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Minorities, Mullahs, and Modernity: Reshaping Community in the Former Soviet Union

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With an introduction by
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less salient among North Caucasian and Transcaucasian Muslims. The account presented here attempts to focus only on the most general common attributes of contemporary clerical images of Islam. On the distinctive trends in the Transcaucasus, for example, see R. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri," *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriyasï* 4 (1979).

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
7. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 (1984): 11.
8. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1983): 1–2.
9. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2 (1985).
10. Quoted in A. Akhmedov, *Sotsial'naia doktrina islama* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1982), p. 27.
11. I should emphasize that "Soviet Muslim citizen" is my own descriptive device and not that of the Soviet Muslim clergy.
12. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1984): 12.
13. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2 (1983).
14. From a sermon quoted in Nugman Ashirov, *Nravstvennye poucheniia sovremennogo islama* (Moscow: Znanie, 1977), pp. 12–13.
15. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1977): 8.
16. This view is shared by some Soviet specialists of Islam. See M. A. Abdullaev and M. V. Vagabov, *Aktual'nye problemy kritiki i preodoleniia islama* (Makhachkala, 1975).

THE REINTERPRETATION AND ADAPTATION OF SOVIET ISLAM

A fundamental problem in Western scholarship on Islam has been the reification of religion. Many scholars do not view religion as a social manifestation of the sacred but as a fixed system of beliefs and practices. Such reification is not a problem confined to the study of Soviet Islam. In the growing scholarship on Islam in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East, many studies work from the assumption that Islam is a transhistorical phenomenon. As a result, there is a tendency to focus on the interrelationship of a static Islam and the advent of modernity.[1] In effect, Islam is seen as a force independent of the changed (or changing) social, economic, and political circumstances of the contemporary world. Thus socioeconomic change and political development become the central concerns of analysis, and religious innovation, even when it is empirically recognized, is theoretically misunderstood and thus undervalued as a subject worthy of scholarly attention.

Most Western scholars of Soviet Islam work within these paradigmatic assumptions. Alexandre Bennigsen, the dean of scholarship on Soviet Islam, writes of an "inborn sense of *Umma*" among Muslims as if it were a genetic rather than a social quality.[2] This is not a singular, poorly expressed phrase; rather, it reflects a common approach to Muslims and Muslim society. Implicitly or explicitly, this perspective assumes the immutability of social identities. In the Soviet context, this type of reification rests on the assumption that after more than a half century of massive socioeconomic and political transformation, the self-conception of Soviet Muslims has undergone little significant change (assuming to begin with that Muslims in the Tsarist empire had a sense of common identity in the umma). Even if one chooses to argue, as in fact Soviet scholars do, that sectors of the "Muslim" population of the USSR are relatively less integrated into Soviet society, one cannot assume that partial or even differentiated integration has not had some impact on popular attitudes.[3]

This approach to the study of Islam in the Soviet Union has proved to be more of an obstacle than an insight. The implicit assertion that religion is a metaphysical system independent of society and politics is a tenuous one. Religion is a symbolic system that is generated in social relations and can be seen as a symbolically organized or constructed phenomenon.[4] This does not deny, however, that religious ideas can provide meaning to social action. The form and substance of Islam, therefore, is interpreted and reinterpreted through social relations yet also provides concepts with which to understand these social relations. The absence of this dialectical perspective and the resultant reification of religion have resulted in serious analytical weaknesses in the study of religious change in the USSR. A fundamental dimension of this weakness is evident in the scholarly undervaluation of the role of Muslim elites in this change.

MUSLIM ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SOVIET STATE

The post-Stalin USSR is home to four independent Muslim religious administrations: the Muslim Religious Board for the European USSR and Siberia (centered in Ufa, Bashkir ASSR); the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan (Tashkent, Uzbekistan); the Muslim Religious Board for the North Caucasus (until recently in Buinaksk; now in Makhachkala, Dagestan); and the Muslim Religious Board for Transcaucasia (Baku, Azerbaijan). These institutions are the locus of Islamic innovation in the USSR, and a conceptual exposition of their orientations and activities is crucial for analyzing the place of Islam in contemporary Soviet society. Each administration has a number of specialized departments and supervises the religious and administrative activities of the mosques and clerics under its jurisdiction. In addition, the Muslim Board of Tashkent operates two *medresas*, or Muslim seminaries, and publishes a quarterly journal, *Muslims of the Soviet East*.[5] The leaders of these administrations, the staffs of their various departments, and the clergy form the Soviet Muslim elite.

Most of the scholarly discussion of these administrations is limited to descriptive accounts of their activities. Analytically, what is significant for Western scholars about these administrations is that

like their prerevolutionary predecessors, they were created exogenously and instituted in the communities that they now serve. The creation and "imposition" of organizational coherence for the Islamic religion by the Soviet regime is an undeniable occurrence. Because of the heteronomous establishment of these Soviet Muslim administrations, however, a priori assumptions are too often employed in place of an analysis of the religious boards' role and their relations with the Soviet regime. An example of this approach is the following comment:

> These administrative bodies exist in name only, since they have no powers whatsoever to safeguard the interests of Islam, i.e., to defend Islam against anti-Islamic attacks in public life.[6]

The same author also claims that the Muslim Religious Boards are noteworthy only in the services they provide for the conduct of Soviet foreign policy and that in this respect the Tashkent administration is the sole significant actor.[7] While these comments are explicit and perhaps extreme in their form, the dominant, conventional wisdom about the role of the Muslim elite in Soviet Islam is steeped in similar notions.[8]

The assumptions of this perspective are perhaps commonsensical: the Soviet regime establishes the Muslim administrations for its own ends, in part as a concession to the Muslim population; these administrations, now empowered with an autonomous organizational apparatus, bargain with the regime and obtain extensions of their power and authority (e.g., the opening of new mosques or the softening of antireligious propaganda) in return for obedient domestic behavior and especially for promotion of the Soviet system and Soviet foreign policy among Muslim states of the Third World.[9] As institutional structures created and established by Soviet authorities, the Muslim Religious Boards must revise their orientations and activities (ostensibly at least) to accord with the regime's values and goals in order to justify to the regime their continued (or even expanded) operation. This approach is particularly evident in the claim that the Soviet regime is willing to promote the official Muslim elite in opposition to the purportedly more threatening nonofficial forms of Islamic association.[10] Nevertheless, the entente established between the state and its Muslim population is hardly cordial. Relations between the religious boards and the regime, according to the conventional wisdom, are based on cost-benefit calcu-

lations between essentially antagonistic partners and are thus inherently unstable and uncertain.[11]

Such assertions are not entirely wrong. They are, however, incomplete and overly simplistic. The operation of Muslim organizations cannot be put in simple terms of accommodation or antagonism toward the state. These organizations are neither mere organs of state power nor incipient vehicles of antistate action. The creation of these institutions reflects the regime's accommodation to socioreligious forces that exist in Soviet society, but this accommodation must be understood in the context of the completion of a decisive and fundamental transformation of social and political relations in the USSR. The Soviet regime initiated a reconciliation with the Muslim clergy only after it had successfully undermined their political relevance.[12] Moreover, the institutional character of the religious boards shapes the terms by which the religious elites articulate and express their identity.*

The simplistic view of the Muslim Religious Boards as obedient instruments of the Soviet state leads to the assumption that these administrations are rigidly formalistic in both conception and practice and that they are unconnected and irrelevant to the constituencies which they ostensibly serve.[13] In fact, Western scholars place too much emphasis on the foreign propaganda role of the Soviet Muslim elites, while they consider their domestic activities to be inconsequential. In relegating the role of the Muslim elites to domestic insignificance, many scholars fail to evaluate and analyze their role in redefining the form and content of Islam in Soviet society.

