

The state's Conceptualization of Islam in Soviet Central Asia, 1954-64

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In the Spring of 1960, an author named Kamil Ikramov writing in the popular Soviet journal *Science and Religion* embarked upon an adventure to Khorezm, a far-flung region of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (UzSSR) with an ancient history spanning thousands of years. His odyssey began in the airport of Tashkent, the capital of the UzSSR and the USSR's fourth largest city. The airport "reminds one of Vnukovo [airport] in Moscow" with "its great halls, walls of glass, and announcements in three languages: Uzbek, Russian and English (for tourists)." After making more approbative observations, Ikramov interrupted the idyllic picture with a cry of horror. "What a shame!" exclaimed a man sitting next to me. "What a shame for us all!" All eyes were fixed on a woman completely covered in a "parandja".¹ She, along with her young husband, were waiting to board the flight to Khorezm. This was Ikramov's introduction by fire to the unspeakable backwardness of Central Asia.

In Urganch, the capital of Khorezm, Ikramov was met by "Pir Niyaz Khodja [sic]", a man who in the May 1960 edition of the magazine *Science and Religion* had identified himself in an emotional personal essay as a former "saint of great renown" and "the twenty-first descendant of Muhammad himself" whose faith in Islam had "burned out". With Pir Niyaz as his guide, a wide-eyed Ikramov observed first-hand the strength in the region of Islam, which over the centuries had "brought the native people nothing but sadness and awful destitution" after annihilating its more benevolent predecessor, Zoroastrianism. Lustful and greedy "mullas and ishans"² still preyed upon what other Soviet sources consistently referred to as 'the backward part of the population'. Relating various rumors that had reached his ears during the trip, the author referred to numerous instances of these spiritual figures stealing livestock and money through means of

¹ "Parandja": In Russian usage, usually a generic reference to an unspecified variety of veils donned by Muslim women.

² "Ishan" (Uzbek & Tajik, *eshon*): An honorific title with varying connotations across Central Asia. In Soviet usage, ishan referred exclusively to social "parasites" such as the shrine caretakers and prayer readers referred to here. It derives from the Persian *iyshan* ('they'). The word 'mulla' (Uzbek, *mullo*), effaced from the vocabulary of modern Uzbek (but not all Central Asian languages) for historical reasons, served a similar function.

deception and extortion. One such social parasite, a certain Vaisov who was a prayer reader at the famous Mukhtar Vali shrine not far from Khiva, was specifically portrayed as a pervert:

"Women who are sent [on pilgrimages to the shrine] by their husbands due to [a wish to be cured of] their barrenness sometimes stay in Vaisov's hut for a few nights. And if one notes that he is young and healthy, then it should be of no surprise that exactly nine months after the 'healing' they give birth." At the same time, Ikramov found much cause for optimism based on what he saw. In recent years, the number of females in the regional workforce had risen tremendously. He took special pride in noting the names of Muslim women who had become caretakers of pigs. Much larger numbers of men and women had earned tractor operation certificates, something which the author assured his readers was antithetical to the tenets of Islam. Closing this account of his adventures in Khorezm, Ikramov qualified his cautious optimism by noting that "little has been done in Khorezm to spread new Soviet traditions and rituals".

In its calculated offensiveness, this article in many ways closely matched Soviet anti-religious literature of previous decades. During the widespread anarchy and terror of the 1920s and '30s, mosques, shrines, and their affiliated clergy and caretakers had suffered heavily in the course of violent Soviet anti-religious initiatives. The destruction of mosques as well as imprisonment and murder of religious figures had been accompanied by attempts to win the masses away from Islam through the non-violent means of the printed word, for one. Journals such as *Bezbozhnik* ('Godless', established 1925) and *Antireligioznik* (est. 1926) enjoyed wide distribution and the establishment of satellite publications for limited republican distribution (e.g., *Bezbozhnik Uzbekistana*) represented at least a token acknowledgement of the state's desire to take a multi-faceted approach to the elimination of religion. Satirical and offensive pieces such as the one quoted above featured prominently in *Bezbozhnik* and therefore did not have believers, whose animosity towards the Communist state's anti-religious policies was more likely than not to increase in the face of such cynical attacks on cherished spiritual practices, as

³ Unless otherwise noted, all preceding quotations are from "Kamill Ikramov", "Yarkii Svet - Rezkie Teni" in *Nauka i Religii* (July 1960) pp. 21-27

their targeted audience. Rather, these articles were intended to encourage and strengthen the resolve of anti-religious agitators in entities such as the Union of the Militant Godless, an official body active in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁴ A propaganda organization, its chief areas of operation included publication of anti-religious brochures in indigenous languages (a difficult enterprise given the acute shortage of native cadres in the Union's ranks), as well as organizing atheist events such as talks, lectures, and film-screenings for the general public. All these developing media of anti-religious propaganda utilized the imagery of Muslim clergy as an exploitative and manipulative class.

On the face of things, therefore, this article did not represent a departure from past anti-Islamic literature. Certainly, the basic tone of this and other polemical articles from the 1950s and 1960s drew entirely upon previous work of a similar vein. At the same time, important changes were taking place during this period with respect to how the state understood its attack on Islam. In comparison to work of earlier decades, one finds the greatest difficulty in detecting these changes between the condescending lines of the innuendo, slander, and well-worn stereotypes of polemical literature. The picture becomes clearer, however, when one analyzes these articles in light of Soviet Orientalist literature from this period, as well as confidential communications within the government bureaucracy. What emerges is a broad though inconsistent desire to understand and explain religion in its totality as a foundation for the enterprise of destroying it. Stereotypes about Islam and Muslims, observations of Muslim life recorded by party cadres, and even Marxist ideology no longer furnished an adequate base to paint the kind of all-encompassing picture of Islam that the state apparently felt it required. There are numerous foundations for this hypothesis.

First, the Soviet government clearly became more preoccupied with basing its anti-religious measures on some sort of scientific edifice. Broadly speaking, in the violence of previous decades mosque closures and the murder of clergy had struck the Party as obvious measures that would have the desired effect. This is not to say that the 1920s and 1930s had not witnessed peaks and valleys in anti-religious measures, or that much discussion and debate within the Party had not gone into how it should attack

⁴ Shoshana Keller, *To Moscow, Not Mecca*, p. 161

Islam. However, the dynamics of the Khrushchev era saw a number of important changes; no doubt, these stemmed in large part from lessons perceived to have been learned from earlier campaigns under Stalin. Whereas the Soviet state's understanding of Islam under Stalin had been more qualitatively casual (i.e., based on observation and Marxist assumptions) and dependent on statistics to a minimal extent, the years after WWII saw a vastly increased prominence accorded to statistics that reached its peak under Khrushchev. Confidential reports from party investigators reported not only on the number of mosques, both registered and unregistered, in Central Asian republics and localities, but also developed highly detailed statistical reports on 'itinerant' clergy, shrines, and pilgrims. The numbers are generally too modest to carry any serious meaning; however, it is the state's preoccupation with these statistics rather than the accuracy of the numbers themselves that speaks volumes about its increased interest in understanding all aspects of Islam and Muslim life. That these statistical initiatives directly influenced the state's decisions on how to conduct anti-religious campaigns is no more apparent than in its attack on shrine pilgrimage. Soviet records from the 1920s and '30s rarely discuss shrine pilgrimage as an issue separate from that of mosque attendance; one can surmise that increased statistical activity shed light on the centrality of pilgrimage to Muslim life in Central Asia. This revelation led to the pronouncement of a Central Committee declaration "on ending pilgrimages to so called 'holy places'" in 1958. Ideologically motivated sociological investigations wrapped in a cloud of methodological terminology also served a very similar function; although not strictly statistical, these initiatives sought to shed light through scientific analysis on areas of Muslim life which the state did not feel it had a complete conceptual grasp of.

