monk Izosima, we know that these editors used to introduce their own opinions into the texts. According to Alekseev, in the L'vov Chronicle (in the Etterov copy) the chronicler replaced the word "God" by "Christ", at his own discretion;²² the result was that the meaning of a whole fragment was distorted. What is characteristic for Nikitin is that he uses words that unite "not so much two languages than rather the established formulas of two mental systems."²³

It cannot be excluded that in the existing manuscript copies of the "Journey" also other places with relation to Islam have been censored. But the existing fragments allow us to agree with Alekseev, who concluded that the Muslim worldview (above all in the form of the idea of monotheism) permeates the whole text of the "Journey". By contrast to the overwhelming majority of his Christian contemporaries Nikitin thought that Islam is, just as the Christian faith, one of the paths that lead to God. At a time when Islam was widely seen as a Hagarian heresy this was a much more courageous step than the open acceptance of Islam by some Russians in our days.²⁴

From the Third Rome to the Intellectual Mecca

Had Nikitin lived longer, his "Journey" might have obtained a completely different content. He passed away in 1472, just a couple of decades before Metropolitan Zosima, in his book "Paschalion Explanation" (*Izlozhenie paskhalii*), formulated the concept that "Moscow is the Third Rome". This concept received its full confirmation in the middle of the 16th century. It became

²² P.V. Alekseev, "Musul'manskii kod", 70.

²³ P.V. Alekseev, "Musul'manskii kod", 72.

²⁴ Academician D.S. Likhachev discussed the issue of religious tolerance in the "Journey", with reference to Nikitin's remark: "But [only] God knows the right faith, and the right faith is to know God the One, to call his name in every place in the purest form". D.S. Likhachev, "Khozhenie za tri moria Afanasiia Nikitina", in: D.S. Likhachev, *Velikoe nasledie: Klassicheskie proizvedeniia literatury Drevnei Rusi; Zametki o russkom* (sec. ed. St. Petersburg, 2007).

the most direct source for the unfolding perception that the terms “Russian” and “Orthodox” are synonymous.

After Ivan the Terrible had conquered the Muslim Khanates of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556) and with the ensuing massive campaigns to Christianize the Muslim population of expanding Russia, it would have been suicide to announce that one had sympathies for Islam, let alone to convert. One also has to keep in mind that in those days there were not too many educated people among the Russians who could acquaint themselves with Islam by using Islamic books in the Arabic and other Oriental languages. There were no translations of Muslim religious texts into Church Slavonic, the high-status literary language of the Russians at that time.²⁵ Direct contacts with adherents of other faiths, which could have enabled Russians to get first-hand accounts about Islam, were, to put it mildly, not encouraged. Thus for objective reasons, the Russians were limited in their access to sources that could have allowed them to embrace Islam.

In addition, in both the medieval and the imperial periods – since Peter the Great’s time – there were legal sanctions that punished the transition of Russian (Orthodox) subjects to Islam. Even harsher punishments awaited those who attempted to attract Orthodox persons to another belief, and particularly to Islam. Thus a legal code of 1649, the famous *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, reads as follows: “And if any Muslim (*busurman*) forces a Russian person into his Muslim faith (*busurmanskaia vera*), by coercion or by deception, and if he circumcises him according to his Muslim faith, and if this is directly detected, then this Muslim has to be executed after investigation, to be burnt by fire without any mercy” (chapter 22, paragraph 24).²⁶ The state did everything to make contacts between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox impossible. It was forbidden to erect mosques in the vicinity of Orthodox churches, and baptized Tatars were not allowed to settle together with Muslim Tatars.²⁷

²⁵ The first Russian translation of the Quran appeared only in 1716.

²⁶ For the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* of 1649 see: www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/1649/whole.htm#22

²⁷ V.Iu. Sofronov, “Gosudarstvennoe zakonodatel’svo Rossii po konfessional’nym voprosam i pravoslavnoe missionerstvo v kontse XVII – nachale XX v.”, *Izvestiia Altaiskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2007, No. 4/2, 139.

One cannot exclude that there were Russians who accepted Islam, but for obvious reasons there is no reliable information on such cases. We know that with the beginning of the Russian-Ottoman wars there were some Russian prisoners who converted to Islam, either because they were forced to do so or out of their free will. Being captured in a Muslim country, or living there for a significant time for other reasons, was in that period the major form of how people went over to Islam.²⁸ If we do not confine our overview to representatives of the Great Russian people, then we must also mention the migration to Turkey of several thousand Cossacks, after the Imperial forces destroyed the Zaporozhian Sech', one of the political entities of the Cossacks in what is now Ukraine, in 1775.²⁹

A certain number of new Muslims came from the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia who often lived next to Muslims. Many of them were Christians only in name, and continued to adhere to paganism. But also here concrete data are missing, and all we can do is hypothesize.

The situation changed after Tsar Nikolai II's Manifest of 17 October 1905 that proclaimed civil rights and liberties. For the period of 1905 to 1917 there are well-known cases of conversion to Islam. Thus, some peasants turned to Islam under the influence of the Vaisov Movement. In a letter to the *zemstvo* department of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, the governor of Tomsk pointed out that "whole families of Muslims as well as of Christians accepted Islam and became Vaisovtsy [i.e., adherents of Gainanuddin Vaisov, the leader of the Vaisov Movement at that time]. One of them was Petr Morozov who with his whole family accepted the ideology of Vaisov."³⁰

The followers of Vaisov that had been exiled to the *guberniia* of Tobol'sk were so active in turning Russians into Muslims that not only the local Orthodox

²⁸ Among the first Europeans who consciously and at mature age accepted Islam were several Englishmen who served in India and Afghanistan in the 19th century; see Karaabagi, "Novye russkie musul'many".

²⁹ Makarov, "Russkie musul'many v istorii Rossii", 157.

³⁰ K.R. Shakurov, "Deiatel'nost' v Tomskoi gubernii musul'manskoi sekty 'Vaisovskii bozhii polk'", *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 2007, No. 305, 100. See also Diliara Usmanova's comprehensive study, with original documents, *Musul'manskoe "sektanstvo" v Rossiiskoi Imperii: "Vaisovskii Bozhii Polk staroverov-musul'man", 1862-1916 gg.* (Kazan, 2009).

church servants rang the alarm bell but also representatives of the official Muslim clergy.³¹ What should be added is that in the early 20th century it was above all persons of low social estates (primarily peasants) who accepted Islam; this picture contrasts markedly from the situation one century later, when the Russians who become Muslims are from the most educated parts of society.

Some Muslim authors refer to Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi as an example for representatives of the Russian elite who converted to Islam. To support this claim they refer to Tolstoi's well-known statement that with regards to morality he would put Islam above Orthodox Christianity.³² Tolstoi had made this statement in his reply to the letter of a woman who informed him that her two sons, who were military students (cadets), had converted to Islam. On the basis of this and other statements that Tolstoi made in his correspondences with Muslims some authors (like Taras Chernienko and Iman Valeriia Porokhova)³³ conclude that he was himself a Muslim. But such conclusions lack any evidence.³⁴

After the October Revolution it became difficult to carry out missionary work among non-Muslims. Just like in the Russian Empire, so also in Soviet Russia the biggest group of those who came to Islam were prisoners of war. In 1979 the war in Afghanistan began. According to official statistics (which, as many researchers believe, were strongly manipulated), during the ten years of war 417 Soviet soldiers became captives to the mujahidin. A significant number of these captives became Muslims, since this was almost their only possibility to save their lives. Some remained in Afghanistan, even when they obtained the possibility to return

³¹ Shakurov, "Deiatel'nost' v Tomskoi gubernii musul'manskoi sekty", 100.

³² For Tolstoi's letter to E.E. Vekilova, in which he argued that "if a person is put before the choice: to keep the Church Orthodoxy or [to accept] Mohammadanism [*magometanstvo*], then any reasonable person cannot have any doubts about his choice and anyone would prefer Mohammadanism", see L.N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh*, vol. 79 (Moscow, 1955), 118.

³³ Rashid Saifutdinov, "Pochemu nekotorye russkie stanoviat'sia musul'manami?", at: <http://mosgues-3.narod.ru/statja.htm>; "Imam [sic!] Valeriia Porokhova: Vse bedy – ot neznaniia. 'Vakhkhabizm – otklonenie ot Korana', schitaet izvestnaia perevodchitsa Sviashchennoi knigi", at http://www.zonakz.net/blogs/user/izgi_amal/18210.html).

³⁴ For Tolstoi's relation to Islam see the special issue of *Chetki* on this question: *Chetki*, 2010, No. 3 (9).

to their fatherland. Mostly young men of eighteen to twenty years of age whose world view was still fluid, they were cast into an unknown environment and became part of another society, accepted its culture and religion. Vladimir Khotinenko's film *Musul'manin* tells the story of one of these new Muslims, the young Russian Nikolai Ivanov; when he was released from captivity in Afghanistan and returned to his home village he became a stranger among his relatives and the village population.

To a significant degree Russian society – or at least its intelligentsia – became interested in Islam as a result of the activities of some intellectual circles who loved Oriental philosophy and mysticism. In these circles people studied the works of the mystic and occultist philosopher Georgii Gurdzhiev, of the (in Russia) very popular Sufi writer Idris-Shah, and others – works that had little in common with Sufism and with the Islamic teaching in general. Still, it was as a result of one of these intellectual circles that Islam in the Russian Federation, and also Russian Islam, obtained one of its most prominent personalities: Geidar Dzhemal'.

Since the late 1960s Dzhemal' belonged to those members of the intelligentsia who met for a glass of portwine and for a good discussion, in particular in Moscow's well-known Iuzhinskii pereulok, where an alternative group (*tusovka*) of Bohemians enjoyed discussing esotericism. Here Dzhemal' got acquainted with the writer and philosopher Iurii Mamleev, who, together with another philosopher and mystic, Evgenii Golovin, influenced the worldview of the failed student that Dzhemal' was at that time. There were many circles of this kind in the "two capitals" in those years. Moscow was, next to Leningrad, the intellectual Mecca; and while St. Petersburg was the more Western city, Moscow combined both West and East in its character.

In subsequent years Dzhemal' himself set up such a form of enlightening education, in the form of a scientific intellectual circle that met in private homes (*kruzhok-kvartirnik*), for his own students. This form of communication was the one that was closest to him, the independent autodidact-philosopher (Dzhemal' had been excluded from the institute in his very first year of studies, for "bourgeois nationalism"). No surprise then that a person like Dzhemal' was able

to raise interest in philosophy and Islam among people that were like him, intellectuals who had an independent manner of investigating the truths of life about which university textbooks use to be silent.

Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova, one of his most well-known disciples, described the secret of Dzhemal's success in the following manner: "Not only the openly non-conformist direction of his texts played an important role but also that while he is an Azerbaijani, he is above all a refined Moscow intellectual. (...) He addressed his audience in a language that was more understandable for the well-read young Russian from the radical environment, or for a Tatar from an educated family who grew up in the capital or in one of the big megapolises, than to representatives of the diasporas."³⁵ According to Ezhova there is a paradox around Dzhemal', namely that in spite of his judgmental relation to the Russian factor in Islam, it is precisely in the Russian scene that he obtained most popularity.

In fact, many Russian Muslims stepped out of the mantle of this "godfather" of Russian Islam: from the former nationalist Vadim Sidorov to the leftist intellectual Aleksei Tsvetkov. Yet even Viacheslav Polosin, in his book "Why Did I Become a Muslim?", acknowledges that his acceptance of Islam ("the return to Monotheism", in Polosin's own phrasing) was predetermined by Dzhemal's TV programs "Nyne" ("Today") and "Minaret" of the mid-1990s. Polosin's ensuing acquaintance with Dzhemal' only strengthened his intention to embrace Islam.