RELIGIOUS "MODERNIZATION," MUSLIM ELITES, AND THE SOVIET REGIME

One of the fundamental features of change in Islam during the Soviet period is the reinterpretation and adaptation of religious thought and practice. Based in the religious boards, the Muslim clerical elite is the initiator of these religious innovations. The reinterpretation of Islam has been promulgated in Soviet Muslim publications and conferences, in religious-educational establishments, and most immediately through the countrywide network of mosques and organized parishes. In effect, all the institutional channels available to the Muslim elite have been mobilized to promote not only the principle of religious reinterpretation, but also its theological and practical applications. Western studies of this religious innovation are invariably based on Soviet scholarship. Therefore, it is useful to review the assumptions of the Soviet understanding of this process before a discussion of Western perspectives.

*A comparative study of the historically innovative Muslim Religious Boards with preexisting religious institutions—e.g., the Russian Orthodox Church or the Armenian Apostolic Church—could provide the basis for better elaboration of this point.

The campaign for the reinterpretation of Islam in the context of Soviet society has received wide attention in Soviet studies of Islam.[14] In Soviet literature this process is most commonly referred to as Islamic modernization (*modernizatsiia*) or Islamic renewal (*obnovlenie*). A perusal of Soviet literature on Islamic modernization reveals abundant information and—although variations and distinct differences in perspective exist—a fairly coherent argument about the character and intent of this modernization. Generally, the Soviet argument goes like this: based on the material transformation of society, a spiritual-ideological transformation has also been achieved. That is, not only has a new socioeconomic "base" been created, but also a "superstructure" has been established that generally (though not completely) corresponds to this novel socialist base. Therefore, in the conditions of a Soviet socialist society the country's traditionally Muslim populations have assimilated materialist conceptions of history and the complex set of Soviet values founded in this new society (collectivism, equality, democracy, and the like). The Muslim elite, in this argument, has been obliged to adapt to the conditions of a new society and a new popular consciousness in order to maintain its now objectively baseless but nonetheless residual status. A minority of scholars also argues that Islamic modernization is intended not only to prevent the further deterioration of the social and spiritual position of the Muslim elite but aims to "regain lost ground" as well.[15]

Comparisons of religious modernization in the USSR and in the developing world highlight the specificity of Islamic modernization in the USSR. In the developed and developing capitalist countries, religious renovation is undertaken to promote the interest of the

dominant class. In contrast, religious modernization in the Soviet Union serves only to prevent, or at least to slow down, the objective elimination of Islamic "vestiges" that have remained in socialist society.[16] The Muslim elite, by way of reinterpretation, strives to reanimate the vestigial elements of Islam to maintain its objectively baseless social status. In the conditions of mass atheism based on a new social order, Muslim elites must prove their "usefulness" to the population and must adapt their conception of religious identity and practices in order not to alienate their already tenuous support remaining in the population at large.[17]

The general outlines of the Soviet argument about Islamic modernization are logical, but the argument does not correspond to the actual state of affairs. While one could argue with ease that Soviet scholars fail adequately to substantiate their case about the transformation of popular consciousness in the USSR, there are more significant theoretical problems. The Soviet approach is overly mechanistic and one-dimensional in assuming a direct and unilateral determination of social consciousness by social structure.[18]

The Western approach to Islamic modernization is distinct yet related to its Soviet counterpart. Western scholars most frequently discuss this issue only in descriptive terms by eclectically appropriating information from Soviet sources and in the process stripping any facts from the conceptual framework in which they were originally presented. In effect, one is provided with a repetitious summary of previously published factual information (albeit in Russian or other languages of the USSR); sometimes one comes across the insertion of parts of arguments appropriated from the same sources. One scholar, for example, after paraphrasing virtually a single Soviet monographic source, concludes that the whole process of religious modernization is "strange" in that it occurs in a presumably atheistic state.[19] Yet another Western scholar simultaneously provides limited evidence of religious change and then denounces it as "insignificant."[20] This same author continues: "Under the Soviet regime [Muslim religious customs and ritual] have neither been modified nor simplified, though some fell into disuse through neglect."[21] This view ignores a great deal of contrary information in both Soviet and Western literature (see below). More generally, however, it reflects serious theoretical inadequacies. As noted, the assumption that Islam exists autonomously from social relations almost inevitably

leads to the descriptive particularization that dominates Western study of Soviet Islam. By concentrating on the details of the reinterpretation of religious thought and practices, Western scholars forget that these details are part of a larger social process of religious change.

While different in content, the conceptual understanding of the origins of Islamic renovation implicit in the conventional Western arguments is striking in its structural similarity to conventional Soviet interpretations. Both arguments approach Muslim reform in a unidirectional manner, ascribing the determination of religious reconstitution to either the regime (the Western variant) or popular consciousness (the Soviet variant). Both of these perspectives, moreover, emphasize the pragmatic, essentially opportunistic character of religious innovations. Yet it is crucial for an understanding of religious change to recognize that the motivations of the Soviet Muslim elites are based not just in political expediency, but also in their own conception of religious identity.[22]

A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS CHANGE

Change in Soviet Islam has been characterized as "religious modernization" in both Soviet and Western literature. Use of the term "modernization" is, however, misleading since it assumes that there is some transition from "traditional" to "modern" forms of religion. I will use the term religious reconstruction since it gives the sense that religion is reinterpreted and recast in new (not necessarily modern) forms and with new content in response to changed or changing sociopolitical conditions. Religious reconstruction does not involve the simple replacement of old forms of religious expression with "modern" ones; nor does it imply the reaffirmation or replication of traditional forms of religion. The reconstruction of religion is a novel articulation of the forms and substance of religion.[23]

An important dimension of religious reconstruction is the reformulation of the role of religious organization in social life.[24] In Soviet Islam, the practical initiator of religious reconstruction is the Muslim clerical elite. In part, changes in the composition of the So-

viet Muslim elite account for religious innovation in Soviet Islam.[25] However, while the reconstruction is led by the Muslim elite, the process is founded in the new social and political conditions of the contemporary USSR. In this way, religious institutions in the post-war USSR to a certain extent serve as transmitters of regime values. Located in the Muslim Religious Boards, the Muslim clergy articulates notions of social progress, collectivism, equality of peoples and the sexes, and so forth. These notions form the foundation of the Soviet regime's value system and establish guidelines for the direction of social and political behavior.

This does not mean, however, that Soviet Muslim organizations are mere mouthpieces for the regime. Soviet Muslim elites have appropriated official Soviet values and expressed them in terms of their own symbolic system—Islam. This entails not simply Muslim mediation of regime values and behavioral norms. Rather, the Muslim elite has assimilated itself into the dominant sociopolitical system through the appropriation of the hegemonic goals and values of that system; and in expressing those values through its own ideological constructs, it reasserts its own social legitimacy. The appropriation of regime values and their recasting in terms of Islamic theology is, in short, a fundamental component of the reconstruction of Islam.

Islamic reconstruction, however, does not simply reflect the existence of a hegemonic Soviet ideology and political order. Nor does it merely constitute a new Islam in opposition to the Soviet regime. Reconstructed Islam also reflects the sociopolitical conditions in which it occurs. At the same time, it constitutes a new social identity by using Islamic theological concepts to articulate dominant, secular values in what Bryan S. Turner calls a "curious blend of the new and traditional."[26] This recasting of Islam synthesizes a new Muslim identity in which Islam and Soviet socialism are reconciled and a novel form of Soviet identity is expressed and legitimated in the reconstructed categories of Islamic doctrine.

As a result, the "renewal" of Soviet Islam is not fundamentally or necessarily a centrifugal force in Soviet society. The reassertion of Islamic identity is not automatically a threat to the regime.[27] Indeed it is important not to confuse *symbolic form* and *symbolic function*.[28] Symbolic form refers to the specific mode through which meanings are conveyed (e.g., ritual or ceremony). Symbolic function refers to the specific meaning that is conveyed (e.g., solidarity or equality).