Second, a perceived need to formulate a qualitative definition of Islam led to an increased level of authority becoming vested in the scholarship of Soviet Orientalists⁵. A few prominent Orientalists accepted the charge of formulating an Islam that the Soviet government and Communists could apprehend. Central to this enterprise was a formal separation by the Orientalists of legitimate Islamic practices from un-Islamic fabrications that had fallen under the rubric of Islam within the consciousness of 'the backward part of the population'. The supreme irony here derived from the fact that polemical literature

⁵ Russian, *vostokoved*. The Russian word for 'Islamicist' (*islamoved*) also had wide currency in this period.

from virtually every decade of Soviet power described *all* Islamic practices and beliefs as illegitimate because of their fabrication by an exploitative ecclesiastical clique working in tangent with feudal or bourgeois ruling classes. In other words, the charge upon the Orientalists to articulate a pseudo-canonized Islam left them with little choice but to try and work around the basic identification by the Soviet regime of religion as constructed in all respects. This paradox meant in practice that the Orientalist formulation of a legitimate Islam did not always correspond to that propagated by SADUM⁶ or internationally revered Islamic institutions such as al-Azhar in Cairo. One example of this was the appropriation of practices and concepts specific to Muslims in Central Asia to the universal Soviet-imagined Islam. By investing himself with a de-facto *ijozat*⁷, the Soviet Orientalist in effect established himself as yet another pillar of authority in the constellation of respectable Islamic knowledge. Soviet Orientalism thus came to legitimize anti-religious policies and was in turn strengthened by the adoption of those policies, playing a crucial role that was acknowledged in many if not all echelons of the Soviet government and that was without precedent before the Khrushchev era. The fact that Orientalists occasionally disagreed on what actually constituted legitimate Islam is the strongest testament of all to the fact that a process of formulating a definition of Islam was very much underway.

⁶During the mid-1940s, the Soviet Government created the four Muslim Spiritual Directorates that were intended to supervise officially sanctioned Muslim life in the USSR and, at least in Central Asia, to replace the ecclesiastical hierarchies that had been destroyed in previous decades. In 1943, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet approved the creation of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakstan (SADUM) This was the same year that the Committee for the Affairs of the Orthodox Church (CAROC) was set up by the Council of People's Commissars; the Committee for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), in effect the body supervising all non-Russian Orthodox religious activity in the USSR, received its statute in 1944. In 1967, the two committees were joined into a single body, the Committee for Religious Affairs (CRA) under the USSR Council of Ministers. Yaacov Ro'i, Islam in the Soviet Union, pp. 12, 59 & 104. A severely understaffed and underfunded body, CARC (and later CRA) devoted most its energy in Central Asia to monitoring SADUM on the one hand and non-SADUM religious activity on the other. CARC fulfilled its mandate through regional representatives (Russian, *upolnomochennyye*; Uzbek, *vakillar*) in republican and provincial (*oblast'*, ASSR, AO) capitals who in practice generally feared local officials more than their CARC superiors. Possessing little decision-making authority of its own, CARC passed on petitions from SADUM to the CPSU Central Committee, and a variety of bodies, including the KGB, read the reports of its Moscow-based chairman. Satisfying the committee's demands occupied and continues to occupy much of the daily work of registered imams.

⁷Tajik & Uzbek, *ijozat*; Arabic, *'ijaza*: Permission given by an Islamic scholar and/or Sufi master to a disciple/student to teach and/or interpret Islamic theology. See Frank and Mamatov, Dictionary of Central Asian Islamic Terms, p. 54

Finally, polemical literature such as the article by Ikramov came to occupy its own unique niche under Khrushchev, not as an independent means of defining Islam but rather as a complement to the work of Orientalists and bureaucratic statisticians. Deeply hostile to Islam and generally lacking even the most basic training in or academic exposure to Muslim history, these writers shared the common goal of depriving Islam of any possible positive associations. On the one hand, their articles and sarcastic short stories deliberately slandered certain practices that Muslims might regard as holy and therefore left no doubt as to where their sympathies rested; on the other, they probably succeeded in entertaining and encouraging those in the reading public with atheist sympathies and many others as well. Although polemical articles did not rely upon any serious attempt to learn about Islam or Muslim practices, they did begin to serve a legitimizing function that added credibility to the activities and ideas of more serious, organized, and relatively knowledgeable anti-Muslim activists. In some cases, these polemicists went so far as to follow the Orientalists' lead and develop their own original theories about Islam. For example, the writing of one such author reveals numerous assumptions (generally left unexplained) about what characteristics distinguished a 'real' imam from a wandering charlatan. Such ideas expressed by one polemicist could just as easily be contradicted by the assumptions of one of his colleagues, sometimes even writing in the same journal. Another article, for example, identified all imams, whether registered or unregistered, as identical in perfidy, ignorance, goals, and background. This demonstrates that the participation in anti-Islamic initiatives of anti-religious writers contributing to popular journals hardly represented a centrally organized endeavor. Indeed, the prevalence of some degree of chaos and lack of coordination in the area of planning constituted the hallmark of anti-religious measures both during the Khrushchev years and in earlier decades.

Broadly speaking, then, the Soviet state under Khrushchev appears to have relied to varying degrees on three categories or domains of contributors in its effort to gain a better understanding of Islam: Orientalists, the bureaucracy, and polemicists. Of course, not all authors and reports necessarily fell neatly into these three categories. Confidential archival sources teem with slanderous references to Islam that harken back to the style of the most effective polemicists; one can hardly call these documents polemical in a

meaningful sense, though, since their target audiences consisted of a severely limited circle of bureaucrats hostile to religion. Some reports in popular journals combine statistical exactness with woeful ignorance of Islam, therefore making it difficult to place them within the three arenas mentioned above. Although the frames of reference of these three domains as defined in this article do not necessarily do justice to the colorful variety of the Soviet material purporting to define Islam, they can claim to generally account for the patterns emerging from these sources. It is important to make this point clear because one might legitimately ask when faced with the tremendous variety of opinions and approaches within different sectors of Soviet society if it is possible to make *any* meaningful generalizations about what 'the Party' or 'the state' thought about Islam. While acknowledging the complexity and multi-layered nature of the problem, this article seeks to bring all these sources together and to the extent possible attack the very problem of what conclusions 'the Party' finally reached vis-à-vis Islam. Certainly, not only the nebulosity of these three domains but also significant overlapping and, to a lesser extent, disagreement between them compound the question's intricacy.