The secret of this eclecticism in the environment of Dzhemal's direct disciples and those who experienced his influence materializes in the personality of the maitre himself. Geidar Dzhemal' is a rather contradictory figure. In the end of the 1980s he was member of the nationalist organization *Pamiat'* ("Memory"). In the 1990s Dzhemal' appeared in public as one of the fathers and founders of the Islamic Renaissance Party (*Islamskaia Partiia Vozrozhdeniia*), the first and only Muslim party in the history of the Soviet Union.

Strikingly, things that cannot be united come together in the person of Dzhemal': Shiism and Salafism, rightist and leftist ideologies. He is a fervent

³⁵ A. Ezhova, "Russkii islam: sredy, motivy, tendentsii i perspektivy", 114. See also the full translation of Ezhova's article in this volume.

representative of the postmodern age, a textbook example for this trend. Postmodern is, in essence, also the phenomenon of Russian Islam. At least this can legitimately be said about those Russian Muslims who emerged out of Geidar Dzhemal's intellectual circle in the mid-2000s.

The further fates of Dzhemal's disciples developed very differently. Some, like Vadim (Harun) Sidorov, gradually purified themselves from any traces of *Dzhemalizm* and subjected the conceptions of their former master to harshest critique, while others, like Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova, had some differences with their teacher but continued to maintain warm relations with him; and a third group, including Aleksei Tsvetkov, continue to regard Dzhemal' as the most important Muslim thinker and activist in Russia. While the intellectual scope of the people who came to Islam under the influence of Dzhemal' is thus extraordinarily broad, the people that are closest to him are the leftist intellectuals.

Islam as Protest: Leftist Intellectuals and Merely Intellectuals

Leftists found in Islam the powerful energy that opposes the injustice that rules in this world. This group of Russian Muslims is not very numerous, but some outstanding personalities gave this trend visibility even beyond the Muslim community.

One of the most characteristic features of the left-leaning Muslim intellectuals is that they do not pay attention to the ritual side of Islam, their focus being on the revolutionary ideas in Islamic theology. Formally we can count Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova to this group, but she is more an exception to the general rule because she holds that the fulfillment of the Islamic rituals cannot be separated from Islam's revolutionary ideas. Also, Ezhova first became a Muslim and only then a well-known journalist, while other leftist intellectuals joined Islam after they had already acquired a public reputation.

One of the most prominent representatives of this group is also Aleksei Tsvetkov, who was already known as a leftist activist when he publicly declared to

have embraced Islam.³⁶ Tsvetkov emphasizes that Islam was his intellectual choice. Important to note is that his decision to become a Muslim resulted from his reading of Geidar Dzhemal's books; as Tsvetkov worked in the oppositional publishing house "Ul'tra.Kul'tura" he performed the editorial work for some of Dzhemal's publications.

Equally under Dzhemal's influence another leftist intellectual came to Islam, Il'ia Kormil'tsev, the director of "Ul'tra.Kul'tura". In the late 1980s and early 1990s Kormil'tsev had already become known to the public as a song writer for the popular Rock group "Nautilus Pompilius". In 2006, shortly after his death, information appeared in the press that Kormil'tsev had embraced Islam on his death bed. By far not everyone believed this to be true. While Kormil'tsev had always shown much interest in Islam, even in the months preceding his death Il'ia gave no indication that he now belonged to this religion. There would have been a number of occasions to "come out": Kormil'tsev acted as a member of the jury that awarded the literary award "Islamic Breakthrough" (about which we will speak below), and he also participated in the edition of books about the revolutionary role of Islam in the contemporary world, including Geidar Dzhemal's "Revolution of the Prophets" (*Revoliutsiia prorokov*), Dmitrii Akhtiamov's "Islamic Breakthrough" (*Islamskii proryv*) (on which more will be said below) and the volume "Allah Does Not Love America"³⁷ and others.

That Il'ia embraced Islam was announced by nobody else than Geidar Dzhemal'. He based his statement on the testimony of one Russian Muslim who was with Il'ia until his last days and who was a witness to the *shahada* that Kormil'tsev pronounced shortly before he passed away.³⁸

Curiously, this message found more credence among the Islamophobic audience than among the Muslims. In the internet people posted evil comments, of the type "Another enemy of Russia embraced Islam." Here the background is that the life of Kormil'tsev, who from head to toes hated the Putin regime, ended

³⁶ R.I. Bekkin, "Interv'iu s Alekseem Tsvetkovym", *Cbetki*, 2007, No. 1, 6-8.

³⁷ *Allah ne liubit Ameriku*, ed. by Adam Parfei (Moscow: "Ul'tra.Kul'tura", 2003).

³⁸ Islamskii komitet, "Smert' Il'i Kormil'tseva kleimit filosemitskoe lobbi, riadiashcheesia v odezhdny russkikh 'natsional-patriotov'", at: <http://i-r-p.ru/page/stream-document/index-11075.html>

in the same London hospital where a couple of months earlier the former FSB officer Aleksandr Litvinienko had died; the latter had made a series of exposing statements about Russia's leadership, and was therefore forced to apply for political asylum in Great Britain. People who were close to him (including above all his father and his wife) maintained that not long before his death Litvinienko embraced Islam and expressed the wish to be buried according to the Islamic ritual. However, this conversion occurred without Geidar Dzhemal'; rather, the former lieutenant colonel of the FSB acted under the influence of the Chechen political emigré Akhmed Zakaev.

After the Litvinienko episode it was no wonder that many in the conservative parts of Russian society began to associate Islam with Russia's "Orange" enemies. Leaving the demagogic debates about Russia's enemies aside, what we can agree on here is that both for Litvinienko and Kormil'tsev Islam became the only ideology that could oppose the authoritarian regime of the so-called *siloviki*, the government representatives who have their professional background in the military or the secret services.

There are also Russian Muslims in the oldest opposition party in Russia, the National Bolshevik Party (NBP) of Eduard Limonov. According to one of the *natsbols* (as the National Bolsheviks are called) who had come to Islam, Pavel (Ahmad) Zherebin, in the mid-2000s the party counted around 30 Muslim converts among its members. Zherebin claimed that many of these Muslims belong to those of whom the party has particular reason to be proud.³⁹

As far as I know, almost all of the leftist intellectuals who converted to Islam picked Sunnism. Yet for most of the leftists the adherence to this or that trend in Islam is not a question of principle. Aleksei Tsvetkov, for example, whom we referred to earlier, wrote a travel account ("The Second Rome in April, or: The Persistent Feeling of the Almighty") in which he celebrated the Alevis – one of the branches of Islam that some Sunni scholars regard as un-Islamic.⁴⁰

³⁹ "Akhmad Zherebin: Ia prinial islam, uzhe buduchi v rukovodstve NBP", at: <http://i-r-p.ru/page/stream-document/index-1319.html>

⁴⁰ A. Tsvetkov, "Vtoroi Rim v aprele ili Nastoichivoe chuvstvo Vsevyshnego", *Druzhba narodov* 2006, No. 6, at: <http://magazines.russ.ru/druzhba/2006/6/cve9.html>

As indicated above, the leftist intellectual Muslims pay little attention to the ritual side of Islam and concentrate on Islam's revolutionary ideology, which, they claim, this religion has in abundance. No wonder then that they do not care much about the duties of prayer and fasting; obviously, one cannot expect from an individualist rebel the discipline that Allah demands from His slaves.

Still, in our view the leftist Muslims are very important for Islam as a whole, and for Russian Islam in particular. Through their entry into Islam, the Islamic culture obtained new works of literature and arts. In addition, the intellectuals give Islam a positive image in the West, since they translate the Islamic principles and postulates into a language that is accessible to the average educated European. It must be added, however, that the leftist intellectuals who embraced Islam do not, as a rule, carry out missionary work for their religion. They hold that the acceptance of this or that religion is a matter of personal choice, and therefore they do not attempt to "save" their colleagues from the leftist movement by preaching them the truth that they discovered for themselves. This is a by far not typical behavior for newly-converted Muslims: usually new followers of a religion attempt to bring as many people as possible to their faith of choice. A clear example of this missionary trend is the former priest Viacheslav Polosin.

The "Straight Path" of Viacheslav (Ali) Polosin

Usually the year 1999 is taken as the starting point for the development of contemporary Russian Islam. It was in that year that a Russian Orthodox priest by the name of Viacheslav Polosin, whom not many people knew at that time, announced that he had accepted Islam. Already two years earlier Valeriia Porokhova, a Muslima, had published her Russian translation of the Quran. But that Porokhova had converted to Islam was not perceived as a sensation; people saw it as no surprise that a woman who married an Arab (the Syrian Muhammad Roshd) accepted the religion of her husband.⁴¹ But it was a completely different

⁴¹ The opinion that young women who marry a Muslim accept Islam in order to please their husband is widespread but erroneous. In fact, among the Muslim wives there are some who accept Islam as a formality. But one will also encounter many girls who marry as a Christian and then accept Islam at a later stage, after having studied Islam.

thing when it was not just a Russian but even an Orthodox priest who accepted Islam.

It should be added that according to Polosin's own words he pronounced the *shahada* already in 1998, in a small circle of witnesses, and it was only in spring 1999 that he decided to go public with what he calls his "return to Monotheism". Soon afterwards Polosin entered the Naqshbandiyya Sufi brotherhood and became a murid of Said-Afandi Chirkeevskii.⁴²

Also, that a former Archpriest (*protoierei*) accepted Islam would not have caused so much noise had it not been that soon after his conversion Polosin started to write books and articles that have as their guiding thread a dogmatic critique of Christianity. Inevitably, this caused a reaction from Orthodox circles who used all means to discredit Polosin.

It should also be mentioned that not all ethnic Muslims, including the leaders of the Spiritual Administrations, took a positive stance on the new activities of the former priest. While he enjoys high respect among the Muslims of Russia (and especially among the youth), Polosin did not emerge as the unchallenged spiritual and intellectual leader for those whom we use to call ethnic Muslims.

This restrained reaction from the representatives of Russia's traditional Muslim peoples inspired in Polosin the idea that the Russian Muslims must have their own path. Still, for several years he continued to argue consistently against the division of Muslims according to nationality. Thus in one of his interviews in the early 2000s he explained: "In Islam one must not create communities according to the national principle, therefore there are no special 'Russian' communities, just like there should not be any special Tatar or Arabic communities."⁴³

A slightly different opinion had Valeriia (Iman) Porokhova, who otherwise largely shared Polosin's views and who right from the beginning gave him all kind of moral support. I remember how Porokhova, in a conversation with me in 1999, gave expression to her enthusiasm about blue-eyed Anglo-Saxons who embraced Islam. One could feel in her words that she saw herself as standing in opposition

⁴² On Said-Afandi see chapter five in this volume.