Many scholars of Soviet Islam conflate these two concepts.* They recognize the maintenance of the traditional symbolic *forms* of Islam and assume that the same *functions* are being accomplished. But through the process of religious reconstruction, old symbolic forms of Islam have been redefined and infused with new meanings. Thus in Soviet society universally recognizable Muslim symbolic forms perform new, different symbolic functions.

In effect, the Soviet Muslim elite's reconstruction of Islam can be viewed in what Steven Lukes has called a "symbolic strategy"—that is, a ritual complex that serves to defend a group's power with respect to other groups.[29] Applied to the respective positions of the Soviet political elite and the Muslim elite, Lukes' distinction between the uses of the "mobilization of bias" for dominant and subordinate groups is especially pertinent. He emphasizes that the symbolic strategy of a subordinate group can be either fundamentally destablilizing or "subordinate and oppositional but not threatening to the social and political order."[30] Treating the Muslim elite's reconstruction of Islamic identity as a particular symbolic strategy can reorient the study of Islam and religious change in the USSR. The issue is no longer the extent to which the Muslim elite or an Islamic "revival" poses a threat to the Soviet regime. Rather, the fundamental question becomes whether Islamic reconstruction is an integrative or subversive process.

My thesis is that the Muslim religious establishment promotes integration into the Soviet social order based on reconstructed concepts of specifically Islamic religious categories. The articulation of a new Soviet-Muslim symbolic system reformulates what the regime intends to be integrative *secular* values; nevertheless, reconstructed Islam at once posits a Muslim subgroup solidarity and promotes the integration of the subgroup into the larger social group—the Soviet social order. The Muslim elite strives to establish both a new Soviet and a new Muslim identity—identities which are defined as mutually compatible and not contradictory to the integration promoted through purely Soviet values. In short, the notion that one can be

*This is the case for observers of Soviet Islam in both the West and the USSR. Western scholars tend to reify Islam and believe that traditional forms of Muslim identity embody similar contents. Similarly, Soviet scholars see, for example, the continuation of Islamic ritual activity as "vestigial" forms of Islam that carry the same content (perform the same function) as they always have.

both a "good" Muslim and a "good" Soviet citizen is put forth.[31] The Muslim elite's reformulation of the Islamic symbolic universe, therefore, not only reflects the transformed political and social conditions of the USSR, but it also partakes in that transformation in its attempts to establish a positive identity for Soviet Muslims congruent with the Soviet sociopolitical order.[32] Religion is not something that either maintains itself unchanged or is swept away by the forces of political and social development. Religion continues to exist, but its form and substance are reconstructed in light of the changing sociopolitical circumstances in which it operates.

ISLAMIC RECONSTRUCTION: RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE AND RITUAL

The Muslim clerical elite has introduced innovations in Islamic ethical-moral norms and theology.[33] In Islamic theological terms, reconstruction has been promoted through the doctrinal concept of *ijtihad.* Ijtihad involves direct consultation and interpretation of the Qur'an and other religious scriptures that form the foundation of the Islamic religion. As a Soviet religious leader has written, successive generations approach the scriptures of Islam with equal respect, but each new generation interprets the essence of these scriptures in a new way and finds new ideas that had previously gone unnoticed.[34]

One of the major themes among the reform-conscious Soviet Muslim elites is the reconciliation of Islamic and Soviet identities. Thus the elites place emphasis on sociopolitical integration, not subversion. Muslim values are recast in Soviet terms, and Soviet values are recast in Muslim terms. An illustration of the former is how the concept of *jihad* has been redefined from struggle for the faith against nonbelievers into struggle for social transformation and equality congruent with Soviet aims.[35] Similarly, Soviet values are explained and legitimated in religious categories. Soviet Muslim leaders note that Allah prepared Marx, Engels, and Lenin for service on earth and that the October Revolution has put into practice many Qur'anic values, including equality of nations and sexes, freedom of religion, security of honorable work, and ownership of land by those who till it.[36] For Soviet Muslim elites, the fact that the leaders of the USSR, as admitted atheists, actively fulfill Islamic religious prescriptions

apparently poses no contradiction in their reconstructed views of Islam and the secular state.

In doctrine and social thought, the Muslim elite's reconstitution of Islam takes essentially two forms: historical and scriptural. That is, new definitions of Islam are established through both historical and scriptural references. Historically, Muslim elites refer to a selected set of Islamic theologians and leaders whose ideas and actions are recast—fairly or unfairly—in terms that reinforce contemporary interpretations of Islam.[37] They emphasize the works or activities of historical Muslim figures, especially the numerous nineteenth-century Muslim reformers of Tsarist Russia, who promoted the ideas of social progress, national and sexual equality, and other currently dominant social and political values. In this way, the Muslim elites construct a historical Islam that is "progressive" in terms of the contemporary value system. The Tatar religious leader Rizaetdin Fahretdinov (1859–1936), for example, is lauded for his progressive ideas and his ability to combine religious conviction and social responsibility. In effect, Fahretdinov is established as a role model for the Soviet Muslim believer-citizen:

> Religion in no way hampered Rizaetdin Fahretdinov from participating actively in the social and political life of our country. With a feeling of great emotion he used to speak of quite a large number of things of which he dared only dream before the Great October Revolution, like the general educational facilities, the emancipation of our women, the flourishing in all spheres of our science, culture and art, which have nowadays become a reality.[38]

The Muslim elites also refer to seminal religious scriptures in their efforts to recast Islam as "progressive." Aside from the activities and interpretations of historical theologians, the essence of the Islamic religious doctrine is portrayed in terms that are congruent with contemporary values. Thus in his sermon at Tashkent's main mosque, the head of the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan cites the Qur'an in promoting the notion of labor discipline and productivity and apparently condemning second-economic activity:

> Only those persons receive their blessings who endeavor to master a trade or profession . . . since Allah regards a craftsman as

> akin to himself, while he condemns all loafers, idlers, and good-for-nothing persons. . . . In no religious dogma does there exist any justification for idleness or accumulation of wealth by easy and doubtful ways or by either theft or beggary.[39]

The reconstruction of Muslim religious thought therefore operates on two levels. The Soviet Muslim elite is engaged in the reconstruction of a historical Islam and socio-religious doctrine to produce an Islamic identity that is conducive to integration in the dominant social order, yet through this integration in terms of the Islamic religion (and not merely by promoting Soviet values as Soviet values *but as Muslim values*), the Muslim elite asserts the authority and legitimacy of Islam as well.[40]

The Islamic ritual complex has also undergone adaptation and reinterpretation in the reconstruction promoted by the Muslim elites. Religious rituals continue to play an important role in the life not only of the believing Muslim population, but among the secularized sectors of the population as well. It is often noted that Islamic funeral rites and circumcision are virtually universally observed in traditionally Muslim areas and that other religious rituals and festivals such as the annual fasting during the month of Ramazan and the birth of Muhammad (*mavliud an-nabi*) continue to be widely observed.

Muslim elites have not only physically adapted and changed a number of important rituals by simplifying and shortening them, but they have also engaged in the redefinition of the role and purpose of ritual. For example, observance of the annual fasting during Ramazan has in many instances been shortened, and only nominal fasting during various points during the period is prescribed.[41] This and many other changes were ostensibly instituted so as not to interfere with the fulfillment of state-defined economic targets, especially since Ramazan often coincides with the harvest season. Beyond this type of change, religious ceremonies have been reinterpreted to accord with "modern" social values. The ritual washing of feet before prayer is extolled for its hygienic value, and the performance of the prayer (*namaz*) is praised for its contribution to physical health.[42] Thus while many Islamic rituals maintained in the USSR appear similar to rituals found in pre-Soviet (or even foreign) Muslim society, the Muslim elites have infused these rituals with new

symbolic meanings. Symbolic forms have remained the same, but their symbolic function has changed.