It is equally important to note that the actors involved in this endeavor did not view their activities in the light in which this article shall present them. Although anti-Islamic measures certainly sought to tighten the state's control over all aspects of Muslim life among Muslims living under Soviet rule, and although many of the principal actors within the three abovementioned spheres saw participation in this enterprise as an opportunity for career advancement, the Party also had in its ranks individuals who genuinely believed in the dark image of religion advertised by Communism. It is difficult today to look back at the Khrushchev era and convincingly distinguish the altruistic anti-religious activists from the opportunistic ones; more likely than not, elements of both types of sentiment influenced the work of most contributors. Rather than taking an overly moralistic approach into the psychology of individual actors, then, this article seeks to understand the assumptions behind and foundations of the Soviet presentation of Islam that emerged under Khrushchev. This approach will shed light on a relatively understudied area of the Soviet state's relationship with religion. I also hope that it will provide an interesting perspective on how the Soviet *modus vivendi* vis-à-vis the idea of Islam established a conceptual precedent, the confines of which perhaps have molded

discussion on Islam in Central Asia down to the present day in a manner which, to say the least, has not been salubrious. An understanding of this crucial period in the state's relationship with religion is also likely to reveal much about later developments during the Brezhnev era. As a backdrop for placing these developments within their context, though, this article will first provide an in-depth discussion of the chronology of and major actors behind the anti-religious measures that developed under Khrushchev. To this end, it seems appropriate to start with an entity that in one way or another rested much closer to the hearts of the Soviet State's largely Russian central administrators: the Russian Orthodox Church.

Approaches to Islam and Russian Orthodoxy during the Khrushchev Era

At least through the end of the Khrushchev era, the Soviet Communist Party regarded the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) as without question the single most threatening religious entity among those faiths with influence over Soviet citizens. The state enshrined this belief in the bureaucracy by creating two administrative committees in the mid 1940s (the Committee for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Committee for the Affairs of Religious Cults - see n. 6), one to oversee the activities of the ROC and Russian Orthodox believers and the other to fulfill the same function for a number of other organized religions practiced on the territory of the USSR (including Islam). These names implied, for one, that the ROC had a status different than that of a "cult" in the eyes of the state. Whereas CAROC oversaw only one faith, CARC's statute gave it authority to monitor Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Gregorian Armenian, Old Believer, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Lutheran activity, as well as "sectarian faiths".⁸ A 1954 Central Committee decree on religion referred to "Christianity, Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and religious sectarianism" as foci of the Party's anti-religious efforts.⁹ Both the establishment of CAROC and the idea of the ROC

⁸ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 12

⁹ "O krupnykh nedostatkakh v nauchno-ateisticheskoi propagande i merakh ee uluchsheniia". Postanovlenie TsK KPSS 7 Iiulia 1954 g. in *Zakon, religiia, tserkov'*, p. 54

as utterly separate even from "Christianity" therefore contributed to its all-important prominence in the eyes of the state.¹⁰

In earlier decades, the Party's approach to the ROC had in large part colored its attitude toward Islam in a conceptual sense if not in a chronological one. Both Russian Orthodoxy and Islam had suffered heavily as a result of officially sanctioned thievery, the murder of ecclesiastical representatives, closure of educational institutions, and destruction of churches and mosques. Whereas Muslim ecclesiastical administrations attached to the khanates of Bukhara, Qo'qon, and Khiva had disappeared with the effacement of those polities, the ROC had at least maintained some admittedly modest semblance of structural integrity even at the height of the Great Terror. This, of course, stemmed in large part from Orthodoxy's much more canonically centralized character vis-à-vis Islam. (As it turned out, these measures did not have the desired effect, i.e. the conversion of the entire Soviet population to atheism, on Orthodox or Muslim believers.) In other words, pure violence constituted one common denominator informing Soviet policy toward all religions.

The similarities did not end there, however. At the center, at least, it appears that important anti-religious activists generally had the ROC primarily in mind when devising their plans. Thus, the aforementioned Central Committee decree from July 1954, "Concerning Serious Inadequacies in Scientific-Atheist Work and Means toward its Improvement", referred specifically to certain Christian practices while barely mentioning Islam. Numerous references to "the Church" appear, and the decree laments the use of "choruses and orchestras" by priests with "the goal of raising the number of visitors to churches".¹¹ The implication is that the Church began to rely more on these elements of worship as an active means of challenging Soviet authority, even though choruses and orchestras ordinarily figure prominently in the services of many Christian faiths. Although the decree never mentions Islam by name, it does contain two references to "pilgrimage to so-called 'holy places'"; the second of these singles out Central Asia as

¹⁰ Ro'i, Islam in the Soviet Union, p. 9 n. 1: "As one CARC *upolnomochennyi* said, it was impossible to discuss the religious movement of the various faiths without relating to the ROC, which both influenced the dynamics of the other faiths and filled a leading role in the restoration of the population's religious feeling." Elsewhere, bureaucrats described Russian Orthodoxy as the only religion practiced in the USSR that had not been imported from abroad. See *ibid.*, p. 32 *I'Zakon, religiia, tserkov'*, p. 51

a special area of concern in this respect.¹² The importance of the inclusion of pilgrimage should not be overlooked; the decree's authors could have chosen to cast the spotlight on a multitude of other practices common to Orthodox and Muslim believers (e.g., folk medicine) but notably chose only this one form of religious devotion.

It appears likely that the mention of pilgrimage, and the specific desire to attack the ROC and Islam by maligning and wiping out a practice the two faiths shared, was the work of a group within the central bureaucracy that had formed around Khrushchev during the 1940s. The CPSU General Secretary undoubtedly accorded greater negative prominence to the ROC than to Islam, even going so far (after much convincing from CAROC) as to meet once with the Orthodox Patriarch Alexei and Metropolitan Nikolai on May 17, 1958.¹³ It seems that the Mufti of SADUM¹⁴ during this period, Shaykh Ziyovuddinkhon ibn Eshon Bobokhon, was never granted such an honor.¹⁵ Khrushchev greeted the heads of the ROC coldly and subsequently denied almost all the requests the two Patriarchal representatives put before him.¹⁶ Scholars have recently begun to question the widely held view of the Khrushchev era as a 'thaw' of liberalization compared to Stalin's rule. Certainly, violence become less popular within the Party as a means of stopping or impeding religious practices. However, Khrushchev had strong convictions with respect to religion and may very well have regarded himself as a purer and above all more consistent Communist than Stalin. In September of 1955, for example, he told a group of visiting French members of parliament that "we will continue to be atheists. We will strive to free the larger part of the population from the opium of religious insanity, which still exists [in the USSR]."¹⁷ Clearly, his desire to de-Stalinize the Soviet Union demands a more nuanced reading than the simple paradigm of a society breathing easily after decades of terror.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 51

¹³ M. V. Shkarovskii. *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' i Sovetskoe Gosudarstvo v 1943-64 gg.*, p. 64

¹⁴ A Mufti, elected at administrative meetings of leading clergy (presumably pending Party approval), headed each of the four Muslim spiritual directorates.