⁴³ See: http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=press&type=list&press_id=33

to Asiatic Muslims, and that she identified more with the refined education of Muslims in Europe.⁴⁴

In 2000 Polosin and Porokhova announced the establishment of the community “Straight Path” (*Priamoi put’*). This was not an organization of Russian Muslims but one of newly converted Muslims. Until the mid-2000s Polosin continued to defend internationalist positions, which can be demonstrated by his strong critique for the semi-mythical project “Russian Islam” (*Russkii islam*) that was reportedly elaborated by some political technologists around the President’s representative for the Volga Federal District, Sergei Kirienko. Polosin reacted to this initiative in his “Statement of Russian Muslims about the Project ‘Russian Islam’”, where he noted: “The title of this project is highly regrettable and evokes bewilderment among the believers: Islam can neither be Russian nor Tatar, Arabic, or belonging to some other national marker. Islam is one, and it was given to the whole of humanity. To divide Muslims according to some national markers is unacceptable. It is through his origins that the believer continues to belong to his nationality, but faith is something higher, and the believer has to act according to the religious canons which prescribe that all Muslims are brothers.”⁴⁵

From these positions Polosin initially criticized the National Organization of Russian Muslims (NORM) that was set up in 2004.

Dzhemal’s Unplanned Child: NORM

The establishment of the National Organization of Russian Muslims (NORM) was announced on its first constitutional conference, in June 2004 in Omsk. Its

⁴⁴ On the other side there are also cases where Russian Muslims integrated organically with the Muslim establishment. The life-long leader of the Islamic Cultural Center (*Islamskii kul’turnii tsentr*), Abdul’-Vakhed Niiazov, was called Vadim Valerianovich Medved’ev before he embraced Islam in 1990. By contrast to other Russian Muslims, Niiazov has continuously underlined (and continues to do so) that he belongs to the one and undivided *umma* of Russia; this is also reflected in the fact that he changed not only his first name but also chose a new last name that is characteristic for representatives of Turkic peoples.

⁴⁵ Ali Viacheslav Polosin, Iman Valeriia Porokhova, “Zaiavlenie russkikh musul’man o proekte ‘Russkii islam’”, at: <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=news&cid=9791&type=view>

organization was composed of Muslim organizations from the cities of Moscow (the *Banu Zul'karnain*), Omsk (the community *Dagvat al-Islami*), Ioshkar-Ola (*Tsarevokokshaikaia obshchina russkikh musul'man*) and Alma-Ata (the *Ikhlās* cultural center⁴⁶ of Russian Muslims). The founders of NORM saw the prime task of the organization in representing the interests of all Russian Muslims, independently of their religious and political views, and to lobby their interests within the Russian Federation's *umma* and beyond. In the eyes of the NORM leaders, the interests of the peoples who traditionally confessed Islam were already defended by the spiritual administrations, the *tarigats*, the *jama'ats*, and so forth.

Yet while many statements pronounced at the conference were rather concrete, the major question was still left without an answer: whom to regard as a Russian Muslim? Should one take as a principle the origin by blood or the belonging to Russian culture? In the latter case the Russian Muslims would also comprise a huge number of the so-called ethnic Muslims, Tatars in the first place, since among them we find not a few persons whose education was culturally fully Russian, and for whom the native language is Russian. NORM circumvented this problem by taking a preliminary position: if a person regards himself as Russian then also NORM will regard him or her as such. For this reason the organization had a lot of members with mixed blood, and even pure blood representatives of other Slavic (Ukrainians, White Russians), Turkic (Tatars) and Finno-Ugric (Mordvins, Mari and other) ethnic groups.

Geidar Dzhemal' was present at NORM's constitutional conference, and he gave a speech in which he wished the new organization luck. Among the leaders of NORM there were several of his disciples, especially Sidorov and Ezhova, who had participated in the maitre's circle in the early 2000s. Still, his influence was not big enough to prevent NORM's split into Sunnis and Shiis.

Already the following year the Shiis were excluded from the organization, including from its leadership. The attempt to unite all Russian Muslims in one organization suffered a failure. The persons of the Sunni wing of NORM fully

⁴⁶ Not to be confused with the *Ikhlās* movement in Western Siberia, analysed in chapter six of this book.

realized this failure, but blamed only the Shiis for the split: “All who knew the history of NORM were aware of the fact that this is one of the few Muslim organizations, if not the only one in the history of the Islamic world, in which Sunnis and Shiis openly united. Guided by a false understanding of ‘all-Muslim unity’ each side was supposed to contribute with its ‘specific’ values and interests, but, as could be seen in practice, the Shii wing of our organization exploited the noble terminology only to carry out its own line, and in fact it denied the Sunnis their equal rights, and even more, their right to represent the Russian Muslims. (...) As a matter of fact, the Shii wing of NORM ceased to work for the benefit of the authority of the organization as a whole, and it created its own separate functional sub-sections and began to act only for the interest of its own community [*soobshchestvo*]. (...) Also other inner-Islamic sects, like pseudo-Tijanis, ‘Euro-Muslims’ and ‘Ahl al-Qur’an’ broke away from those who remained faithful to the ideas and tasks of NORM.”⁴⁷

The Russian Shiis have a somehow different version as to why NORM split into camps.⁴⁸ At any event, one will have to agree with Ezhova who argued that it was Vadim (Harun) Sidorov who played, from the very beginning, the key role in NORM, and that the ideational evolution of NORM was just a reflection of the ideational evolution of Sidorov himself. As someone who came from a nationalist environment, he was not ready to make compromises with the internationalism that permeated the whole philosophy of his former master Geidar Dzhemal’. However, that Sidorov turned to Salafist ideas can only at first sight be regarded as a break with the teachings of the Shii Dzhemal’. Both Dzhemal’s followers and his critics have repeatedly stated, with full right, that in Dzhemal’s works and speeches, Salafism is organically combined with some postulates of Shii ideology. No surprise then that Sidorov was drinking Salafi milk when he consumed Dzhemal’s philosophy.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ “Obrashchenie Malikitskogo tsentra Natsional’noi Organizatsii Russkikh Musul’man”, at: <http://sunnizm.ru/others/13-others/138-obrashchenie-malikitskogo-czentra-naczionalnoj-organizaczii-russkix-musulman.html>

⁴⁸ For details see chapter eight in this volume.

⁴⁹ Critics of NORM from the organization “Dar ul-Fikr” call the ideology of Sidorov in those days “Shii-Wahhabism”; see: http://darulfikr.ru/NormMurabitun_politics.

When they detected “modernist innovations” and “internationalist views” in contemporary Salafism, Sidorov and the people who followed him in his thinking continued to search for a new ideology for NORM. In 2007 they officially announced that the Maliki school of law (*madhhab*) will henceforth be the fundament of NORM’s ideological conceptions. The choice for Malikism was determined by contacts between NORM’s leadership and the Murabitun World Movement, and their entry into the Shadhiliyya-Darqawiyya-Habibiyya Sufi brotherhood.⁵⁰

The fact that Sidorov and his companions joined the *tariqat* improved their relationship with ‘Ali Viacheslav Polosin, with whom Sidorov was previously not always on a good footing. Polosin, in turn, stopped to criticize NORM of creating factionalisms and of posing against the rest of the *umma*. Instead, one would hear from Polosin more and more criticism of the “turban wearers” (*chalmonostsy*), of the “pilav mullas” (*plovnye mully*), and so forth – the same terminology that had since long been used by the leaders of the young generation of Russian Muslims, the disciples of Dzhemal’ like Ezhova and Sidorov. In 2006 “Straight Path”, the organization that Polosin directed, joined NORM. Polosin became first deputy of the NORM chairman, and thus the only member of NORM’s leadership who did not adhere to the Maliki *madhhab*.

It was not by accident that the Russian Muslims chose the Maliki interpretation of Islam. The NORM people did not beat around the bush when they declared: “Which *madhhab* should the Russian Muslims select? We, the authors of this Appeal, maintain that the Maliki *madhhab* is the true one, and we are ready to explain this to everyone who would like to know why. But here we call upon our readers to look at it from a practical side, and to move away from the idea that in principle one could follow any of the four *madhhabs*. (...) If the Russian Muslims become Hanafis, then this will surely not make the bulk of the Hanafis in Russia happy, since the Tatars still fear Russification. And in this case one could hardly expect that the Russian Muslims will be of much use for the Hanafi segment of the *umma* in Russia, and there is good reason to assume that

⁵⁰ See chapter nine in this volume.

this would create new problems, which would multiply by the conflict between the mentalities of the Tatars and Russians. (...) The same would occur with the Shafi'i *madhhab*, yet this time with the Muslims who have their origin in the North Caucasus, where Shafi'ism has deep historical roots and where it represents a well-developed school. [If they accept the Shafi'i *madhhab*], then the Russian Muslims would be forced to take the North Caucasus school as their example, which would lead to their 'Caucasification' [*kavkazizatsiia*], or they would have to take another direction, which would provoke a *fitna* among the Shafi'is, among the people from the Caucasus. (...) The Hanbali *madhhab* is not very suitable to the conditions of a Northern country, but this is not the only problem. Rather, little has been preserved from the original *madhhab* of Hanbalism, and today it exists in other regions than those where it had its historical roots, in the form of the so-called '*bez mazkhabnost*' [lit., "being without a *madhhab*"].⁵¹ Today the majority of the Russian Muslims are indeed people without a *madhhab* (*"bez mazkhabniki"*), and this is what explains our erosion and separation (*razmytost' i razobshchennost'*). An environment (*sreda*) without *madhhab*s is by nature unstructured (*bezstrukturna*), and this includes that it is without nation (*bez natsional'na*)."⁵²

In result, when NORM found its concrete ideological platform it limited the numbers of its followers even more. While the Russian participants of the Murabitun Movement do not object against some NORM members who adhere to one of the other three Sunni *madhhab*s, in fact the whole ideological organization is now built on Malikism. They also founded a special Maliki Center of NORM that is busy propagandizing the Maliki school of law.

In the environment of the Russian Muslims, the Malikism of the NORM people is not always met with understanding. By far not all Russian Muslims have embraced Islam under the influence of Russian converts like themselves. More than a few came to Islam independently, while others followed the example of, or were influenced by, representatives of Muslim peoples, which entails that they

⁵¹ [Obviously the idea that Muslims of the Hanbali trend argue that the true revival of Islam should come about by overcoming the traditional legal schools.]

⁵² "Obrashchenie Malikitskogo tsentra Natsional'noi Organizatsii Russkikh Musul'man".

also took over the ritual of the Hanafi or Shafi'i *madhhabs*. And finally, some new Muslims are convinced Salafis.

Nevertheless, the leaders of NORM continue to emphasize that their organization, together with its ideology of “a special way”, is highly necessary for the Russian Muslims: “NORM is and will continue to be the only real organization of Russian Muslims, and it is the only team that works for the goal that the Russian Muslims participate in Islam as a nation, not as ‘Ivans who do not remember their blood ties’, not like Mankurts⁵³ who, when accepting Islam, cut their own roots, but as an integrated ethnic group (*tseľ'naia etnicheskaia gruppā*) that has its own legitimate interests, and that preserves its identity (*samobytnost'*) that it had received from the Almighty.”⁵⁴

One can partially agree with these words, but they are only one side of the coin. The coin's other side reveals in all clarity that the Russian Muslims indeed are no united whole. Just like other Muslims, they are divided into Sunnis and Shiis, into left and right, and even into practicing and non-practicing Muslims. By far not all Russian Muslims (in the definition of Sidorov and his followers) are sympathizers of NORM. I have met many Russian Muslims who never heard about NORM, even though they are active users of the internet.⁵⁵

Interestingly, the most consequential critics of NORM and of the Murabitun Movement are not the Russian Shiis, as one would have expected after the split from Geidar Dzhemal', but the representatives of a Sunni *jama'at* by the name of “Dar ul-Fikr” [“House of Thought”].⁵⁶

⁵³ The term Mankurt alludes to the novel *Burannyi polustanok (I dol'she dlitsia den')* published by Chingiz Aitmatov in 1980.