The promotion of religious ritual as a component of the identities of the various offically recognized "nationalities" in the Soviet Union is one of the most fundamental innovations in the reconstruction of Islamic ritual. The mixing of religious and national elements is a significant element in the maintenance of Islam in the Soviet context.[43] Muslim religious elites actively pursue this theme in the redefinition of Islam. For example, they assert that the performance of religious rites expresses not only religious solidarity, but national affiliation and ethnic identity as well.[44] For the secularized strata of the population, the connection between religious rituals and national identity is especially important to maintain the continued popularity of these rites. As a result of the mixing of religious and national identities, Soviet scholars point out, many nonreligious people observe religious rituals.[45]

The assertion that religion is an essential component of national identity is important with respect to the argument that Muslim elites have adapted Islam in the face of changed popular attitudes. The view that Islam is the primary and most comprehensive expression of the population's identity is a common feature of the conventional literature on Soviet Islam.[46] In contrast, one of the central features of Soviet development is the physical and ideological construction of explicitly distinct and hierarchically organized nations and nationalities in the USSR.[47] The religious establishment's attempts to present ritual and even religion more broadly in terms of national and not just religious identity in effect recognize the new status of nationality, in the Soviet Union. Moreover, this new status can be placed in light not only of the regime's construction of nationality, but also of the evolution of the social consciousness of the Soviet "Muslim" population. The Muslim religious elite's efforts to "nationalize" Islamic ritual, therefore, not only reflect the new Soviet social and political order, but also respond to changes in popular world views.

THE SOVIET MUSLIM ELITE: AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMATION

The Muslim elite's promotion of a reconstructed Islam is neither a conflict-free nor a homogeneous process. An essential element in the elite's rearticulation of Islam is the redefinition of the role of the Muslim leadership in social and religious life. Historically, Islam was a system of communally defined traditions and beliefs; one of its fundamental characteristics was the absence of a hierarchically organized administration or "church." The domain of the Soviet Muslim elite, however, is in fact a hierarchical administrative apparatus.

The Muslim elite in fact asserts its legitimacy and authority through Islam by defining Islam, yet it must also overcome elements that provide competing understandings of religious ideology and practice. Thus the Muslim elite attempts to establish its own legitimacy and authority through the reconstruction of Islam. In the Muslim elite's terms, religious reconstruction is the reestablishment of a true, purified Islam in the best *jadid* tradition.[48] The elite defends an Islam that it considers authentic; nonetheless, its behavior also reflects a keen awareness of political circumstances. The less control the elite has over the definition of "Islam," the less social authority and legitmacy it will be able to obtain or maintain among the Soviet authorities as well as the Muslim community.

The Muslim elite strives to establish its socio-religious authority through its own "symbolic strategy" and institutional control over ritual activity. The basic instrument through which it can express its authority is the complex of Muslim institutions: the Muslim press, Muslim educational establishments, and the network of mosques and religious functionaries under its jurisdiction. Through these institutions, the elite strives to promote its own definitive forms of Islamic identity. Traditionally, anyone familiar with ritual discourse could legitimately officiate during religious activities. The Muslim elite, by contrast, is attempting to displace traditional loci of religious expression and place religion clearly within the realm of the mosque and the official religious bureaucracy—that is, under the administrative and ideological control of the Muslim Religious Boards.*

*Here again I should emphasize the importance of considering both material and ideal interests. The Muslim elites promote their own definitions of doctrine and ritual and the significance of the mosque and clergy not just out of power

Administrative and religious pronouncements (*fetwa*), sermons, and other statements reproduced in the Soviet literature on Islam or in the journal of the Tashkent Muslim Religious Board, *Muslims of the Soviet East*, attest to the direction of the Muslim administrative elite's efforts to promote its own authority and undermine any alternative authority. The establishment of the Muslim elite's authority proceeds (as noted) through its promotion of a true, authentic Islam purged of historical impurities. In this way, the late mufti of Tashkent has been praised for his seminal efforts and achievements in "uniting all Muslims [and] eradicating all [things] alien to Islam in [his] struggle against heresy, prejudices and superstitions."[49] Fundamental to the reconstruction of Islam, therefore, is not only the identification of what Islam *is*, but also what it *is not*. The Muslim administration thus not only opposes various manifestations of "non-Islamic behavior,"[50] but it also calls for strict adherence to its instructions on the performance of religious ritual and the articulation of religious precepts.[51]

The Muslim elite through the Muslim Religious Boards' multiple institutional channels seeks not just to define Islam, but also to define itself as the sole legitimate interpreter of the faith. In defining its administrative network as the sole locus of religious authority, the Muslim elite attempts to consolidate its authority. The importance given to the institutional structures of Islam is especially evident. The religious boards emphasize and promote the mosque as the center of religious life, and some denounce the performance of religious services in the home or pilgrimages to traditional holy sites.[52] Connected with this, Muslim elites speak of the "mission and rightful place" of the cleric in society and his tasks in "rooting out" various kinds of heresies and superstitions that are not considered part of Islam but are nonetheless widespread among the population.[53]

The reconstruction of Islam, then, is not just a matter of theological debate among isolated Muslim elites. It is a strategy to reconcile Islam with changed sociopolitical circumstances. The Soviet Muslim elite, in an essential part of this strategy, seeks to establish its own socio-religious authority. Reinterpretations of Muslim iden-

considerations or because only official clerics and registered mosques are legally sanctioned. The Muslim leadership conceives of the extention of reconstructed Islam as a struggle against religious ignorance (*jahiliyya*).

tity are expressed through an organizational apparatus whose role itself has been redefined.

STRATEGIES OF RECONSTRUCTION: HOMOGENIZATION VS. REGIONALIZATION

While I have thus far concentrated on the general character of religious reconstruction, this does not mean that it is a unitary process throughout the USSR. It is important to distinguish between the forms of Islamic bureaucratic administration and the particular social role these administrations play. The institutional structures of the Muslim Religious Boards are fairly standardized throughout the country. From all available accounts, the model of the regional administration with its numerous departments and the local mosque with executive and other committees appears to be universal.[54] Other purely administrative features differ because of specific regional or geographic circumstances. Thus since the Muslim community in Azerbaijan is predominantly Shi'ite, the Transcaucasian Muslim Religious Board combines two positions of religious leadership—a Shi'ite *sheikh ul-Islam* and a Sunni *mufti*. Also, the Tashkent administration has "branch" offices headed by a religious functionary (*qazi*) in each of the Central Asian republics since this administration's jurisdiction extends over five sizable territorial units.[55]

Notwithstanding these fairly standardized, consistent institutional features, the administrations operate under vastly different circumstances in different regions of the USSR. These include each region's contemporary and historical level of socioeconomic development, cultural legacy, the particular local forms of religious expression, and the nature and characteristics of the regional administration's constituency. Contrast, for example, the conservative seminarian tradition of the Central Asian administration to the modernist heritage of the Ufa administration; compare the fairly urbanized, nationally homogeneous constituency of the Baku religious establishment with the rural, multinational, and strongly Sufi-oriented populations under the North Caucasian jurisdiction.