¹⁵ Certainly such a meeting would have been mentioned in the book one of the Mufti's sons wrote on his father's professional life. See Shamsuddinkhon Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon* (Tashkent, 2001)

¹⁶ Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, p. 64

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 56

A commonly accepted element of the chronology of Khrushchev's tenure derives from the notion of the years 1954-57 as a 'liberalization' with respect to religion and of 1958-64 as Khrushchev's 'anti-religious campaign'.¹⁸ It seems likely that the aforementioned Central Committee declaration of July 1954 had been the work of Khrushchev and his constituency. This was followed, however, by a radically different decree in November of the same year: "On Mistakes in Scientific-Atheist Propaganda Conducted among the Population". In the document, local party agitators and Party cells were chastised for "permitting insulting attacks on clergy and believers observing religious rituals". The document called on local authorities to cease employing "lazy procrastinators [*khalturshchiki*]" who only knew "anecdotes and fairy tales about priests" as anti-religious agitators.¹⁹ Very likely, the two apparently contradictory declarations did not emerge from the same source; different visions of how to approach the problem of faith among Soviet citizens clashed with one another. In the early years of Khrushchev's tenure, complex forces and active disagreement within the Party made it difficult for one figure to push a specific agenda while overriding dissent. The November 1954 declaration very much matched the moderate line advocated by senior bureaucrats such as Puzin²⁰ and Karpov, the chairmen of CARC and CAROC respectively. In 1958, however, Khrushchev was in a position to push through an anti-religious agenda; one could not have said the same of the hardliners in 1954, whether Khrushchev then formally adhered to their ranks or not. Two 1958 decrees from the Central Committee, one on increasing scientific atheistic work and the other on ending shrine pilgrimage, are considered to have inaugurated Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign formally.²¹ These dates, however, may not accurately reflect the full scope of the anti-religious atmosphere of the Khrushchev years for two main reasons.

First, the notion of an historical anti-religious "campaign" enshrined in well-defined dates is complicated by the prevalence of crests and valleys in the ferocity of the

¹⁸ See Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 203-214 and Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, pp. 55 & 67

¹⁹ "Ob oshibkakh v provedenii nauchno-ateisticheskoi propagandyi sredi naseleniia." Postanovlenie TsK KPSS 10 Noiabria 1954 g. in *Zakon, religii, tserkov'*, p. 57. Ironically perhaps, some Russian émigrés to Central Asia used *khalturshchiki* as a racist epithet for indigenous people.

²⁰ I. V. Polianskii chaired CARC from its creation in 1943 until his death in 1956, when Alexei Puzin took over. Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 12

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 205

measures taken as well as by the tense environment of the supposed 'liberalization' of 1954-57. During the entire Khrushchev period, and after World War II as well, administrative measures (*administrirovanie*) and administrative pressure (*nazhim*) constituted local Party organs' weapons of choice when putting pressure on religious organizations and/or individual believers. *Nazhim* and *administrirovanie* represented a conceptual umbrella under the rubric of which one could understand a host of anti-religious actions carried out by local authorities. These might include arbitrary mosque, shrine, or church closures, calculatedly crippling taxation (on the sale of candles in Orthodox Churches, for example), introduction of unreasonable health or safety codes as a prerequisite for utilizing premises for worship, denial of a whole variety of petitions from individual believers, firing believers (especially Communists) and registered imams from their jobs, calibrating or simply not defining the standards for assessing registered imams' compliance with certain regulations, setting down stricter administrative regulations for SADUM activities, and in some cases fining or even imprisoning 'renegade' and registered imams deemed undesirable. The preference for *administrirovanie* over arrest and violence makes it more difficult to gauge when the really 'bad times' occurred. First and foremost, this is because local authorities frequently acted independently of the center in matters related to religion; it has already been noted that in practice CARC and CAROC *upolnomochennye* at the republican and regional levels felt compelled to satisfy local officials such as republican and *obkom*²² secretaries rather than Puzin or Karpov in Moscow.²³ Many of these authorities frequently felt the need to limit the number of legally operating mosques because they feared large numbers of houses of worship appearing in their jurisdictions might adversely affect their future career paths.²⁴

Having said all this, it will not be denied that bureaucrats favoring a defined and reasonable place for organized religion in Soviet society still wielded considerable influence in the first three years of Khrushchev's tenure and, to a lesser extent,

²²*obkom*: The bureau of the republican Communist Party administratively responsible for the government of a given province (*oblast'*).

²³ Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, p. 76: "Local authorities conferred less and less with CAROC, whose representatives were forced to obey the orders of regional or republican authorities and not their direct superiors." Also, see a Central Committee memo elucidating the limits of CARC's authority in decision making matters related to individual religious organizations in RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 127 l. 25.

²⁴ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 189

afterwards. The point here is not to challenge the notion of a campaign but rather to nuance it; a virulently anti-religious faction within the bureaucracy did indeed gain more authority after 1957. However, the dual facts that after 1957 they still had to contend with those advocating a moderate line, and that the hard-liners succeeded in pushing through their agenda on numerous occasions from 1954-57, demand an acknowledgement of the continuing unpredictability and lack of cohesion that surely must have marked the character of the anti-religious campaign in the minds of those most directly affected by it i.e., the clergy as well as religiously observant Soviet citizens. Khrushchev's hostility to religion in 1955 and 1956 has already been mentioned. In 1956, a power struggle within CAROC over the Committee's alleged leniency toward the ROC almost led to Karpov's removal from his position.²⁵ In fact, Karpov managed to stay at CAROC's helm until February 16, 1960 - well into the campaign if one accepts the start date of 1958 - and was replaced by V.A. Kuroyedov²⁶, a bureaucrat more hostile to the ROC whose views, nevertheless, would soften with time. The archives are replete with instances of the two committees attempting to reprimand or complain about local authorities who closed mosques arbitrarily. Yaacov Ro'i has observed that "as late as 1961, [CARC] protested that religious associations which had every right to register had not been allowed to do so by local authorities without any explanation being offered."²⁷ These selected examples only serve to illustrate a much broader phenomenon. Furthermore, it is extremely unlikely that these Party bureaucrats would have spoken up in defense of strict adherence to regulations on religious life if doing so would have seriously jeopardized their careers or status. Within the bureaucracy, therefore, moderate groups must have had a strong if shifting base of support throughout Khrushchev's tenure.