⁵⁴ “Obrashchenie Malikitskogo tsentra Natsional'noi Organizatsii Russkikh Musul'man”.

⁵⁵ According to Sidorov, even those Russian Muslims who have no relation to NORM received a palpable benefit from the establishment of this organization, “because many Islamic mass media and organizations started a veritable race to attract Russian Muslims, in order to create a counterbalance to NORM, to incorporate the phenomenon of Russian Muslims, or to position themselves as their protectors”. See Kh. Sidorov, “Russkie musul'many: fenomen, sostoianie, perspektivy”, at: www.norm-info.ru/articles/128/

⁵⁶ In the Russian form spelled as Dar ul'-Fikr.

Dar ul-Fikr is no organization that pretends to unify the Russian Muslims, but it also comprises Russians who adopted Islam. In the eyes of the people from Dar ul-Fikr, NORM is nothing else but a sect astray (*zabludshaia sekta*) that propagates views which are alien to Islam: "Their error is built on two clear diseases of the nafs [soul]: nationalism and the love for Western culture. They consciously employ the European discourse and preach a Western lifestyle."⁵⁷ For the representatives of Dar ul-Fikr, Western culture is fully antagonistic to Islam, and this is why they are sceptical with regards to intellectuals who convert to Islam, claiming that with their baggage of Western culture it is difficult for them to achieve Islam, and to fully embrace it.

Thus while they do not reject the coming to Islam of Europeans, including Russians, the Dar ul-Fikr people (*"darul'fikrovtsy"*) hold that their conversion requires that they perform a whole lot of work on themselves. The people of NORM, so the representatives of Dar ul-Fikr, proceed by the way of least opposition. One of the ideologists of Dar ul-Fikr is Ahmad ar-Rusi, who criticizes NORM from the positions of medieval theology and finds several forbidden innovations (Russ. *novovvedeniia*, Arabic, *bid' a*, pl. *bida'*) in NORM: the permission to listen to music and to smoke, the rejection of the legal obligation for women to wear a *niqab*, the ban on the use of paper money while at the same time insisting that *zakat* needs to be paid from their pay checks, and so forth.⁵⁸ In the eyes of Dar ul-Fikr, the image of an *'alim* who wears an expensive suit and a Swiss watch, and who smokes cigars while listening to Wagner, is not compatible with the behavior of a decent Muslim.

Dar ul-Fikr criticizes NORM for its politicization, maintaining – not without reason – that NORM is primarily a political organization, not a religious one. Reviewing the Murabitun/NORM doctrine from the position of pure Shariat, Ahmad ar-Rusi comes to the conclusion that NORM and Murabitun are not representatives of the Maliki school but that they in fact attempt to establish a fifth, "Medinan" *madhhab*. Here Ahmad ar-Rusi quotes Harun ar-Rusi (Sidorov)

⁵⁷ "Russkie musul'mane protiv 'NORM'", at: http://darulfikr.ru/russian_muslims_against_NORM

⁵⁸ Akhmad ar-Rusi, "O Mankhadzhe i politike 'NORM-Murabitun'", at: http://darulfikr.ru/NormMurabitun_politics

with the following words: “This is a *madhhab* that stands above the four *madhhabs*. A person who is formally a Maliki but who does not acknowledge this superiority cannot belong to it. To the contrary, the Shafi‘i al-Ghazali, *rahimahu Allah*, belonged precisely to this [Medinan] *madhhab*. And even Ibn Taymiyya, a Hanbali, defended the Medinan path, the Medinan *madhhab*. (...) The ‘*amal* Ahl al-Madina [i.e., the continued Islamic practice of the population of Medina], the method of this ‘*amal* – this is the teaching of our shaykh, *hafizahu Allah*, and the most important fundament of the ‘Murabitun’”.⁵⁹ Ahmad ar-Rusi objects that the Murabitun are no consistent followers of the Maliki school, but that they only follow those resolutions of the Malikis that suit their own passions.⁶⁰

NORM and Dar ul-Fikr thus represent two opposite poles within the spectrum of contemporary Russian Islam: the first is through and through Europeanized and not always orthodox in the following of Shariat requirements (at least not in the interpretation of conservative observers), while the second is more scrupulous in relation to the Shariat but extremely archaic.⁶¹

But life is always more complex, and the majority of Russian Muslims finds itself between these two poles. A huge part of the Russian Muslims leads their lives imperceptibly in the big megapolises and in towns and villages. They do not join any organizations. They are not active in the public space, and hold that their faith is their private affair. One way to learn about them is by looking at their literary works.

⁵⁹ Quoted from: Akhmad ar-Rusi, “O Mankhadzhe i politike”.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Probably few educated Muslims from Russia would subscribe to the following statement from the Dar ul-Fikr people: “If a Muslim demonstrates steadfastness in the study of Islam and in service [to Allah] then he will have no time left for Dostoevskii and other pastimes”.

See: http://darulfikr.ru/russian_muslims_against_NORM

White-Skinned Beasts in Green Trousers (The Literary Work of Russian Muslims)

The literary production of Russian Muslims is a topic that has so far received very little scientific attention.⁶² Yet the study of this aspect of the life of Russian Muslims has, in our view, significant importance, since in their prose, poetry and journalistic work we can find not only information about their path to Islam but also how they perceive the world around them. And a closer look shows that Lev Danil'kin, one of the leading Russian literary critics, is completely right when he says that in the Muslim community of Russia, art literature has a much higher degree of influence on people's minds than any specialized Islamic TV program.⁶³

In this context we will only look at contemporary Russian Islamic literature, since from the past not much literature from Russian Muslims has come down to us – except for Afanasii Nikitin's aforementioned "Journey beyond Three Seas". And while the question about Nikitin's "Islamicity" is still open, we can safely assume that had he lived in our times he would legitimately be a candidate for the Muslim literary competition "Islamic Breakthrough", which was for the first time opened for competition in the fall of 2005.

This award was named after Muslim Dmitrii Akhtiamov's novel, "The Islamic Breakthrough" (*Islamskii proryv*), which had been published earlier in 2005 in the oppositional publishing house "Ul'tra.Kul'tura".⁶⁴ This novel was important as the first significant literary work of an author who characterized himself as a Russian Muslim. A Russian Muslim is also the major hero of this novel, as already noted in the annotation to the book: "As we are living in the epoch of technocracy, today's companions of the last prophet Muhammad are represented by a new type of mujahidin from the party of Allah, those who have a computer and the Quran in their portfolio. This is the narrative about a simple Russian man

⁶² We do not know of any special study on this problem. The creative work of some Russian Muslims is discussed in: R.I. Bekkin, "Islamskii proryv: musul'manskaia literatura v poiskakh ideologii", *Kavkaz i globalizatsiia*, 2007, vol. 1 (2), 92-101; Iu. Prudnikova, "Islam ot protivnogo", *Druzhba narodov*, 2006, No. 8, 204-209.

⁶³ L. Danil'kin, "Mir budushchego. Pervyi islamskii", at: <http://www.afisha.ru/article/8454/>

⁶⁴ Muslim Dmitrii Akhtiamov, *Islamskii proryv* (Ekaterinburg, 2005).

who stopped to be a slave of the contemporary social environment [*sotsium*], the latter in fact being a masked global slave-holding system. After torturing spiritual searches the main hero finds the meaning of life and directs his glance at the absolute form of Monotheism – at Islam.” Interestingly, Akhtiamov – who has a Tatar family name and patronymic – does not regard the ethnic Muslims as real Muslims; he regards them, not without disdain, as sheep, as slaves of the system who do not object to being “sheared”.

Here we immediately need to add that “The Islamic Breakthrough” is in fact not quite a novel and not even a tale. The absence of a clearly outlined subject, the monstrous Russian language, the stereotyped personalities – all of these elements have already been sharply ridiculed by Iuliia Prudnikova in her review on the book.⁶⁵ When reading the novel it becomes clear directly and from the start that this book is a parody: what are Muslims worth who saunter in green jackets and in trousers of the same color. And their names: Levsha, Zakhar, Emelia... They are all as one, Akhtiamov’s Muslims: tall white-skinned and blue-eyed beauties, as if they had just come down from one of Leni Riefenstahl’s movies.

But no, the author is not even thinking about joking. His book is a pamphlet against “the system” that suppresses and enslaves the human being, turning him into a robot without a soul, in order to serve the interests of “the system”.

So who is the author of the “Islamic Breakthrough”? Unfortunately, there is only very little information about him. Akhtiamov was born in Ioshkar-Ola, the capital of the Republic Mari-El. Judging from his name, Akhtiamov is a half-blood: half Tatar (as is his family name and his patronymic, Giniiatovich) and half Russian or Mari (as reflected in his first name, Dmitrii). In the early 2000s he embraced Islam and took on another name: Muslim.

How did he come to enter Islam? Most probably, Akhtiamov is, like Harun Sidorov, coming from the environment of right-wing radicalism: it is well-known that in the epoch of postmodernism, persons with mixed ancestries often stand up to defend slogans in favor of pure blood. It is even possible that Akhtiamov’s conversion took place because of his acquaintance with Sidorov. What can be said

⁶⁵ Prudnikova, “Islam ot protivnogo”, 204-209.

at the least is that in a conversation with me Sidorov affirmed that he knows the author of the “Islamic Breakthrough” very well.

The text of Akhtiamov’s book gives some indirect indications that allow us to assume that he belonged to the right-wing radical scene before he embraced Islam. One would have to agree with Iuliia Prudnikova that the new Muslim Akhtiamov demonstrates by his whole oeuvre that he is more at home in *Mein Kampf*, and in Nazi ideology in general, than in the basics of Islamic theology.⁶⁶ No coincidence then that one of the favorite expressions of the characters of his novel is Cicero’s expression “To everyone what he deserves” (“Kazhdomu – svoe”/ “Jedem das Seine”), which is also the text on the arch of the Buchenwald gate.

From one of the popular sites that also contain an electronic version of the “Islamic Breakthrough” we learn that Akhtiamov loved literary work since his early childhood, and that in 2005 he created the literature forum halifat.ru where works of Muslim authors were published. Also known is that next to the “Islamic Breakthrough” Akhtiamov also wrote another novel called “The Russian Caliphate” (*Russkii khalifat*); the latter work belongs to the genre of “alternative history writing” and describes the conversion of the Rus’ to Islam under Prince Vladimir. This text was suggested for the “Islamic Breakthrough” literature award but did not make it onto the longlist.

Reportedly, after the American attack on Iraq Akhtiamov went to Iraq and died there; this is what his comrades from NORM maintain. This is everything we know about this author. Did this person really exist, or is “Muslim Dmitrii Akhtiamov” merely a literary pseudonym chosen by one of the well-known Russian Muslims? We do not have a final answer to this question.

What however is beyond doubt is that the author of the “Islamic Breakthrough” demonstrated the zeal of a new convert to expose that Islam is the only alternative for our humanity that has become a slave to the “system”. Yet as we know, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions, and what Akhtiamov achieved with his book is the opposite effect. Even a reader who has sympathy with Islam, or who at least is interested in this religion, will be abhorred by the

⁶⁶ Prudnikova, “Islam ot protivnogo”, 207.

novel's many aggressive white-skinned beasts who are day and night busy with theft, extortion, and killing, bearing the name of the Almighty on their lips. Not without reason Prudnikova puts Akhtiamov's "Breakthrough" into the same line as Elena Chudinova's Islamophobic novel "The Mosque of the Paris Mother of God" – they both produce the same effect with the reader.⁶⁷

Written with a very different goal was Renat Bekkin's novel "Islam from the Monk Bagira" (*Islam ot monakha Bagira*), which came out before Akhtiamov's "Islamic Breakthrough".⁶⁸ As the author wrote in his preface, his intention was to explain, in a popular form, some postulates of Islam and in particular of Islamic law, so that his book was not meant to be of propagandistic or of aesthetic value, but informing and enlightening.⁶⁹ That the story was designed as a detective story was just a kind of umbrella, to entice the reader.