Interestingly, the Muslim elites themselves realize the significance of regional variations and the potential of these differences for religious life:

> [The religious boards] conduct useful work in disseminating among their flocks the teachings of the Qur'an and the sunnah in conformity with the dogmas of the shariat *which have their own spiritual weight in respective places.*[56]

Moreover, the Muslim elites realize that the reworking of religious ritual, while facilitating acceptance in one area, may complicate matters in other areas due to specific regional differences. "The fundamentals of Islam," they note, "are not always as simple as they appear to be."[57] Soviet scholars of Islam remark on these variations as well. Ashirov points out that quite simply in a large country like the USSR, differences in the interpretation of the Qur'an are bound to exist and that, in addition, the process of Islamic modernization itself is an uneven development dependent on local socioeconomic and historical circumstances.[58] Similarly, R. Aslanova describes how the modernization of Shi'ite Islam proceeds significantly more slowly than Sunni Islam.[59] The observation that the mixing of national and religious identities and the "liberation" of national identity from religious influences are uneven processes highlights the potential for variation in the forms and substance of religious change in different parts of the USSR.[60]

Even with the limited information on religious development under the four Muslim Religious Boards, many differences are evident in religious orientations and practices, especially with respect to the status of women in religious life.[61] It is analytically useful to identify two distinct trends in the development of Islamic reconstruction led by the regional Muslim elites: homogenization and regionalization. While these trends are in practice not necessarily mutually exclusive, there is a fundamental tension between them. Each of these trends can be analyzed in the context of each regional Muslim Religious Board's efforts to establish and consolidate its own socio-religious authority within its respective jurisdiction.

The process of homogenization began with the imposition of standardized institutional structures on the various Islamic traditions in the USSR.[62] Indeed while the movement toward uniform interpretation of religious ritual and ideology is conditioned by the

cultural environments of particular Muslim elites, the Muslim Religious Board for Central Asia and Kazakhstan, essentially in the hands of the Uzbek Muslim elite, is nevertheless the driving force for the homogenization of Islam in the USSR.[63]

In its promotion of a unitary definition of Islam, the Uzbek Muslim elite has at its disposal a number of institutional mechanisms through which it can assert its power and authority. Although they overlap, one can distinguish three channels: the educational establishments, the religious instructions (fetwa), and the press. The most important and evident is Uzbek control of the only two Muslim educational facilities in the country: the medresas of Bukhara and Tashkent. Aside from the restricted alternative of theological education abroad, the two Uzbek seminaries are the only training grounds for aspiring clerics, who come from throughout the country to attend these institutions.* The curriculum of these institutions is strictly controlled and is itself an important means through which the Uzbek elite promotes its own understanding of ijtihad. This is achieved through the study of theological texts that conform (or are interpreted to conform) to a particular definition of Islam in its spiritual and practical forms.

Two other items stand out. One is that along with instruction in English, Russian, and Arabic, Uzbek language and literature are subjects of study at the medresas. From descriptions of life at the seminaries (and for that matter, interadministration affairs), it is not clear which is the language (or languages) of instruction or communication. It appears, however, that just as Russian has a "special" role as the language of inter-nationality communication and "friendship" among Soviet peoples, Uzbek—the "language of science and culture"[64]—may play a similar role in the USSR's Muslim administrations. More significant than language is the content of the education at these seminaries. In this respect, the inclusion of the fetwa promulgated by the Tashkent administration into the curriculum is important. Aspiring religious functionaries from throughout the USSR are instructed in the authoritative religious prescriptions of the Central Asian religious board. These pronouncements on the definition of correct religious life, Islamic ritual, and the role and status of Islam in contemporary society are meant to be assimilated by the people who will direct religious institutions in their respective regions.[65]

*After completion of studies at the Uzbek medresas, a select number of Soviet clerics are sent for supplemental religious education outside the USSR to the universities of al-Azhar (Egypt), Qarawyin (Morocco), al-Baydha (Libya), and Damascus (Syria). It is interesting to note that at least al-Azhar and Qarawyin promote the theological importance of ijtihad.

The role of the Tashkent religious board's fetwa outside of the medresas is a separate channel of institutional authority. Soviet Muslim leaders stress the importance of the fetwa in establishing officially sanctioned religious authority and in implementing elite instructions on religious practices and beliefs.[66] Yet it is not clear what the relation of the Tashkent mufti's fetwa is to those of other administrations. It is instructive to note the Tashkent administration's assistance in the religious life of the North Caucasus and particularly the use of the Tashkent fetwa in strengthening the position of the North Caucasian religious board.[67]

Related to the use of the fetwa is the convening of theological and other conferences in Tashkent, for both the Central Asian administration specifically (at which in any case representatives from other administrations often attend) and the broader audience of all Soviet Muslim elites. Aslanova notes that these conferences, while not always successful in establishing the Tashkent administration's definitive authority, nonetheless are intended to unify and modernize Soviet Islam along specific lines.[68] Apart from these conferences, foreign religious delegations invariably spend most of their time in Uzbekistan with Uzbek religious leaders, and Soviet religious delegations that travel abroad are composed almost always of Uzbek elites.[69]

Finally, the Uzbek Muslim elite has a virtual monopoly on the publication of religious materials in the country. This does not refer solely to the publication of the Tashkent administration's quarterly journal (which in any case is of dubious accessibility). The Tashkent Muslim Religious Board publishes editions of the Qur'an and also the works of authoritative Muslim theologians (including of course the writings and fetwa of the Tashkent mufti). The significance of these publications is not slighted by the Central Asian administration. One of its representatives noted the following on the publication of the works of an (approved) Islamic theologian:

> The edition of *Sahih* of al-Bukhari marks the final victory of Islam over superstition and obscurantism. . . . This book will satisfy all

the spiritual needs of Muslims. We are now well armed to defend ourselves against the temptations of false theologians and false prophets. This edition is a divine gift which will help our advance along the right path.[70]

Thus the Uzbek elites champion such publications as important steps in the reconstruction of a true Islam and in the struggle against nonconformist heretical ideas and practices. Significantly, it is the Uzbek elite that decides which interpreters of the faith are to be published, as well as how these works are to be understood.

In contrast to the homogenizing trend, one can identify a move toward local differentiation of Islamic identity in what I have referred to as regionalization. The conflict between these two trends can be illustrated by a quotation attributed to the mufti of the North Caucasian Muslim Religious Board:

I think that [Tashkent mufti] Zia ud-din Babakhanov's fetwa do not correspond to Islam. . . . Close ties between the two muftiats were only established [at the Tashkent Muslim Congress in 1970].[71]

The regionalization of Islam involves an attempt by regional religious elites to formulate an effective strategy in response to the local cultural traditions of their respective regions. Considering the markedly different circumstances in which the regional Muslim elites operate, the reworking of locally oriented strategies necessarily implies a differentiation of Islamic identity and practice. As a trend in Islamic reconstruction, regionalization can be demonstrated through a comparison of the North Caucasian and Transcaucasian religious boards.

The North Caucasus is highly heterogeneous in its ethnic composition and linguistic variety.* Historically the primary expression of religiosity in the region is Sufism. The "mosque tendency," characterized by its seminarian tradition and orthodox clergy, is relatively weak. Originating from the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya Sufi lineages, the widespread network of Sufi orders links the North

*The jurisdiction of the North Caucasian Muslim Religious Board includes the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), the Dagestan ASSR, the Karbadin-Balkar ASSR, the North Ossetian ASSR, the Adygei Autonomous Region (AR), and the Karachai-Cherkess AR. In the USSR, these administrative divisions are ethnically based territorial units. Dagestan alone has over thirty nationalities and seven major literary languages.