Second, elaborate concern over the Soviet Union's international image constituted one of the few areas of agreement uniting both the hardliners and moderates vis-à-vis religion. At a time when the tension of the Cold War had reached its height and the Soviet Union competed for influence with Communist China or the United States in virtually every developing nation in the world, the CPSU saw the need to take advantage of any possible opportunity to enhance its image and influence. Top bureaucrats felt that

²⁵ Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, p. 57

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 79

²⁷ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 206

a perception abroad of the Soviet Constitution's avowed respect for freedom of religious expression as anything less than genuine could compromise its attempts to gain influence among the religious masses of countries in the ideological battleground. In practice, this applied almost exclusively to the Soviet state's attempts to win over Muslim and Christian countries; the CPSU could effectively use the Muslim and Christian clergy operating on its territory as a political means of forging common ground with influential religious bodies abroad. As the state well knew, these religious entities - whether they be autocephalous churches or ministries of Islamic or waqf affairs - commanded effective communication networks with masses in many countries and in some cases claimed the deference of rulers in their nations. Certainly, the validity of this theory must have seemed apparent when a CPSU-organized and highly successful ROC mission to the Ethiopian Coptic Church resulted in a visit by Emperor Haile Selassie I to the USSR in 1959.²⁸ Although he may not have had the pleasure of meeting Khrushchev in person, the SADUM Mufti Ziyovuddinkhon qori found himself propelled to the center of the USSR's successful efforts during this period to win the sympathy and backing of countries with large Muslim populations such as India and the Arab nations of the Middle East. As the chief ecclesiastical figure in the USSR's most 'authentic' Muslim territory - Azerbaijan was Shiite and thus lacked the broad appeal the Soviets sought, and the other spiritual directorates were based in less 'colorful' and more Russified Muslim cities than Tashkent, namely Makhachqala and Ufa²⁹ - the Mufti was called upon to play host to literally scores of religious and secular delegations from Muslim and other countries. (In 1959, he hosted Eleanor Roosevelt at Hastimom in Tashkent.)³⁰ He also traveled extensively overseas in a similar capacity, appearing frequently at international Islamic conferences.³¹ All four Soviet Muftis and the ROC Patriarch were called upon to speak at international world peace conferences held in major Soviet cities such as Moscow and

²⁸ Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, p. 72

²⁹ These delegations as a rule traveled from Tashkent to Samarqand and Bukhara. In many cases the Mufti accompanied high-profile visitors.

³⁰ Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, p. 57. Hastimom ('Hazrati Imom') is the square in Old Tashkent housing the Tilla Shaykh Madrasa, where SADUM's offices were located and where its successor is still based.

³¹ A detailed list and account of all the Mufti's visits and receptions is in Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, pp. 50-134.

Baku, where carefully chosen delegates spoke out against American imperialism and lavished praise on the CPSU for its contribution to the maintenance of world peace.³² This prominence accorded to the ROC and SADUM in the state's international plans allowed the two religious bodies to wring concessions. It also complicated the state's attempts to impose *nazhim* on officially sanctioned religious life. On numerous occasions, the Party found the mere presence of these religious figures at major publicity events desirable for cosmetic reasons. In 1955, it requested that representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate attend all formal events held by the Supreme Soviet in Moscow. Two years later, the Patriarchate was asked to furnish two young Orthodox Christians to engage in disputes with visiting Western Christians and to testify to the existence of religious freedom in the USSR at the Sixth Worldwide Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow. In return, the ROC gained a number of important concessions: the Central Committee eased restrictions on opening prayer houses and also empowered CAROC to register functioning but unregistered religious societies on its authority. Similar dynamics applied to Muslim clergy.³⁴ For example, SADUM received permission to establish an International Department in 1961;³⁵ the department's head, an ecclesiastical appointee though not necessarily an imam, worked closely with CARC's Tashkent representative (who in turned coordinated with Moscow and other government bodies) in planning the Mufti's political activities. It was also charged with the all-important task of organizing the annual Hajj for the few lucky Central Asian Muslims whom the state permitted SADUM to select for such an honor and privilege. (Soviet Muslims could first make the Hajj with the blessings of the state in 1945, albeit in miniscule numbers.)³⁶

³² See, for example, RGANI f. 5. o. 33 d. 127 ll. 48-69 for correspondence within the bureaucracy concerning the session of the Congress of Caucasian Muslims in Baku in 1959 as well as transcripts of speeches of numerous muftis, including Ziyovuddinkhon qori. Also, Shkarovskii devotes considerable attention throughout his *Ruskaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'* to the CPSU's attempts to use the ROC in attempts to win control of the World Church Council and undermine the Vatican.

³³ Shkarovskii, *Ruskaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, p. 54

³⁴ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 586: "Regular visits of delegations from Muslim countries, as of 1954, began to be adopted [by CARC] as a reason, or perhaps a pretext, for taking measures to improve the situation of Islam in the purely domestic context. (They had served the same purpose even in the late Stalin years, but more rarely.)"

³⁵ Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, p. 55. Ro'i lists the date as 1963; see *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 588. A source as close to SADUM as Bobokhonov is more reliable.

³⁶ Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, p. 51

Thus, at the peak of the anti-religious campaign the Party not only permitted SADUM to increase its international contacts but actually encouraged it to do so.

Having said all this, one should not make the mistake of exaggerating the liberalizing power of this type of cooperation between SADUM, the ROC, and the state. Religion was and always would be the opium of the people. Undoubtedly, the countless international delegations who had their visits financed by the Party (including ecclesiastical delegations) were entirely aware of this basic fact. They, however, like the Soviet State itself, found themselves coupled with unlikely bedfellows due to the radically novel political demands of the ever-expanding Cold War. The state never considered easing all restrictions on religious life. Furthermore, one must remember that whatever concessions SADUM gained due to its loyal promotion of the CPSU, masses of Muslims whose needs could not be satisfied by SADUM (e.g., those observant Muslims residing in localities where no registered mosques existed, and who therefore prayed collectively and practiced other rituals at varying levels of risk) continued to suffer the full brunt of the state's anti-religious measures. This was especially true for the large numbers of Central Asian Muslims who regularly undertook pilgrimages to the shrines of saints and who, under Khrushchev, found the state becoming increasingly antagonistic to this most cherished of spiritual practices.

On November 28, 1958, the Central Committee issued a decree "On Stopping [*o prekrashchenii*] Pilgrimages to so-called 'Holy Places'".³⁷ The decree marked the culmination of a preoccupation with this religious practice within the bureaucracy spanning some decades, but primarily from the late 1940s onwards. Before this period, Soviet bureaucrats and Orientalists appear to have been aware of the existence of pilgrimage but not to have approached it as a problem separate (i.e., demanding distinct tactics) from that of the practice of Islam in general.³⁸ The most prominent Orientalist under Khrushchev and to some extent before, Liutsian Klimovich, refers to shrines only in passing in his first major work, *Islam in Tsarist Russia* (1936).³⁹ Indeed, the contrast

³⁷ RGANif. 5o. 33 d. 125l. 1

³⁸ That is to say, both Tsarist and Soviet Russian cadres in Central Asia in previous decades must have recognized shrine pilgrimage based, if nothing else, on their knowledge of pilgrimage in the ROC tradition. However, the Soviet state did not recognize it as an issue requiring a domain of investigation and attack separate from that applying to religion in general until after World War II.