The main hero of "Islam from the Monk Bagira" is a Russian Muslim by the name of Abdullah Petrovich Mukhin, who serves as a judge at a Shariat court of St. Petersburg's N-skii district. He is busy with an investigation into the theft of an ancient Quran manuscript from the Russian National Library, the Publichka in St. Petersburg. Abdullah Petrovich, just like any Russian person, is characterized by extremes. First, he does not pray five times a day, as is demanded, but six times; and second, he lives together with his three legal wives in one apartment (whereas according to Islam each wife is supposed to have her own apartment).

What is interesting in these kinds of works is how the hero comes to Islam. In Akhtiamov's "Islamic Breakthrough" the hero's conversion takes place within just a few minutes, namely when he makes the acquaintance of a man in a green jacket

⁶⁷ E. Chudinova, *Mechet' Parizhskoi Bogomateri* (Moscow, 2005).

⁶⁸ The first edition of "Islam from the Monk Bagira" was published by the author under the pseudonym Abu Ihsan, and on his own expenses, in 2002. A second edition, improved and expanded, was supposed to appear in "Ul'tra.Kul'tura" in 2006, and was already prepared for publication when director Il'ia Kormil'tsev passed away and his publishing house collapsed; this prevented the publication. The second edition did eventually materialize in 2007, with the private youth publishing house "Kislorod" that sees itself as continuing the tradition of "Ul'tra.Kul'tura".

⁶⁹ R.I. Bekkin, *Islam ot monakha Bagira* (Moscow, 2007), 3.

and in trousers of the same color; our hero is tired of going to work each day, and from this stranger in green he learns about the advantages of Islam.

By contrast, in Bekkin's "Islam from the Monk Bagira" the hero (when he was still called Petr Petrovich Mukhin) embraced Islam not so much as a result of a spiritual quest but by coincidence. In his university years he was an average student. After graduating from the Faculty of Jurisprudence he becomes assistant to the chairman of the court of St. Petersburg's K-skii district. At that time (according to the novel, of course) Shariat jurisdiction had not yet been introduced in Russia, and cases that touched upon the interests of Muslims were dealt with in special sections or, as they were called Western-style, in "chambers of general courts". Yesterday's student Mukhin was assigned one of these cases for inspection. In his despair Mukhin went to his former university teacher Eino Iukkovich Viralainen, who taught courses in Islamic law – a person behind whom the reader can easily detect Russia's leading specialist of Islamic law, Leonid Rudol'fovich Siukiiainen.

For Mukhin, the conversation with his teacher opens up a previously unknown world; Mukhin, a rationalist to the bones, gets full of enthusiasm for the logical character and justice of Shariat. Thanks to his former professor's advice Mukhin ends his first court case with a brilliant decision. But this is only the beginning, the first step on his way to Islam. The perfectionist starts to develop the complex of an A-student: "After the 'case of the second wife' Abdullah enjoyed enormous popularity. People turned to him in all kinds of questions – sometimes even bypassing the Shariat qadis of the peace. This fame cost the young judge dear. Instead of enjoying the company of his (at that time) only wife Ania, after work Abdullah would sit for hours behind books to study the endless ocean of Islamic law. His eyes were getting tired, his hand was not able to write any more, but Abdullah would not get up from the table before he fulfilled the norm that he had set form himself. (...) After not too much time, in Abdullah's head the seemingly 'senseless heap of archaic norms' (...) looked like perfect harmony. It was no longer the natural and logical character of the Shariat that fascinated Abdullah. This he now simply took for granted. But what is more, he could not imagine himself outside of Shariat. (...) Finally Abdullah found that very Law,

those Divine commandments, full of harmony and justice, that he had many years unconsciously been searching for. And the more Abdullah studied them, the clearer he saw the difference between such fluid and borderless concepts as: right and wrong, good and bad, love and hatred.”⁷⁰

To enlighten his readers was not the only goal that the author of “Islam from the Monk Bagira” pursued when writing this book. He also wanted to conduct an experiment: to make known to the public that there is such a genre as Muslim art literature. In order to push this idea Aslambek Ezhaev, the director of the publishing house “Umma”, and Renat Bekkin developed the idea of the literary award “Islamic Breakthrough”, which was for the first time organized in 2005.

The “Islamic Breakthrough” in Russian Literature

Right from the start the Award received high public interest – and this not only among people who love literature. The name of the Award itself, and also the titles of some of the works that had been forwarded for the competition, provided lots of opportunities for journalists to demonstrate their wit.⁷¹

The jury comprised such personalities as the oppositionist politician and writer Eduard Limonov, the former “Nautilus Pompilius” textwriter Il’ia Kormil’tsev, the young writer Sergei Shargunov, and the Russian Muslima Valeriia Porokhova who had produced a Russian translation of the Quran. The jury was chaired by Aleksandr Ebanoidze, chief editor of the journal “Friendship of Peoples” (*Druzhba narodov*).

If, in the Russia of our days, well-known people who are themselves not Muslims publicly acknowledge that they have sympathies for Islam, then this alone has the potential to cause a sensation. One can imagine the outcry if such an acknowledgment comes from an odious figure like Limonov, whose each and every public appearance is meant as a provocation for society. The Organizational

⁷⁰ Bekkin, *Islam ot monakha Bagira*, 106-7.

⁷¹ L. Novikova, “Gde Vostok, tam i rjetsia (Ob”iavlenny nominaty na ‘Islamskii proryv’”, *Kommersant* No. 46 (3377), 17 March 2006, p. 22; L. Novikova, “Shakhidku uteshili. (V Moskve nazvali laureatov ‘Islamskogo proryva’”, *Kommersant* No. 84 (3415), 13 May 2006, p. 8.

Committee of the Award decided to invite Limonov after an interview that he had given soon after he was released from prison, where he was detained following the accusation that he was in illegal possession of weapons. In that interview Limonov said that in prison he got acquainted with Muslims, and that he was amazed by the solidity of their belief in God: "In Islam things are easy for man. I saw how in prison the Muslims had it easier than the common inmates. They prayed in union with their whole community, with the whole wide Islamic world. And this provides man with great power, it allows him to feel that he is not just a grain of sand. (...). The common inmates were isolated, and nervous like leaves in the wind; and this difference was clearly palpable. I met Chechens as well as Muslims of other nationalities, not only in Lefortovo but also in other prisons. As a rule, they were more joyful (as joyful as that is possible in a prison), more cheerful, and more powerful. I think this they obtained from their religion, from their belonging to a huge community."⁷²

As usual, Geidar Dzhemal' was involved also here. According to Limonov, his interest in Islam resulted from a conversation with the "Godfather" of Russian Islam: "In 1998 we were getting closer to each other, travelled together to Kazan, went to the mosque and had a public event in front of a very curious crowd – half of them were National Bolsheviks and people who sympathized with them, while the other half were Muslims who were attracted by Dzhemal'. This all made a big impression on me. (...) Back then Dzhemal' opened my eyes for many truths, sure, things that might have been pretty simple for those who were closer acquainted with Islam. Since that time this religion has been making a growing impression on me. (...) And then, I already passed my sixty-third year, and, in spite of everything, you get wiser, one simply has to become wiser. And this is why Islam as a wise religion is getting closer to me."⁷³

Another member of the jury, the director of the "Ul'tra.Kul'tura" publishing house Il'ia Kormil'tsev, belonged to those intellectuals for whom Islam was not so much a religion but a protest ideology against the forces of injustice. As

⁷² E. Limonov, "S kazhdym godom islam mne vse blizhe", at: <http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1132090080>

⁷³ Ibid.

mentioned above, not long before his death in 2006 Kormil'tsev embraced Islam. It cannot be excluded that Kormil'tsev's interest in Islam came up under the influence of one of his colleagues in the publishing house, Aleksei Tsvetkov. And it should be mentioned that Tsvetkov's essay "The Second Rome in April, or: The Persistent Feeling of the Almighty", which had been nominated for the "Islamic Breakthrough" award, did indeed obtain the first place in the section "socio-political journalism" (which is how we can best translate the Russian term *publitsistika*).

Many of the authors who submitted their works came from the scene of Russian Muslims. This is not surprising, since the representatives of the ethnic Muslims are not always active in creative art work – even if many of them know the Russian language better than ethnic Russians do. Still, the jury found that the highest quality was to be found in works that were written by non-Muslims.

Thus from the nine finalists for the award only three were Muslims. Next to Aleksei Tsvetkov this group included the ethnic Muslim journalist Al'finor Gafurova, who obtained the third place in the competition for "publitsistika", for a biography in book form about the outstanding Muslim scholar and Jadidi intellectual Ata'allah Bayazitov. Also in this Muslim group of nominations was a former Catholic monk, the poet Sergei Isaev, who occupied the first place in the competition for "poetry". Jury member Il'ia Kormil'tsev emphasized that Isaev's *vers-libres*⁷⁴ deserved the first rank in the poetry nomination because of their freshness, and because they did not give in to the temptation of Orientalism.

Most works of Russian Muslims were submitted in the field of *publitsistika*. The majority of these works narrated about how either the author or some of his acquaintances came to Islam. As a rule, these texts lack clear literary merits, but they are of high interest for a student of Russian Islam. An analysis of these works shows that most authors embraced Islam after a spiritual search, and after having compared the teachings of various religions, also beyond Russian Orthodoxy and Islam. For example, the above-mentioned Sergei Isaev (who belonged to two Catholic orders, that of St. John and the Franciscans) was once responsible for the

⁷⁴ Unrhymed verse without a consistent metrical pattern.

religious dialog with other religions, one of his duties being the study of other faith communities. After a study of the Quran Isaev understood that Islam responds more to his spiritual demands than Christianity.

New works were already submitted for the award competition before the second “Islamic Breakthrough” season was publicly announced. This time the jury included: the politician and publicist Shamil’ Sultanov (as chairman), the writers Anatolii Pristavkin and Il’dar Abuziarov, the journalist and literary critic Nikolai Aleksandrov, the journalist Maksim Shevchenko and the member of the “Friendship of Peoples” redaction committee Vladimir Medvedev. This second season promised to yield an even greater harvest than the first one: the award was now known not only in Russia but also abroad. Yet in the heat of the review process the two “fathers” of the “Islamic Breakthrough” competition, Aslambek Ezhaev and Renat Bekkin, came into a creative conflict. In the first season the sponsor (Ezhaev) did not interfere with the decisions that were taken by the reader (Bekkin) and the jury members, but this time he categorically objected against works that, in his eyes, stood in contradiction to Islam. As a result all texts in which Muslim personages do not behave correctly (by drinking alcohol, having illegitimate sexual relations and so forth) were dismissed.

In other words, idealistic literature (so to say, Islamic *lubok* – popular romantic literature) defeated realistic texts. Bekkin could not agree with Ezhaev’s position, which had only been announced after the jury had already made its decisions, and ended his involvement in the award process; in Bekkin’s eyes, Ezhaev’s interference was unethical not only towards the jury but also vis-à-vis the authors. The award ceremony for the winners was cancelled, the results were just announced without the competitors being present.