Caucasus's disparate ethnic, linguistic, clan, and village communities. Sufism is especially important in the region since most mosques in the area were destroyed during the deportation of Chechens and Ingushes in World War II.[72] In these circumstances, the North Caucasian religious board most clearly fits the description of an official Muslim elite isolated from the masses. The Makhachkala board's accommodation to the strong Sufi orders would entail the contamination of its ideological and organizational integrity. For the Makhachkala elite to promote its own authority in the region, it must distinguish itself from the too viable alternative authority to its own definition of Islam—the Sufi movements.[73]

The North Caucasian religious board's definition of Islamic identity and practice is thus orthodox and exclusionary. The practical result of this identification with a pristine Islam is minimal or even no accommodation to local traditions. The North Caucasian board emphasizes mosque worship and the religious authority and primacy of the official cleric. Pilgrimages to local shrines (the *mazar*, or saint's tomb) are discouraged, and the believing population is encouraged to participate in religious rituals performed by official clerics in the state-registered mosques.[74] The board is cautious not to overtly attack the popular Sufi orders, yet a number of its policies reflect its anti-Sufi orientation. Its discouraging of pilgrimages to the mazar—traditional meeting places of Sufis—is a case in point. The North Caucasian clergy has issued a fetwa prohibiting women from leading religious associations. This can be understood as a measure aimed against the numerous Sufi orders that are led by women and whose membership is entirely female.[75]

In response to the cultural particularities of its jurisdiction, the North Caucasian elite has formulated a strategy which is congruent with the conservative, orthodox interpretation of Islam promoted by the Central Asian Muslim clergy. Numerous North Caucasian clerics are trained in the orthodox seminaries of Central Asia, and the Tashkent-based religious board provides logistical and moral support to the Makhachkala administration.[76] In short, the North Caucasian administration has adopted the dogmatic variant of Islamic identity articulated by the Tashkent Muslim establishment.

In contrast to the North Caucasian administration, the Transcaucasian Muslim elite operates under vastly different conditions. Aside from its jurisdiction over Muslims in Armenia and Georgia

(where in any case most Muslims are ethnic Azerbaijanis), the Baku religious board is staffed by Azerbaijanis and serves an Azerbaijani community. The Baku administration can thus be characterized as an Azerbaijani national institution. In Azerbaijan the overlapping of religious and national customs and identities is more common and likely since "Muslim" is coterminous with "Azerbaijani."* The Baku administration is also heir to a religious administration established during the Tsarist period and thus may have some historical legitimacy for the population.[77] Probably more important, however, is that Azerbaijan's Muslim community is predominantly Shi'ite. In contrast to Sunni Islam, formal religious hierarchy is not foreign to the historical development of Shi'ite Islam. Thus the operation of official institutions regulating religious life can be seen as part of Azerbaijan's Shi'ite heritage.[78]

The Muslim Religious Board in Baku thus operates in a culturally much more intelligible environment than the board of the North Caucasus. Since in this sense it enjoys a greater degree of legitimacy in popular eyes, it can more easily accommodate particular popular traditions by appropriating them as its own legitimate religious traditions. For example, while visitations to saints' tombs or other holy sites have been criticized as heretical by the Tashkent and North Caucasian establishments, the Baku Muslim elite has encouraged such visitations by organizing pilgrimages under its auspices to holy sites in Azerbaijan.[79] In general, the intensity of Islamic reconstruction is much less pronounced in the Azerbaijani administration.[80] The Baku elite's appropriation of popular Azerbaijani traditions serves its quest to consolidate its socio-religious authority and legitimacy, whereas the Makhachkala administration must oppose and distinguish itself from widespread popular customs in order to assert its authority.

In general, then, regional differences in the extent of homogenization reflect differences in the strategy adopted for consolidating the regional Muslim elite's authority through the religious boards. Taking into account the historical and sociocultural variations and regional particularities of Islam in the USSR, the boards have to adopt different strategies of religious reconstruction to both maintain their organizational and ideological integrity and defend and extend their socioreligious authority. While the strategies of Islamic reconstruction take different forms in response to different circumstances, this process is moderated by the centripetal, homogenizing tendency promoted by the Uzbek Muslim elite in the Central Asian Muslim Religious Board.

*In contrast, a "Muslim" in the North Caucasus can be a Chechen, Ingush, Avar, etc.

CONCLUSION

Conventional Western studies of Islam in the USSR consistently maintain the fundamental incompatibility of Islam and communism. They assert that Islam and Soviet socialism are mutually exclusive phenomena—if not practically, at least ideologically.[81] Accordingly, observers conclude that either Soviet Islam has become isolated from society through its cooperation with the regime, or that Islam by its mere existence poses a threat to the Soviet state. Interestingly, conventional Soviet and Western studies of Islam tend toward a similar argument that Soviet Islam represents past tradition and a customary way of life; its continued existence in the USSR is explained either as an "objectively baseless" collection of feudal-type remnants or the proud persistence of an entire society and culture despite Soviet efforts to destroy it.

Here I have examined the problem of Islam in the USSR in another way. Rather than assume that Islam is simply a vestigial phenomenon, I have argued that Islam is actively reproduced in Soviet society and institutionally maintained through the Muslim Religious Boards. Islam is not simply an unchanged tradition; rather, through the intervention of the Muslim clerical elites, it represents a novel social identity—a reconstructed Islam.

The reconstruction of Islam not only reflects transformations in the material and ideological conditions of society and in popular self-identification, but it also constitutes a novel understanding of society and social consciousness. This reformulation of religious identity is not a peculiarly Soviet development, but represents a common response to the confrontation of Muslim society with European modernity. Although religious change in Islam is a universal

process, in the USSR the specific forms of Islamic reconstruction reflect the conditions of Soviet society and particular cultural and historical legacy of the country's diverse Islamic heritage. Soviet Muslim elites posit new definitions not only of Islam, but also of Soviet socialism, in which the two are apparently reconciled. Through religious reconstruction, the Soviet Muslim clergy seek to integrate themselves and their communities into the hegemonic Soviet order while simultaneously asserting and reasserting their own socio-religious legitimacy.

This process, however, is not conflict-free. The Muslim elite faces not only obstacles from the regime, which is aware of the role religious innovation plays in the revitalization of Islam, but also from the population, where the Muslim elites must overcome popular alternatives to their reconstructed forms of religious identity. Finally, religious reconstruction is not a unitary process; rather it assumes different forms in response to divergent cultural environments of the several traditionally Muslim regions in the USSR. In short, official Islam in the Soviet Union is not a stagnant, isolated bureaucracy but a dynamic social force responsive to regional variation and local circumstances.

I have emphasized the integrative qualities of Islamic reconstruction while only briefly noting the points of tension and conflict. Similarly, I have concentrated on elite motivations and behavior more in terms of their ideal interests than in their material, pragmatic concerns. This approach is perhaps partially in response to the contrary, dominant trend in the Western study of Soviet Islam. Yet I should qualify my argument further. To date, the religious boards have fairly effectively demarcated a path to integrate their constituencies on two levels—the Muslim and the Soviet. Yet it remains to be seen to what extent the Muslim elite's reconstructed Islam will successfully establish an integrative and complementary identity or become an alternative, subversive source of identity. As I have argued, religious reconstruction is not something that "begins" with traditional religion and "ends" with the establishment of modern religion. Islamic reconstruction is an ongoing response to social change—hence its development is contingent on both sociopolitical conditions and effective clerical strategies. Like the New Soviet Man, the New Soviet Muslim is still being built.