³⁹ Liutsian Klimovich, *Islam v Tsarskoi Rossii*, pp. 116-118 & 358

between the attention to shrines in this work and his subsequent book, *Islam* (1965), is notable. In a recent collection of essays on shrine pilgrimage in the Caucasus and Central Asia, two Russian Islamicists have noted that the first sociological studies of shrine pilgrimage in the Soviet Union appeared in the early 1930s, primarily in reference to the Caucasus. According to them, the translation into Russian of the Hungarian Orientalist I. Goldtser's non-Marxist work on shrines, *The Cult of Shrines in Islam*, in 1938 stimulated a series of ideologically motivated works on pilgrimage in the following decade. However, the authors only list four such articles focusing on Central Asia before 1960.⁴⁰ A similar chronological dynamic seems to have characterized the interest of the bureaucracy. Reports on shrine pilgrimage began to surface in the late 1940s and appear to have become part and parcel of CARC's deliberations as well as anti-religious vocabulary in general only around 1959.⁴¹ The Central Committee's own decrees back up this assertion as well; for example, a 1923 resolution of the Communist Party of Turkestan declared that "superstition and the remnants of pagan beliefs create fertile soil for the evil work of many kinds of missionaries, ishans, khojas, *duana*, qalandars, azaimkhans, and others."⁴² Some of the stereotypical denizens of a shrine receive mention here, but one finds no acknowledgement of the *places* at which one might find them as a separate problem in and of itself. In the '20s and '30s shrines appear to receive little or no discussion or examination as distinct from mosques.

There are also indications that an anti-pilgrimage ethic was crystallizing in the early Khrushchev years within a certain faction in the bureaucracy. It will be recalled that the July 1954 Central Committee decree singled out shrine pilgrimage as a target of the Party and went so far as to specify Central Asia (presumably as an area of particular

⁴⁰ These are Rassudova, R. Ya. *Kul'tovyye ob'ekty Fergani kak istochnik istorii oroshaemogo zemledeliia*, *Sovietskaia Etnografiia*, No. 2, 1949; Sukhareva, O. A. *Kvoprosu o kul'te musul'manskikh sviatykh v Srednei Azii*, *Materialy po arkheologii i etnografii Uzbekistana*, Tashkent, 1950; Kruglov, A. P. *Kul'tovyye mesta Gornogo Dagestana*, *Kratkie soobshcheniia o dokladakh Ipolevykh issledovaniiakh Instituta istorii i material'noi kul'tury*, T. 12, Moscow, 1946; and Shilling E.M. *Iz istorii odnogo zemledel'cheskogo kul'ta*, *Kratkie soobshcheniia Instituta etnografii*, Moscow, 1946. See Abashin and Borbovnikov, *Soblaznyi kul'ta sviatykh* in *Podvizhniki Islama* (RAN, Moscow, 2003), pp. 3-4. It is interesting to note that in contrast to later studies, the word *palomnichestvo* (pilgrimage) does not figure in the titles of these works.

⁴¹ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 363-84 and *Podvizhniki Islama*, p. 3, which suggests an active upsurge in ideologically motivated interest on the part of scientific-atheist scholars in Islamic pilgrimage around 1963.

⁴² *Zakon, Religiiia, Tserkov'*, p. 41. Uzbek, *azayimxon*: a type of shaman; *qalandar*: wandering mystic; *duana*: perhaps a misspelling or bastardization of *devona* ('holy fool') or *duoxon* (prayer reader).

concern). Pilgrimage, however, had become one of the foci of the group surrounding Khrushchev at least a year earlier, and probably well before. Thus, on April 29, 1953, a group within the bureaucracy drafted a memorandum specifically addressing Khrushchev and calling for the formation of a special commission to "liquidate and localize 'holy' places, to which massive pilgrimages are undertaken." This may in part have been a delayed reaction to approval given by Karpov for the opening of eight Orthodox shrines, approval which the Central Committee subsequently overruled on May 7, 1952.⁴³

Local authorities were expected to carry out the charge of "stopping" pilgrimage within half a year of the issuance of the November 1958 decree.⁴⁴ Indeed, starting around the Spring of 1959 many republican and regional Party secretaries began sending the Central Committee reports on what measures they had taken to fulfill it.⁴⁵ Although these reports contain occasional references to Buddhism, it becomes clear that Russian Orthodox and Muslim shrines suffered heavily in equal measure. There is great variance in the types of shrine activity described by *obkoms* in predominantly Orthodox and Muslim localities; nevertheless, the measures taken resemble each other remarkably. Local authorities disregarded the conciliatory tone of the November 1954 decree and consistently closed or destroyed shrines on their own authority. Although the Central Committee appears to have met these arbitrary measures with little opposition (unlike CARC and CAROC), almost all the reports contain at least one reference to believers closing or vowing not to conduct pilgrimages to shrines on their own initiative. Thus, the Kazakstan secretary's report notes that "closures are carried out by local Soviet organs with the agreement of the population"⁴⁶ and another points to "decisions taken by the workers to liquidate pilgrimage".⁴⁷ Other measures included simply closing a shrine rather than destroying it. Thus, local authorities at the O'sh *gorispolkom*⁴⁸ in southwestern Kyrgyzstan forbade pilgrimages to the Suleyman-tau shrine (also referred to as Takhti Sulaymon), perhaps the most frequented shrine in the Farghona Valley.⁴⁹ (Its

⁴³ Shkarovskii, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'*, p. 49

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 69

⁴⁵ These are in RGANI, f. 5 o. 33 d. 125

⁴⁶ RGANIf. 5 o.33d. 125,l. 114

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, l. 28

⁴⁸ the equivalent of City Hall

⁴⁹ RGANI f. 5 o.33 d. 125 l. 11. One wonders how the authorities could have stopped pilgrimages to a mountain with a circumference of many miles, surrounded on all sides by the densely populated

destruction would have been complicated given that the shrine is a holy mountain with a number of tombs, a mosque and other holy attractions attached to it.) The *obkom* also wrote to the Farghona, Andijon, and Namangan *obkoms* in the UzSSR, asking them to take more stringent measures because "the larger part of the pilgrims come from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan."⁵⁰ In a similar vein, authorities at the Southern Kazakstan regional *obkom* decided to transform the 16th century shrine of Qoja Akhmat Yassawi - arguably the most famous shrine in all of Central Asia along with those of Bahovuddin Naqshband and Imom al-Bukhori - into an atheist museum through means of restoration.⁵¹ Occasionally, though much less frequently than in previous decades, authorities resorted to arresting shrine caretakers as a means of stopping pilgrimages. In 1959, for example, a "charlatan" reading prayers for pilgrims at the "Astana-baba" shrine in the Kerki district of the Turkmen SSR's Charjou region found himself sentenced to two years in prison for his activities; the Turkmen report describes this action as specifically intended to fulfill the demands of the Central Committee decree.⁵²