Ezhaev then announced in a press-release that in the third season he planned to organize work differently: “The Organizational Committee of the Award will not only form a jury but also a pre-selection committee. The pre-selection committee will be formed according to professional criteria: from among poets, writers, critics, scholars of literature, journalists and publishers. The pre-selection committee will produce a long-list as well as a short-list, both comprising the works that will be considered for the Award. The jury will be formed according to

a confessional principle: from among the representatives of the Muslim intelligentsia – public personalities, representatives of science, arts, culture and education, who all belong to Islam.”⁷⁵ But a third season did not materialize.

Still, the one-and-a-half seasons of the “Islamic Breakthrough” Award demonstrated that Muslim art literature is not just an experiment that only throws some weird isolated writers onto the superficiality of Russia’s contemporary literature; rather, it is an expanding trend in Russian literature. Renat Bekkin, in his article “The ‘Islamic Breakthrough’: Muslim Literature in Search of Ideology” describes the credo of Muslim art literature in the following manner: “(...) a more reasonable (and functional) approach allows us to classify as Muslim literature only those works that have as their guiding thread the burning problems of Islam and of Muslims, for example the question how to preserve Muslim values in the family of today. (...) The task that Muslim writers are confronted with is to look at the vices of the environment through the eyes of a Muslim – without sanctimoniousness and without hypocrisy. (...) Also topical are works and biographies of outstanding figures of Muslim history. Such works also have direct relation to Muslim art literature. (...) That spiritual poetry should also be included goes without saying. (...) With other words: Muslim literature is not literature ‘about Islam’ but a pro-Islamic literature. Muslim literature comprises, in its fullest sense, high-quality poems, verses, novels, stories, narrations and other genres, but not one-sided moralistic parables with idealized positive heroes and simplified negative characters whose features are poorly worked out”.⁷⁶

Originally it was planned to publish an annual almanac after each award competition, which was to include not only the finalists but also texts of other competitors whom the organizational committee found worthy of publishing. Yet this idea was given up by the sponsor, for financial reasons.

At the same time the amount of authors whose works fall under the category of Muslim art literature continued to rise since the announcement of the first

⁷⁵ “Literaturnogo ‘Islamskogo proryva’ ne sluchilos’. Premiia meniaet format”, at: www.islamrf.ru/news/russia/rusnews/117/

⁷⁶ R.I. Bekkin, “‘Islamskii proryv’: musul’manskaia literature v poiskakh ideologii”, *Kavkaz i globalizatsiia*, 2007, vol. 1 (2), 94,

“Islamic Breakthrough” season. One year after the extinction of the award program an opportunity opened up to publish such an almanac. And not merely in annual form but four times a year: in the form of the Muslim literary and philosophical journal *Chetki* (“Chain of Pearls”, “Rosary Beads”).

The first issue of *Chetki* appeared in 2007, with the philanthropic foundation Mardjani as its founder. The chief editor of the journal and the major ideologue of the project was Renat Bekkin, who followed the concept he had outlined in the article quoted above. Yet as Bekkin himself acknowledged, this concept is very difficult to follow consistently.⁷⁷ To give an example, one of the numbers discussed the Cinema Festival “Golden Minbar”, which had such a wishy-washy conception that it included films that had no relation at all to Islam or to Muslims.⁷⁸

The first issues of *Chetki* offered many texts that had previously been submitted to the “Islamic Breakthrough”. But approximately one half of what *Chetki* published was fresh material, written in the Russian language and often on the journal’s direct request; the other half consisted of translations of texts by writers from Muslim countries.

Just like in the “Islamic Breakthrough” competition, also among the contributors to the journal there were many Russian Muslims. For instance, Anastasiia Ezhova became a regular writer in the *publitsistika* section. Among the Russian Muslim authors who wrote for *Chetki* one can also find Irina Tavaratsian, Anzhelika Pobedonostseva, Anton Savin (Ali Reza), Dmitrii (Ahmad) Makarov, plus many others. Some readers erroneously held *Chetki* for a Shii journal, since there were more than a few Shiis among its contributors, including Iranians as well as Russian Muslims. Interesting to note is also that *Chetki*’s readership comprised not only Muslims but also, and perhaps even more so, representatives of the intelligentsia who have a passion for the Orient. Probably not all texts that *Chetki* published were to the liking of orthodox believers.

⁷⁷ “Renat Bekkin: dialog cherez tvorchestvo”, *Musul'manka*, 2011, No. 10, 26.

⁷⁸ R.I. Bekkin, “Ot redaktsii”, *Chetki*, 2009, No. 3 (5), 4.

Since 2010 *Chetki* produced thematic issues. One of the numbers that attracted most attention was an issue devoted to Russian Muslims. *Chetki* published articles from the whole breadth of the spectrum, from Twelver Shiis like Ezhova to secular intellectuals like Igor' Alekseev. Their different political and also religious views notwithstanding, all authors agreed on one: the Russian Muslims are a special group. All texts underlined, consciously or unconsciously, the “special character”, the “being different” of the Russians who embraced Islam, their difference from the rest of the believers, especially those whom we are used to call “ethnic Muslims” or “Muslims by birth”. Galina (Aisha) Babich shed light upon some details about this often artificial juxtaposition, in her emotional essay “Opposition: ‘Ethnics against Russians’”, and so did Anastasiia (Fatima) Ezhova and Anzhelika Pobedonostseva. The editors promised to return to the topic of Russian Muslims in one of the next issues, but in 2012 the journal was discontinued.

But even the rather small amount of literature by Russian Muslims that was published in *Chetki* and elsewhere is still waiting for its researcher.

Some Preliminary Conclusions

On the one hand, the analysis of the political and religious activities of Russian Muslims allows us to conclude that in spite of their intentions they did not become the vanguard of the Russian *umma*, and this for objective and for subjective reasons. This raises the question: is there a united *umma* in the Russian Federation, one that is not split up into its national entities, like Tatar, Chechen, and so forth?

On the other hand, also the Russian Muslims themselves never represented one whole, which would have been a precondition for appearing as a force of their own. The National Organization of Russian Muslims (NORM) has been claiming to represent the interests of all Russian Muslims but did not live up to this task, and turned from a relatively pluralist structure into a closed association that has limited outreach because of its radical right-wing ideology. As a response to the “ethnic Muslim” establishment’s rejection of NORM, the latter chose an

ideological framework (including the choice of a legal school that has no other followers in Russia, and the primacy of the national factor above the religious one) that turned Russian Muslims into an isolated, marginal group that in fact occupies only a modest niche in the public life of Russian Muslims. The ambition of some of the Russian Muslims to follow the example of “other Russians” – Old Believers and Christian sects of medieval Russia like the Subbotniks, Molokane, Dukhobory and so forth⁷⁹ – stands in open contradiction to their intention to be recognized as the leading elite of Russia’s Muslim community.

In this situation – whether they like it or not – the only way for Russian Muslims to become part of Russia’s contemporary Muslim society is to integrate into it, like Abdul’ Vakhed Niiazov (the former Vadim Medved’ev) did, who not only changed his name and family name but even turned into someone who can no longer be distinguished from a representative of the educated elite of the Turkic peoples of Russia. From the position of many Russian Muslims such a change is not acceptable because it leads to the loss of their identity.

Yet to regard the Russian Muslims as a “lost sect” would also be completely inappropriate, and if only for the reason that there is no ideological unity in their ranks; there are Russian Sunnis, Shiis and also non-practicing Muslims.

Equally problematic is the vagueness of the term “Russian Muslim” itself. One can regard this term as an umbrella not only for ethnic Russians (including people of mixed family background) but also for representatives of the autochthonous Muslim peoples who traditionally belong to Islam: the Tatars, Bashkirs, and others, in as far as many of them regard Russian as their native language. Their children, as Iu.M. Kobishchanov has rightfully observed, are already Russian in culture and Muslim in confession.⁸⁰ Perhaps the mutual intellectual interrelations of an internationalist-minded part of the Russian Muslims with representatives of the Turkic peoples who find themselves in the Russian cultural area will one day

⁷⁹ Kh. Sidorov, “Russkie musul’many: fenomen, sostoianie, perspektivy”, at: www.norm-info.ru/articles/128/

⁸⁰ Iu.M. Kobshchanov, “Musul’mane Rossii, korennye rossiiskie musul’mane i russkie musul’mane”, *Musul’mane izmeniaiushcheisia Rossii* (Moscow, 2002), at: <http://www.tatar-history.narod.ru/musulmane-rossii.htm>

produce a real intellectual vanguard of the *umma* of the Russian Federation that is able to speak in the name of all Muslims of Russia.

There are attempts to frighten the public by arguing that the social activity of the Russian Muslims poses a threat to the unity of Russia; but these are just propagandistic exercises. There is no doubt that the number of Russian converts to Islam – at present several thousand at most – will rise, but their share in the overall population will hardly ever be higher than a few percent. There are good reasons for this. The Russian Muslims are indeed an elite, but not of the Russian Federation's *umma* but of Russian society as a whole. They are an intellectual elite that is reflecting about the meaning of life, that is searching for itself, that does not want to walk the well-trodden path and to simply follow the religion of their ancestors. Of such people there are always but a few, and there is no reason to instil fear and to believe in the myth that Russia's Islamization is imminent. At least not from the numbers of Russians who embrace Islam. At any event this question has little scientific to it. Time will tell...

Translated from the Russian by Michael Kemper.⁸¹

⁸¹ This article was produced for our volume; it has not been published before.

COMPARATIVE CONCLUSION: “ISLAMIC RUSSIAN” AS A NEW SOCIOLECT?

Michael Kemper

Limitations of this Study

What we have looked at in this volume is the *Muslim* discourse on Islam; the broader public debate on Islam would also include the image of Islam in the mainstream popular media, the academic discourse on Islam by ethnographers and political scientists, and also legal acts and court decisions (e.g. bans on Islamic literature). Also left out of our picture is the discourse on Islam that is produced by representatives of the Orthodox Church, especially in the context of interfaith dialogue and Christian missionary work among Muslims. Especially the latter field has so far not received much scholarly attention, and would deserve its own study.

Within the limits of the Muslim discourse on Islam, there are many more voices that we have not included here; our study does not pretend to offer a full overview. We have not discussed how Turkish trends like the Nurcu and Süleymanî movements are translated into Russian, nor did we look at what kind of literature the Tablighis and Hizb ut-Tahrir produce in the Russian Federation. Equally important, we have not studied the Russian translations of Arab, Turkish, Iranian or Pakistani Islamic religious authorities and intellectuals, like Sayyid Qutb, Fethullah Gülen, Ali Shari‘ati, or Abu l-A‘la Mawdudi, to mention just some of the big names; one may assume that the first translations of these authors, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, played a significant role in the framing of the Russian Islamic discourse. In this line one might also have to include the texts of authors like Idris Shah who are less important or even obscure on a global scene but who happened to be among the first non-Soviet Islamic writers that were translated into Russian, and who had a huge presence in many Russian bookshops as long as there was nothing else on Islam. All this limits the scope of what can be

said here on the basis of the few samples that we explored above; and even the authors whose writings we did examine in this volume produced much more literature that might differ in style and terminology. In short, our little study could easily be expanded into all directions, including into time and space (including the internet) as well as into breadth and depth. Also, while several of our texts deal with questions of gender, we have not ventured into the question whether Muslimas develop a different style of “Islamic Russian”; here the internet could provide a wealth of material, next to a number of female Islamic journals and books. Finally, the question remains how the written styles differ from oral “Islam-Russian”. Videos often contain oral statements, but these are mostly read-out written texts; accordingly this would be a task for sociolinguistic fieldwork.