NOTES

1. Some of the recent literature includes John L. Esposito, ed., *Islam and Development: Religion and Sociopolitical Change* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980); Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); James P. Piscatori, ed., *Islam in the Political Process* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). (The article by Fouad Ajami, in all fairness, does not fit well into the Piscatori volume's overall perspective.)
2. Alexandre Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism in Soviet Islam," in *Religion and Modernization in the Soviet Union*, ed. Dennis J. Dunn (Boulder: Westview Press, 1977), p. 258. In his assumption of a transhistorical "Moslem unity," Bennigsen also refers to the "Moslem *millet*" of Tsarist Russia, thus drawing a false analogy between a specific Ottoman institution, the millet system (along with all its sociohistorical implications), and the social structure of the Muslim regions under Tsarist Russian dominion (Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, *Les Musulmans oubliés: L'Islam en U.R.S.S. aujourd'hui* [Paris: Maspero, 1981], pp. 29, 35, as well as in other works by the same authors).
3. For a clear example of this, see M. V. Vagabov, *Islam i voprosy ateisticheskogo vospitaniia* [Islam and problems of atheist education], 2d ed. (Moscow: Vysshaia Shkola, 1982), pp. 109–18.
4. For an exposition of this argument, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967). Mary Douglas and Peter Berger, who often disagree on other issues, also view religion as a cultural system that is socially constructed. For an overview of their contributions to the sociology of religion, see the relevant chapters of *Cultural Analysis* (London: RKP, 1984).
5. For a concise overview of the administrations' operations, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam in the Soviet Union," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, 3 (Autumn 1979).
6. Timur Kocaoglu, "Islam in the Soviet Union: Atheistic Propaganda and 'Unofficial' Religious Activities," *Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs* 5, 1 (January 1984): 147.
7. *Ibid.*
8. See in particular: Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR," *Religion in Communist Lands* 6, 3 (Autumn 1978): 154; Alexandre Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims and the World of Islam," *Problems of Communism*, March–April 1980: 42–43; Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism" p. 253; James Critchlow, "Islam and Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia," in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Pedro Ramet (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press Policy Studies, 1984); and David Nissman,

"Iran and Soviet Islam: The Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan SSRs," *Central Asian Survey* 2, 4 (December 1983): 58.

9. This view is expressed quite bluntly in Bennigsen, "Soviet Muslims," p. 46.
10. Clandestine Sufi orders are among such associations whose activities are not officially condoned and evaluated as more threatening (Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam," pp. 153, 157).
11. Marie Broxup, "Recent Developments in Soviet Islam," *Religion in Communist Lands* 11, 1 (Spring 1983).
12. The significance of such transformation and its divesting of traditional social institutions of their political implications is underscored by Ken Jowitt in his conception of the role of family and village in collectivized Leninist systems. See *The Leninist Response to National Dependency* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies 1978), pp. 63–73. As noted below, Soviet authors explain the development of pro-state orientations among the Muslim clergy in terms of the successful construction of socialism and the destruction of the institutional and social basis of anti-Soviet and antistate activity (A. Akhmedov, *Sotsial'naia doktrina islama* [Moscow: Politizdat, 1982], p. 120).
13. See references in note 8, especially Nissman.
14. All major Soviet studies of Islam in the USSR discuss religious modernization. For some of the best examples, see Nugman Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia islama v SSSR* [The evolution of Islam in the USSR] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1973); T. S. Saidbaev, *Islam i obshchestvo* [Islam and society], 2d ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1984); and *Islam v SSSR* [Islam in the USSR] (Moscow: Mysl', 1983), esp. ch. 8.
15. Vagabov, p. 122.
16. G. Khälilov, "Azärbaïjanda shäriät galyglarynyn müasir väziïïätinä dair" [On the contemporary situation of shariat vestiges in Azerbaijan], *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 3 (1971): 83.
17. This account was based primarily on *Islam v SSSR*, pp. 105–6; Vagabov, pp. 103–26; Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, chs. 1 and 4; and Khälilov.
18. This approach is especially apparent in Vagabov's discussion of the reasons for the maintenance of religious vestiges. According to him, residual Islam is directly explainable in its scope and depth with reference to variations in the material conditions of the traditionally Muslim regions of the USSR (see pp. 109–18). An exception to the crudely materialist theory of Soviet Islam is Saidbaev.
19. Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, "Islam in the Soviet Union: Attempts at Modernization," *Religion in Communist Lands* 2, 4–5 (July–October 1974): 19.
20. Bennigsen, "Modernization and Conservatism," p. 251.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 259.

22. Islamic reconstruction thus reflects not simply the *material* but also the *ideal* interests of the Soviet Muslim elite. See Ken Jowitt's elaboration of Weber's distinction between ideal and material interests in "Scientific Socialist Regimes in Africa: Political Differentiation, Avoidance and Unawareness," in *Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Assessment*, ed. Carl G. Rosberg and Thomas M. Callaghy (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1979), pp. 148–49.
23. In this sense, I agree with Michael Taussig that novel religious concepts are not simply vestiges of traditional superstitions. He overstates his case, however, by qualifying these reconstructions as "precise formulations" and "systematic critiques" of the social order. Moreover, he tries too hard to emphasize that these religious innovations represent articulate rejections of the incipient capitalist mode of production, whereas clearly in the case of Soviet Islam, the underlying motive of reconstruction is accommodation, not opposition. See his "The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry: Devil's Labor and the Baptism of Money," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19 (April 1977), especially the conclusion.
24. Madzhidov, "Modernistskie tendentsii v islame v usloviiakh sotsializma" [Modernist tendencies in Islam in the conditions of socialism], *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma* 31 (1983): 223–24.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
26. Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study* (London: RKP, 1974), p. 148. My use of the constitution/reflection dialectic follows from the discussion of culture and cultural production in Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 11–20ff.
27. Many Western observers view Islam as centrifugal precisely because they define Islamic and Soviet identities to be incongruous and view these identities in reified terms. It thus follows that a reassertion of Islam is *logically* anti-Soviet in nature. For a concise exposition of this perspective, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Marie Broxup, *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).
28. This distinction is put forth by Abner Cohen in *Two-Dimensional Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 3–4, 26–30.
29. Steven Lukes, "Political Ritual and Social Integration," *Sociology* 9, 2: 302.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 305.
31. For examples of the Muslim elite's positions along this line, see *Islam v SSSR*, pp. 108–14; and Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, esp. ch. 2.
32. Similarly, Turner (pp. 137–50) points out that Islamic reform establishes a religious identity that is congruent with sociopolitical change in modern societies.
33. For an overview in English, see Carrère-d'Encausse.
34. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 (1984): 11. The Soviet Muslim elite's reassertion of the religious authority of these seminal writings is a feature common to

the scripturalist or reformist movement in other Muslim societies. The recourse to religious scriptures and Islamic law, moreover, reflects Islam's rational quality and compatibility with the modern age. See Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 65ff., and Turner, pp. 146–47.

35. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, pp. 11–17. For an analysis of the variant uses of jihad in different sociopolitical contexts, see Hannah R. Rahman, "The Concept of Jihad in Egypt: A Study of *Majallat al-Azhar* (1936–1982)," in *Islam, Nationalism and Radicalism in Egypt and the Sudan*, ed. G. R. Warburg and U. M. Kupferschmidt (New York: Praeger, 1983).
36. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, pp. 39–42.
37. In order to justify the doctrine of ijtihad, or rather to establish it as a fundamental direction in Islam, the Muslim elites cite historical Muslim leaders such as Abu Hanifa (767–800) and Shihabeddin Marjani (1818–99) to portray the legitimacy of this doctrine. For examples, see Ashirov, *Evoliulsiia*, as well as relevant articles from the journal *Muslims of the Soviet East*.
38. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1984): 12. (Here and below, I have edited the prose in all selections from the English-language edition of this journal.)
39. *Ibid*. 4 (1983): 3.
40. Muslims can thus participate in revolutionary transformations and maintain their Muslim identity. This perspective permeates pronouncements of official Soviet clerics: "During the past 60 years, the previously backward peoples of the Soviet East have indeed attained historic success in economic and cultural construction and have shown the entire world that *Muslims, too, can attain the heights of progress*" (*Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 [1977]: 1, as quoted in Akhmedov, pp. 124–25; emphasis added).
41. Khälilov, pp. 85–86.
42. These and other examples abound in Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, ch.5.
43. This issue is discussed extensively in Nugman Ashirov, *Islam i natsii* [Islam and nations] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1975). For a shorter but valuable statement, see A. M. Shükürov and S. Ä. Mähärrämov, "Dini vä milli aïrysechkilik galyglarynyn älagäsinä dair" [On the connection of the vestiges of religious and national prejudice], *Azärbaïjan SSR Elmlär Akademiïasy, Khäbärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 2 (1980).
44. Islam v SSSR, pp. 30, 39; Shükürov and Mähärrämov, pp. 125–26ff.
45. *Ibid*., p. 126.
46. For example, with reference to the Uigurs, one author posits a contradiction between religious and national identity and notes a "more powerful attachment to a supra-national grouping, that of the community of Muslims" (Jon Soper, "Unofficial Islam: A Muslim Minority in the USSR," *Religion in Communist Lands* 7, 4 [Winter 1979]: 229). The uncritical and ahistorical assumption of a fixed, all-encompassing Islamic identity is common not only in the conventional literature on Islam in the USSR, but also in studies of Soviet nationality policy.