As a rule, local authorities appear not to have consulted CARC as required by Soviet legislation before taking such measures. In rare cases where the reports' authors (usually the staff of the republican party or *obkom* secretary) mentioned the local CARC or CAROC representative, they gave the impression that that individual's participation in the endeavor was tangential. For example, a May 1959 report from V. Letiagin, secretary of the Kirov regional *obkom*, stated almost as a footnote that "CAROC s representative has conducted corresponding work with the local clergy and heads of religious societies on stopping pilgrimage to so-called 'holy places'." With total disregard for or ignorance of CAROCs role, the report's previous paragraph noted that "in Sanchurskii district the grave of the 'holy' Prokop has been destroyed. In its place a shack has been set up to

neighborhoods of Kyrgyzstan's second largest city. The report does not mention the construction of a fence or establishment of police posts, suggesting that the *gorispolkom's* 'decision' meant very little in reality. Ro'i has found cases of CARC's representatives on the ground occasionally giving central authorities a reality check. "In a similar vein, the CARC *upolnomochennyi* for Kirgiziia expressed his doubts as to the chances of success in the struggle against the holy places. How, he asked, was the Takhti-i Sulayman to be closed, for it was merely [sic] a crag?" See Ro'i, Islam in the Soviet Union, p. 377. The report is from an All-Union CARC conference in November of 1958. ⁵⁰RGANI f. 5 o.33 d.125, *ibid.*, l. 12

⁵¹ *ibid.*, l. 65

⁵² *ibid.*, l. 96

store the agricultural inventory of the collective farm."⁵³ Reports from Muslim regions similarly mentioned the activities or contribution of CARC's representative extremely rarely.⁵⁴

Although both the ROC and Islam shared common types of suffering and repression during the campaign, the state's choice of SADUM as a partner in the anti-pilgrimage movement distinguished its policies toward Islam from those it developed toward Orthodoxy during this period. Admittedly, the Party viewed the ROC's cooperation as helpful on some level in easing along the destruction and closure of Orthodox shrines as quickly as possible. In a CAROC report dated June 12, 1959, Karpov wrote to the Central Committee that

"upon the recommendation of the Committee [CAROC], Patriarch Alexei sent an official letter to all the patriarchal administrations, in which he charged the clergy to conduct explanatory work among the population to explain the unsuitability of pilgrimage i.e., to 'holy places' not within the authority of the church."⁵⁵ This attempt on Karpov's part to shed a positive light on the ROC's contribution, however, appears to mark the extent of the state's cooperation with the ROC in this specific respect. CARC's relationship with SADUM during this period presented a very different picture. Because SADUM played such an active role in legitimizing the Party's campaign against Islamic pilgrimage, it is appropriate to briefly address its ideological motivations in doing so.

Although shrine pilgrimage is by no means unique to the practice of Islam in Central Asia, specific aspects of its performance in various corners of the region do distinguish it from similar pilgrimage practices elsewhere in the Muslim World. Shrines appear in an amazingly vast array of forms; pilgrimage is a complex phenomenon meriting separate examination.⁵⁶ Generally speaking, however, most shrines developed around the site or grave where a saint identified as Muslim from the near or distant past was buried or believed to be buried. Pilgrims generally access other items or sites

⁵³ *ibid.*, l. 29

⁵⁴ Whereas the reports from the Kyrgyzstan republican party secretary and the South Kazakstan regional *obkom* do not mention CARC at all, the Bashkir ASSR report, interestingly enough, refers to CAROC rather than CARC, and only in passing. See *ibid.*, l. 56

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, l. 84

⁵⁶ On shrine pilgrimage in Central Asia today, see two excellent articles by V. L. Ogudin in *Podvizhniki lama* (Izd-vo 'Vostochnaia Literatura' RAN, 2003).

containing holy power near the saint's tomb. These may include rocks, springs, trees, or the tombs of the saint's disciples, mentors, and/or family members.⁵⁷ Frequently, this holy power is thought to emanate from the saint him or herself and pilgrims seek the saint's intercession in their lives.

Contrary to what the Soviets believed and what some authors have argued⁵⁸, pilgrimage was not by any means alien to or illegal in Islam. Indeed, a well-known tradition of the Prophet Muhammad urges Muslims to visit graves because the experience will remind them of death. Recognized institutions of Sunni authority such as al-Azhar and SADUM did not condemn pilgrimage in and of itself; from the perspective of such bodies, a legitimate pilgrimage (Hajj and Umra excepted) consisted of praying for the soul of a Muslim who had done good works in his or her lifetime. However, the practice of asking saints to intercede on one's behalf, as well as the belief in their ability to work miracles, was and is considered sinful by most and perhaps all modern Sunni legates. For this reason, the Party's 'exposure' of the falseness of these miracles matched SADUM's ideological goals in spreading the true teachings of Islam. This was very much in line with the principles expressed at SADUM's founding *qurultoy*⁵⁹ in October of 1943. Attended by 160 clergy from across Central Asia and represented by the *qozis*⁶⁰ of the five regional SSRs, the *qurultoy* "declared that the founding basis of all [of SADUM's] activity would be the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him)."⁶¹ This statement undoubtedly had two chief purposes: 1) to

⁵⁷ A report by Puzin dated June 1959 notes in typically over-simplified fashion that "the absolute majority of these pilgrimage sites are situated in cemeteries and exist in the form of 'holy' graves, 'holy' trees and springs, which are visited by believers on annual Muslim holidays." RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 125 l. 14

⁵⁸ See Ro'i, Islam in the Soviet Union, p. 137, who quotes Soviet sources to this effect and adopts their arguments as well.

⁵⁹ Uzbek, *qurultoy*; Kazak, *qurultay*: In modern usage, an organizational meeting of Muslim clergy usually held to select the leader of an ecclesiastical body.

⁶⁰ *Qozi*: Usually a judge in a court of Islamic Law, but in this context apparently taken to mean the chief cleric of each Central Asian republic in the pre-SADUM ecclesiastical structures operating in an orbit of uncodified legality acknowledged to varying degrees by local authorities.

⁶¹ Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, p. 41. The five chief clergy were Ziyovuddinkhon qori for Uzbekistan, Shaykh Abdulghaffor Shamsuddin for Kazakstan, Shaykh Solih Bobokalon for Tajikistan, Olimkhon To'ra Shokir for Kyrgyzstan, and Shaykh Anna Eshonlar for Turkmenistan. These spellings reflect Uzbek and Tajik pronunciation.

declare SADUM as a strictly Sunni body⁶² and 2) to make clear its opposition to traditions such as pilgrimage and folk healing.⁶³

SADUM primarily provided moral support to the state; it did not generally participate in or encourage the destruction or closure of shrines. It was, after all, not the shrines that bothered SADUM as much as what went on at them. One might surmise that many registered Muslim clergy regarded the anti-pilgrimage campaign primarily as a war of ideas in which they could purify the practice of Islam among the population. In contrast, the state took this a step further and found satisfaction in curtailing pilgrimage itself. For this reason, the partnership was a problematic one at best. As part of this contribution, Ziyovuddinkhon qori issued *fatvos*⁶⁴ at numerous points during the campaign. Some of these appeared as a direct result of government pressure. In 1959, he issued *afatvo* declaring the "worship of shrines" to be based on lies and therefore contrary to Islam.⁶⁵ This came some months after he received a summons from CARC's Tashkent representative, who appears to have believed he succeeded in coercing the Mufti into producing such an opinion. SADUM handed the CARC representative a draft of *the fatvo*, "On Restricting the Activity of *Mazars*", on December 23, 1958, after which the Central Committee of the UzSSR Communist Party significantly edited it. SADUM clergy read *this fatvo* at Friday prayers throughout March and April of 1959 i.e., approximately one month before local *obkoms* began reporting back to Moscow on their implementation of the decree.⁶⁶ This opinion, however, rarely receives mention in the

⁶² i.e., in contrast to the Sunni perception of Shiism as not based on the Sunnah. SADUM's reception of ideas from the broader Muslim world - including Wahhabi ideas - is a theme worth pursuing on the basis of sound research and well-qualified conclusions resting upon interviews with former SADUM officials conducted in Central Asian languages.