In addition to all these limitations we also have to keep in mind that most of our text samples were thoroughly edited before publishing. In our cases, various editors and censors were at work: a professional academic reader/editor at *Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo* (where Abdullin's 1976 book came out, ch. 1), the KGB/Council for Religious Affairs (as in the case of the Soviet fatwas from the North Caucasus, ch. 2), an academic advisor (as in the case of Mufti Gainutdin's books, ch. 3), a team of murids at an Islamic institute (who translated Said-Afandi's texts from the Avar language, ch. 5), some anonymous Chechen leader in the underground (as probably the case with all “official statements” of Kavkaz Center, ch. 7), and a friendly interviewer (Sidorov's interview partner, Aleksandr Kazakov, is himself a member of the Murabitun, ch. 9). Only Valishin and Abu Maryam's “samizdat” texts, published as xeroxes or on the web, seem to have escaped any kind of editing or censorship. So when we try to identify the “Islamic Russian style” of a given author we must be aware that we are often dealing with collective work.

Still, the question remains how our samples fit together into a broader picture, and how to delineate the contours of the Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation of today. As outlined in the introduction, we suggest a system of coordinates with three major analytical dimensions: the administrative language of Islam (in the Imperial and Soviet traditions) and the religious language of “traditionalism” as pull factors, and the level of professionalism and academic

learning. These three vectors have to be studied in relation to the old and new varieties of Islamic interpretations and schools or trends as “push factors”. Where, on this system of coordinates, can we position the case studies that we analyzed?

Vector 1: The Administrative Language of Islam

For the power of Islamic administrative language, the prime examples are of course the spiritual administrations, whose task was (and is) to “administer Islam”. While the major public statements of Muftis in the Soviet period were fatwas (ch. 2), today’s Muftis publish more narrative texts, mostly sermons and speeches, with a wider range of topics (ch. 3). Where Soviet fatwas drew their authority from the Mufti’s closeness to the state organs, contemporary Muftis still cooperate with the state but also create a distance to the latter, in order not to appear as mere puppets. While the goal is still to comply with state expectations, and to work towards the stabilization of society, the style of the Muftis’ texts changed from that of mere “orders” (supported by a rather weak system of references to medieval Islamic legal works) to a more complex argumentation in which the believers are meant to be *convinced* (mostly by direct references to the Quran and the model of the Prophet). While Soviet fatwas addressed only the Muslim believers of their immediate region and tried to change their behavior into the direction of one particular Islamic tradition, modern-day Muftis and Mufti umbrella organizations emphasize the legitimate diversity in Islam.

Another major change is that the Muftis of today also act as *representatives* of the Muslim population vis-à-vis other confessions and the state; accordingly, their texts became much more plain and less bound to insider knowledge. That Muftis thoroughly translate Islamic terminology into Russian is thus due to the circumstance that contemporary Muftis are public figures who address not only their own constituencies but larger audiences, including Muslims and non-Muslims with little knowledge about Islam. Any statement, sermon and Quranic reference must be self-explanatory. It is therefore not surprising that each statement of Mufti Gainutdin amounts to a presentation of the benevolent character of Islam in the broadest sense, of Islam’s harmony with the Russian state

(“Islamic patriotism”) and with the multi-religious society (“religious universalism/humanism”). And while in former times it was the KGB that dictated which topics were to be discussed in fatwas, today the Muftis respond to the grand challenges of Russian society, especially urgent problems of immigration, xenophobia and Islamic terrorism in Russia, but also concrete day-to-day issues like new draft laws on various issues.

Equally high up on the “administrative Islamic language axis” are the Chechen jihadists (ch. 7). What Dokku Umarov has in common with the Muftis is that he defends a political system, albeit the opposite one. The administrative language element is most obvious when the leaders of the “Caucasus Emirate” present their virtual empire as a full-fledged state structure with a functional hierarchy of ranks and institutions, including the Amir himself, a “Military Amir”, and the Military Council as the supreme consultative body. Furthermore, in their news messages about terrorist operations the jihadists divide the North Caucasus into provinces (“vilayets”) that are given alternative names (Nokhchicho for Chechnya, Galgai for Ingushetia plus North Ossetia, Nogay for what is now the Stavropol’ and Krasnodar krais, and so forth). Each of these territories is assigned to a local agent, a strongman who is leading this or that “front”. The key concept for constructing this hierarchy is the personal “oath of allegiance” (Arabic, *bay‘at*) to the Amir. In contrast to the geographically circumscribed administrative reach of Russia’s official Muftis (with contentious overlaps, to be sure), the “administrative reach” of the Caucasus Emirate is deliberately left open, to even include areas that are far beyond the Caucasus; thus in August 2012, after the assaults on the Tatarstan Mufti Faizov and his deputy Iakupov, a Tatar Islamist group appeared on videos to claim responsibility and to “repeat” their oath to Umarov, thus presenting Tatarstan as another vilayet of the Caucasus Emirate. This geographical/administrative expansion (whether real or not) is the logical outcome of the transformation of the national-liberation struggle of the Chechens into a supra-national Islamic jihad, as discussed in Umarov’s text in our volume. That text also pointed to the weakness of this system, namely that it is extremely voluntaristic: it depends on the individual will of the local jihadists, and leaders in the neighboring republics have their own agendas and can disrupt links with Umarov at any time.

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The system of the Emirate is thus very vulnerable and can break up at critical junctures, especially when after the death of a leader the succession question comes up again.

The strong administrative language of the jihadists is meant to conceal this weakness. When they leave their Islamic political terminology without translation they underline the alternative, distinct Islamic character of the Emirate project, implying that there is a fixed blueprint for an Islamic state that will evolve naturally. In reality, however, any discussion of what their state would look like is avoided. What kind of political system would they set up? How would a Caucasus Emirate deal with the non-Muslim peoples of the Caucasus on its territory? How would it relate to the states around it, in an endless jihad to establish a world caliphate? Who would elect or appoint the Caliph? The conscious neglect of a clear state vision (or the inability to create such a vision) is of course a feature that the Caucasus jihadists have in common with like-minded movements elsewhere in the world; they all feed from very concrete and personal grievances on the spot that bring the desperate youth, plus some skillful jihad managers, into their camps.

Also Sidorov's and Ezhova's texts (chs. 8 and 9) are about alternative political visions; yet the difference to the jihadists' language and content is obvious. The two Moscow intellectuals do not call to jihad; in their eyes, the Caucasus jihadists are wrong in their creed (Salafism), in their goal (separatism from Russia), and also in their method (terrorism). Instead, Ezhova and Sidorov argue that the Islamic umma of the Russian Federation should be rejuveniled and led by the ethnic Russians, which requires first of all to bring them to Islam. They are thus doing missionary work through a political appeal. What Ezhova and Sidorov have in common is their insistence that their unique political-religious choice (Khomeinism and the Medinan Path model, respectively) suits the Russian national character much better than any other ideological system. These Islamic visions are therefore turning the anti-Russian jihadism of the Caucasus Emirate, and the typical anti-colonial or post-colonial stance of modern Islamic activists in general, on their heads.

While Ezhova and Sidorov thus claim to stand for alternative political systems, they also refrain from making concrete statements about what their alternative state and society would look like; similar to Umarov in this respect, they focus on the way to that goal, leaving aside the goal itself. And their projects are equally voluntaristic: they emphasize the strength of will that is necessary to change society, both putting their hopes in the ingenuity and enthusiasm of the Russian youth. This romantic idealism in their writings reflects the radical right-wing nationalist and “leftist patriotic” youth circles that they came from; and it is from these radical “environments”, one may assume, that they took their conviction that only a fundamentally different system can lead Russia out of the social and political decay that they perceive around them. For them, the best alternative for Russia is the most different and remote one, geographically, culturally, and also historically: only the adoption of the Iranian model, or of the Medinan Path, would really produce the complete break with contemporary society. Both authors pose as prophets of a new age, an age that they know will not come during their lifetime, if at all – and this relieves them of the duty to consider the impracticality of their visions. Interestingly, both visions are depending on players outside of Russia, namely the Iranian Islamic leadership, in Ezhova’s case, and the Murabitun World movement, in Sidorov’s. Potential accusations that this might be seen as treason to the Russian national cause are countered by the argument that the projected alternative is particular suited to the “Russian mentality”; the most important thing is to set the own project apart from the immediate Muslim neighbors in Russia, from whom they receive, naturally, no sympathies.

These openly political texts contrast with several others that do not describe alternative political Islamic systems, namely those of Shamil’ Aliautdinov, Said-Afandi Chirkeevskii and Rafail’ Valishin (chs. 4, 5 and 6). In our system of coordinates these texts are situated on the lower edge of the “administrative Islamic language” axis. To be sure, also their messages have strong political overtones, as can be seen from Valishin’s polemics against the Muftiates and “anti-state sects”, from Said-Afandi’s factual take-over of the Daghestani Muftiate, and from Aliautdinov’s loyalty towards the Moscow Muftiate when he defends the tearing down of the old mosque. But these authors address the Muslim reader

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individually, and not as (aspirant) political leaders or administrators. In Said-Afandi's writings, this is most obvious in the personal style of his responses to individual petitioners, and in his statements on the Sufi master-disciple relation. In Valishin's booklets, the emphasis is even more clearly on personal conversion, via *tauba*, personal "repentance" that he constantly calls for. And also Aliautdinov emphasizes the transforming impact of Islam on the individual personality (albeit in different forms, and for another audience). While Said-Afandi and Valishin still unite Muslims in "their" organizations (the Naqshbandiyya-Shadhiliyya and the Ikhsan-Movement, respectively), Aliautdinov has no ambitions to establish his own group; rather, he speaks to all Muslims, and individually, and not even in the name of the Moscow Spiritual Administration where he works as Gainutdin's deputy. Also the cases of "Mirasism"/"Euro-Islam" that we visited in chapter one lack administrative Islamic language; they argue that the Tatar nation has a superior tradition of secular Islam where Islam is removed from politics and administration.

To sum up, the highest position on the axis of administrative Islamic language in our system of coordinates would be held by the Soviet Muftis (as organs of the state conveying orders to their flock) and the Caucasus Emirate jihadists (as commanders themselves). Next come the post-Soviet Muftis, who have lost their position of command but retained the function of administrators, now with more representative functions towards a broader public. Below these we would locate the political Islamists Ezhova and Sidorov, who provide outlines of Islamic political systems but leave the practicalities of governance completely aside. Next (but still in an intermediate position) come the Sufis Said-Afandi and Valishin, who make some political statements and who are also active in community-building, with leadership claims, but who do not aspire administrative functions, and who claim to speak as private scholars/preachers. The lowest position on the scale, from among the authors whom we looked at in this volume, is held by Aliautdinov (who focuses on the personal development of the individual Muslim) and by the secular Mirasists/representatives of Euro-Islam (who relegate Islam to the private sphere, thus leaving administration to the state organs). Needless to say, this positioning is only related to the authors' use of administrative Islamic

language in their published works, not to the degree of politicization that the individual interpretations reveal. In the overall discourse, Mirasism is as political as Muftism and Jihadism.

Vector II: The Russification of Arabic/Islamic Terminology

In our definition, the second vector in our system of coordinates pertains to the question whether Arabic/Islamic terms are being translated or introduced as loan words. As the public status of Islam in Russia is largely linked to that of the Orthodox Church, we suggest to see the Church as an important “pull” factor for the Russification of the Islamic lexicon; and we further hypothesize that a consequent translation of Islamic terms into the Russian language automatically leads to a rapprochement of the “Islamic language” towards the language used by Church representatives. This hypothesis would need corroboration through direct comparisons with Christian texts and intertextual analysis, which we cannot achieve here. What however can be done is to group our texts and authors by looking at the degree to which they translate Islamic terms, and in how far they use Islamic terms without translation, in Arabic forms.