47. In some respects, this accords with Gregory Massel's notion of "tactical nation-states" in Soviet developmental strategy. See *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). For a shorter exposition of this perspective, see his "Modernization and National Policy in Soviet Central Asia: Problems and Prospects," in *The Dynamics of Soviet Politics*, ed. Paul Cocks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).
48. Jadid refers to the Islamic reform movement in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Tsarist Russia that originated in Muslim efforts for educational reform (hence *usul-i jadid*, or "new method" schools). For useful short biographies of the major reformers, see Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush, *Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 191–211. Most studies of this movement are inadequate, but among the better examples are Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *Réforme et révolution chez les Musulmans de I'Empire russe, Bukhara 1867–1924* (Paris: A. Colin, 1966), Cahiers de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, No. 141; and Serge A. Zenkovsky, *Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960). Purification of historically "corrupted" religion and the reassertion of an "authentic" Islam in opposition to popular expressions of religion are common elements in movements for Islamic reconstruction throughout the Muslim world. In part, it is this "corruption" of Islam that serves as rationale for the reconstruction (in religious language, purification) of religion. See Geertz, pp. 56–89; Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 193–234; and Turner, pp. 144–50.
49. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 1 (1984): 17.
50. *Ibid*. 1 (1983): 1–2.
51. *Ibid*. 3 (1983): 7–8.
52. *Ibid*. 3 (1983): 7–8, and 4 (1983): 8.
53. *Ibid*. 3 (1982): 17.
54. See, for example, A. Vakhabov, *Muslims in the USSR* (Moscow: Novosti, 1980), pp. 23–33.
55. Vakhabov, pp. 25–26. In this respect, it is not clear if the Transcaucasian administration similarly has representative offices for the Muslim minorities of Georgia and Armenia under its jurisdiction.
56. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 2 (1982): 7; emphasis added.
57. *Ibid*. 2 (1983): 10.
58. Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, introduction.

59. R. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri" [The character of modernism in Shi'ism], *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 4 (1979): 41.
60. Islam v SSSR, p. 49.
61. For many instances of these differences, see Saidbaev.
62. The role of official, "orthodox" religious institutions in the homogenization of Islamic worship is a theme of M. Demidov's study of Islam in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Turkmenistan, *Sufizm v Turkmenii: Evoliutsiia i perezhitki* [Sufism in Turkmenistan: Evolution and vestiges] (Ashkhabad: Ylym, 1978).
63. Others have also noted the "hegemonic" or "imperialist" position of the Uzbeks (Bennigsen and Broxup, pp. 139–40).
64. Apparently the Uzbek language is so described in the journal of the Tashkent administration. The reference comes from Vagabov, p. 126, and Madzhidov, p. 236.
65. This is not a simple achievement. Many Soviet authors point out regional variations in religious expression and note the conflicts that arise from these variations. For example, the Leningrad mosque's newly appointed religious leader, who was educated in Central Asia, was removed from his position by his flock after he prohibited the sale of tickets to a music concert and exhorted his parishioners not to watch television. Also, while the birth of Muhammad is widely celebrated in private homes by clerics in Tatarstan, the Central Asian religious board has restricted the observance of this ritual to mosques (Ashirov, *Evoliutsiia*, pp. 10–22).
66. *Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 (1984) 7–8.
67. *Ibid.* 2 (1983): 6.
68. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri," p. 42.
69. Bennigsen and Broxup, pp. 104–7.
70. As cited in Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "'Official' Islam," p. 155.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
72. For discussion of North Caucasus Islam, see A. Avksent'ev, *Islam na severnom Kavkaze* [Islam in the North Caucasus], 2d ed. (Stavropol', 1984); *Kharakter religioznosti i problemy ateisticheskogo vospitaniia* [The character of religiosity and problems of atheistic education] (Groznyi, 1979); M. Z. Magomedov, "Iz istorii resheniia natsional'nogo i religioznogo voprosov na severnom Kavkaze" [From the history of the revolution of the national and religious questions in the North Caucasus], *Voprosy nauchnogo ateizma* 14 (1973). On this last point, see especially Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, "Islam parallèlle en Union Soviétique," *Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique* 21, 1 (January–March 1980): 53–55; Marie Broxup, "Islam and Atheism in the North Caucasus," *Religion in Communist Lands* 9, 1–2 (Spring 1981): 40–41.

73. Avksent'ev stresses that the reconstructionist (modernist) tendency in the North Caucasus is evident solely in the official clergy of the religious board and that this tendency is weakly reflected in the practicing religious communities. In this region, he stresses, "tradition prevails over modernism" (pp. 251–52).
74. This was underlined in a recent meeting with parishioners in Buinaksk: "Proper accomplishment of namazes in a mosque is valued by Allah much more than namazes performed in homes" (*Muslims of the Soviet East* 4 [1983]: 8).
75. Saidbaev, p. 240.
76. Under the rubric "Theologians Exchange Experience," a recent article in *Muslims of the Soviet East* (4 [1983]) provides numerous examples of such assistance.
77. A religious administration was first established in Baku in 1872 and operated until February 1917 (G. Mustafaïev, "Charizm vä Islam [Azärbaïjan, XX äsrin ävvälläri]" [Tsarism and Islam in early twentieth-century Azerbaijan], *Azärbaïjan dövlät universiteti, Elmi äsärlär, Tarikh, hügug vä fälsäfä seriïasy* 4 (1973): 18–19.
78. The creation of official religious institutions under the Safavid dynasty can be understood as a character-defining event for the later development of Shi'ite Islam, especially for Azerbaijani Islam. Under the Savafids, the official clergy was in close alliance but subordinate to the state. This clergy-state coalition began to disintegrate under the Qajar dynasty, but northern Azerbaijan (today's Soviet Azerbaijan) was already annexed to the Russian empire in the early stages of Qajar rule. See Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran, 1785–1906* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 5–40. For a review of the institutional development of Shi'ite Islam with particular reference to Azerbaijan, see R. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä räsmi vä geïri-räsmi ruhaniliïn fäaliïätinin kharakteri" [The character and activity of the official and nonofficial clergy in Shi'ism], in *Islam tarikhdä vä müasir dövrdä (Elmi äsärlärin tematik mäjmuäsi)* (Baku: Azärbaïjan Dövlät Universitetinin Näshri, 1981).
79. Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri," p. 44. In fact, Aslanova ("Shiälikdä räsmi vä geïri-räsmi," p. 54) includes an official "holy site" along with Azerbaijan's officially registered ten Shi'ite, two Sunni, and five mixed mosques.
80. The point is confirmed in Aslanova, "Shiälikdä modernizmin kharakteri." Precise information on the training of the Azerbaijani clergy is not available, but the fact that the sheikh ul-Islam of the Transcaucasian religious board was educated in Mashad suggests a more localized, non-Central Asian orientation toward Islamic reconstruction.
81. Hélène Carrère-d'Encausse, *Decline of an Empire: The Soviet Socialist Republics in Revolt* (New York: Newsweek Books, 1979), pp. 263–64.