From this perspective the post-Soviet Mufti Gainutdin as well as Moscow Imam Aliautdinov rank highest; when they use Islamic terms they always translate them, and explain them, in plain Russian, not fearing composites with the element “bog-” (Russian, God) in it. Equally high in translating rank the “Mirasists” (who could not expect their highly secularized audiences of the 1970s to have any knowledge of Islam, and who thus had all liberty to assign their favorite explanation to key terms of the Islamic legal debate of the 19th century) and their later incarnation, Khakim’s Tatar “Euro-Islam”. All of these authors try to reduce the scope of Islamic terminology to just a few important concepts; this consequential translation of Islamic terms reflects the fact that their audience comprises not only believers but also secularists, non-believers (or potential believers), as well as representatives of other faiths.

The intermediate position is again held by the political Islamists Ezhova and Sidorov. They use a wealth of Islamic terms (derived from the two systems of

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thought that they claim to represent) but carefully translate and explain them. This is logical because they, too, address (in the texts that we have chosen here) not their “in-crowd” who are familiar with the terms but a wider audience, to whom they try to explain their curious choices. At the same time both texts contain a number of concepts that stem from the Russian radical discourse, and that would not be easy to grasp for Russia’s “ethnic” Muslims who do not share this background; and the same can be said about the academic social science slang that permeates both texts. In result Islam is largely reduced to a political system (against the authors’ claim to the contrary, of course), denuded of religiosity.

Lower on the “Russification of terminology” scale ranges the message of Dokku Umarov. He uses a limited number of Islamic terms in Arabic forms, mostly from the political field, plus a number of Arabic formulas. We argue that this restricted use of Arabic terms is meant to make the text clear also for outside observers (in Russia and the West) and for sympathizers whom the jihadists try to lure into their camp. Other texts on Kavkaz Center, however, are clearly meant for consumption by insiders in the first place and reveal a thoroughly Islamic language.

The least consequential “translators into Russian” are the two texts from the Sufi camp, by Said-Afandi and Valishin, as well as the online fragment from the Tajik Salafi Abu Maryam Nazratullah. To be sure, Said-Afandi’s instructions to his murids are highly brushed up by his scholarly editors; still, the reader will not find any clear definition of Sufi concepts like *rabita* or *muraqaba*, except in allegoric language. At the same time Said-Afandi’s work also contains texts that pose no particular problems to a non-initiated reader, as for instance the core narrative of his biographical account; and also his interviews, directed at a larger audience, are rather self-explanatory. Said-Afandi speaks, at times in one and the same book, to both his devoted followers and to larger audiences, with different degrees of “terminology Russification” in different fragments.

Valishin, by contrast, clearly preaches only to the converted; his text is barely understandable to someone who is not familiar with the discourse already. The same holds true for Aby Maryam from the opposite, anti-Sufi camp. What we see here is that the scope of terms that are used in Arabic, sometimes with translation

but often without, is expanding beyond the pool of terms that other authors leave untranslated. Said-Afandi uses Arabic words only for key concepts that denote a specific Islamic technique, and which lack an obvious Russian equivalent. Abu Maryam, by contrast, also employs Arabic terms like *shubuhāt* (*shubukhaty* in his Russified form, “doubts”) or *manhaj* (“method”), terms that could have easily been expressed in the Russian equivalent without any loss of Islamic meaning, and without being associated with Christian terminology; “to doubt” and “to use a method” are universal activities. Still, with constant repetition also these “secondary” Arabic terms enter the lexicon of the Salafi style of “Islamic Russian”.

We did not find any clear neologisms. What we did find were Tatar and Avar elements that entered the Russian language either as calques (loan translations, as “to devote one’s prayer to somebody else”, in Valishin’s text) or as adjectives (*ochen’ barakatnyi chelovek*, “a person with much blessing”, in Said-Afandi’s texts). While Islamic terms are mostly taken as loanwords in the form of nouns, as in *bidagatchiki* (“followers of unlawful innovations”, from Arabic *bid’at*, “innovation”; Valishin, Abu Maryam), the Russian language also allows for the easy creation of verbal forms by adding the Russian “to do/to make”, as in “to make a *du’a*/invocation” (*delat’ dua*) (Umarov, Valishin) and “to make *sabr*” (patience; Abu Maryam). Here the Russian nativization of Arabic terms clearly follows the model of Turkic languages (*doga qilu*, in Tatar).

Vector III: Professionalism and Generations

Our third parameter for positioning the texts in a common discourse model was “professionalization”, coupled with the generational issue. Here the overall picture is more complex than the usual juxtaposition “old self-educated imams versus young highly educated challengers”.

Two of our authors obtained a formal Islamic education at the Soviet Mir-i Arab madrasa in Bukhara; these are the North Caucasus Mufti Gekkiev (b. 1935) and the current Mufti for Central Russia, Ravil’ Gainutdin (b. 1959). We observed that Gekkiev’s fatwa was more professional than that of one of his predecessors who had no Mir-i Arab education, Mufti Kurbanov, both in his use of Islamic

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terminology and in his reference to sources. Thus a generational change among Islamic functionaries can already be substantiated for the USSR of the late 1970s. Gainutdin then represents another step further in style and contents, which however seems to result less from his Mir-i Arab student years than from his practical work as an Islamic official in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet years. It is probably not wrong to say that Gainutdin pioneered the style of patriotism and humanism in Islamic Russian.

Also educated in Soviet times, though not in the official Islamic institutions, was Said-Afandi (b. 1937); one must assume that he learned his Sufism not from the books but through instruction from his masters. By comparison to Gainutdin, Said-Afandi's writings are less oriented towards political correctness, and also less self-explanatory. Where Gainutdin (as well as Sidorov and Ezhova) wants to explain everything, and thereby reduces the complexities of Islam to a core (*sut'*) that can easily be explained to non-Muslims, Said-Afandi is not afraid of leaving things unexplained, or of using an allegorical language instead of clear definitions.

While Gainutdin and Said-Afandi had personal teachers/masters, Rafail' Valishin (b. 1956) appears as an autodidact of the post-Soviet period. He admits having read only few books on Islam, and represents a mixture of local West Siberian traditions of shrine veneration and imported writings by Said-Afandi. His lack of familiarity with Islamic literature is reflected in his chaotic way of writing; his booklets are in essence transcripts of oral speech. Equally self-educated, we must assume, is Dokku Umarov (b. 1964); he does not seem to claim the position of an Islamic scholar and uses, by contrast to Valishin, only a limited amount of Islamic terms, mostly in jihad-related political and military issues.

From the younger generation, Aliautdinov (born 1974, with a diploma from al-Azhar University in Cairo) represents the most refined example in terms of modern Islamic education, and also uses modern Western literature to supplement or elucidate his Islamic sources; interestingly, he never uses the works of Western Islamologists though. While being a typical highly-educated "young imam", Aliautdinov does not oppose his Soviet-educated boss Gainutdin but complements him – this in marked contrast to Abu Maryam, who is probably of Aliautdinov's age but represents a very different model of Islam. Anastasiia

(Fatima) Ezhova (b. 1983) and Vadim (Harun) Sidorov (b. ca. 1978, into a mixed Russian-Armenian family in Baku), demonstrate a very academic Islamic terminology that differs markedly from that of all “ethnic Muslims”, seemingly to underline their “otherness”. However, this difference might also reflect a lack of formal “classical” or modern religious education, as well as the influence of Geidar Dzhemal’.

What we see from these examples is a general increase of Islamic professionalism over the decades. Professionalism occurs not only in the camp of the Salafi contesters but also in the traditionalist camp. As could be expected, most authors of the elder (Soviet-educated) generation defend the status quo of “traditional Islam” while new and challenging interpretations are being brought up by younger authors. But even Umarov is now already a senior player, confronted with younger challengers; after 20 years of struggle in the North Caucasus the Islamic underground already has its own generational conflict.

Conclusion: The Variants of “Islam-Russian”

Are the types we looked at mere “idiolects” (individual styles of single authors), or is “Islamic Russian” a full-fledged sociolect (social dialect) of the Russian language, defined by the Islamicity of its authors as well as by its lexicon, forms, and contents, and by the position that the sociolect takes within the broader field of writings on Islam in Russia? We believe that there is good reason to argue for the latter, but that this sociolect of “Islam-Russian” appears in at least three varieties:

I. The first clearly distinguishable variant is the one that is most consequential in its use of Arabic terms as loanwords (mostly as nouns), subjecting them to Russian flection. From our case studies, this variety is most extreme in the writings of the popular Sufi preacher Valishin, and in the sermons or lessons of the anti-Sufi Salafi Abu Maryam; Said-Afandi’s texts, as well as Dokku Umarov’s proclamations, appear as less consequential representations of this variety, for in their writings the amount of Arabic words that are left without translation is more limited.

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II. Second, also the two opposing representatives of “ethnic Russian” political Islam would have to be referred to one single style within the spectrum, namely that of an academic Westernized terminology (in spite of the fact that they ferociously attack the West) that is clearly meant as a break with Soviet-speak and with the common Islamic use of language in Russia. Curiously, with their thinking in terms of social groups, basis and superstructure (Sidorov), and a global struggle for justice (Ezhova), both also appear, to a certain degree, as heirs to Marxist writings on Islam, including the “Mirasism” of the 1970s. “Murabitunism”, “Khomeinism” and “Mirasism” (and “Euro-Islam”) all appear as intellectual projects that have little connection to Islamic communities on the spot. What they all have in common is that they put little emphasis on religiosity and spirituality and instead present Islam as an instrument for political emancipation, historically (“Mirasism”) or in the future (“Khomeinism”/Murabitun).

III. And finally, the third style would probably be the one where Islamic terms are most consequently translated into Russian, as here in the texts of Mufti Gainutdin; whether or not Gainutdin is really characteristic for a “Mufti style” would need to be tested with a wider sample of writings by other Muftis in the Russian Federation. Aliautdinov would also fall into this variety, since he appears as a popular intellectual preacher who elaborates the grand concepts of the Muftis on the level of religiosity, thereby moving away from the administrative side of Muftism to psychological advice language but maintaining the priority on Russification.

What is striking about these variants is that they are not grouped along the lines of the the various interpretational/ideological camps within the Islamic scene. To the contrary: each of varieties I and II comprises at least two, maybe more opposing camps. Linguistic and dogmatic divisions do not coincide.

These observations have important repercussions for our model of the overall Islamic discourse in the Russian Federation. On the one hand, the Islamic Russian sociolect is fragmented; this clearly reflects the huge fragmentation within the Islamic scene of Russia, both in ethnic terms and in terms of interpretations and professionalism/education. On the other hand, however, enemy pairs – those

groups that attack each other most – are speaking the same variant of the sociolect: the Sufis and the Salafis (variant I), and the Khomeinists and the Murabitun (variant II), from among our cases. What we see here is that language features are transgressing the ideological frontlines; and this would be an important argument for the claim that there is indeed an overall Islamic discourse in Russia that unites several opposing camps in one coherent discursive space. Educational backgrounds as well as ethnicity seem to play a secondary role for the differentiation of “Islamic Russian”, as can be seen from the fact that the Tajik Abu Maryam, the Tatar Valishin and the Avar Said-Afandi would all fall into the same variant of the sociolect.