⁶³ Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, p. 43: "*Islom dinining sofligiyo 'lida turli xurofot va bid'atlarga qarshi izchil va murosasiz kurash tashabbuskori bo 'lib chiqdilar.*" (In the path of the pure way of Islam, [Ziyovuddinkhon qori] came out against all kinds of superstitions and innovations and advocated a logical and relentless struggle against them.) One should not overlook the significance of the use of the word *bid'at* (Arabic, *bida 'a*) here because this term has achieved some prominence in Wahhabi and Salafi ideas. It refers to any practice - usually one observed widely by Muslims - considered not to have any basis in the Qur'an or Sunnah. Shrine pilgrimage as well as consultations of folk healers presented themselves as obvious candidates for this classification. SADUM kept quiet about Navro'z, the Zoroastrian New Year, for political reasons, but many of its representatives also regarded its observance as a deeply harmful *bid'at*. *Bid'at* is most commonly translated as 'innovation'.

⁶⁴ Uzbek & Tajik, *fatvo*; Arabic, *fatwa*: non-binding legal opinion of a Muslim theologian (*faqih*) or council of scholars (*shuro*). SADUM had a Fatwa Department composed of such scholars.

⁶⁵ RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 125 l. 134

⁶⁶ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 146-47. Unfortunately, it is not known what additions or deletions the Party made. It should be noted that the word used for 'shrine' in the title of the draft, *mazar*, was a

reports, suggesting perhaps that the *obkoms* did not wish to appear as SADUM's partners; only CARC could legitimately claim this as its province. In an exceptional case, though, the Kyrgyzstan report mentions the use by local authorities of *the fatvo* in reference to Suleyman-tau in O'sh against "parasitic shaykhs" because it "provides an interpretation of dogma as to why 'Takhti Sulaymon', 'Hazrat Ayup', 'Arslanbob'⁶⁷, and 'Shoh Fozil'⁶⁸ are not'holy'."⁶⁹

Through this kind of cooperation, S ADUM gained some very limited credibility with the Soviet state; there was an implicit acknowledgement that the Party would not insist on its destruction, that it would grant S ADUM some measure of autonomy, and, finally, recognize it as the sole legitimate representative of Soviet Muslims in Central Asia (even of *Ironis* i.e., the Shiite minority most commonly associated with the cities of Bukhara and especially Samarqand). This acknowledgement by the state was important at a time when polemicists still casually lambasted and insulted all Muslim clergy, whether registered or unregistered, and called for their collective elimination. Also, one must note the restricted nature of the benefits SADUM could gain from its support for the state's anti-pilgrimage policies; after all, this period witnessed many closures of SADUM-run mosques as well as the continued application of *administrirovanie*. Still, one cannot help but note the conciliatory tone of archival documents toward registered Muslim clergy. CARC apparently demanded of all four spiritual administrations that they "take measures from their own end to stop the activities of the hysterical elements organizing pilgrimages."⁷⁰ Writing to the Central Committee in 1959, it reported that "there is information to the effect that believers and the clergy are themselves kicking the charlatans out of the *mazars* and demanding the closure of 'holy places'", going on to list over ten instances across Central Asia in which SADUM had either closed shrines itself

generic term appropriated by Soviet bureaucrats and scholars writing in Russian to refer to Muslim tombs. The Uzbek and Kazak languages, however, use the words *maqbara* and *kesene* (among others) respectively to refer to the tombs at shrines. (Other languages, such as Kyrgyz, do use *mazar* more commonly.) This word choice may therefore suggest that CARC's representative had edited the draft on his own before handing it to the UzSSR Central Committee or perhaps merely given the title himself.

⁶⁷ In the mountains north of Jalalabad.

⁶⁸ On the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border north of Zarkent, Kosonsoy district, Namangan region.

⁶⁹ RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 125 l. 11. The Turkmen report also mentions the *fatvo* and that it was issued in February, 1959. See *ibid.*, l. 96.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, l. 15

or advised local authorities to do so.⁷¹ Only oral histories and an examination of any relevant archives in SADUM's successor bodies can provide the alternate perspective that would shed light on the veracity of its purported role in these events. Independent of reality, though, it is important to note that the more moderate part of the bureaucracy clearly came to regard SADUM cautiously as an ally.

As the final element of this presentation of the chronology of Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign, the issue of the Party's attitude toward Muslim women in Central Asia demands a brief discussion, at the very least. The state's initiatives related to Muslim women are significant for two reasons: first, because attention to women's rights as an issue distinct from religion in general predated that manifested toward shrine pilgrimage by more than three decades, and second, because even more than pilgrimage it distinguished the treatment of Islam from that of other religions (notably Orthodoxy). Women's rights presented a 'problem' in Islam more than in any other religion from the Party's perspective. Although the Party's efforts to 'liberate' Muslim women in Central Asia from the oppressive forces of class (marked with the old warhorse of feudal-boi relations⁷²), culture, and Islam have their own intricate history, a word about the greatest of these initiatives is in order.⁷³ Inaugurated in 1926, the *hujum* (Uzbek; attack, onslaught) in many ways complemented the campaign of mosque and madrasa destruction and persecution of Muslim clergy which was taking place at the same time. Although the *hujum* started with the seemingly modest goal of requiring all Party members in Central Asia to unveil the women in their families, cycles of retributive violence, the brunt of it born by innocent women and girls, as well as bureaucratic obfuscation, characterized its progress above all. The *hujum* had its own crests, nadirs, and highly complex internal dynamics - all too detailed to justify a quick summary here. Suffice it to say that the experience of monitoring its progress focused the gaze of central Party administrators in a specific direction during the decades before Khrushchev. The

⁷¹ *ibid.*, ll. 15-16

⁷² *Boi*: in Soviet usage, a member of a stylized landed gentry. Muslim practices were frequently described as relics of the feudal-boi epoch, and the abuse of women as stemming from social relations established during this historical era.

⁷³ For more on this topic in the 1920s and '30s, and specifically on the *hujum*, see Keller, pp. 115-118, Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation* (2004), pp. 221-260, Marianne Kamp, "Unveiling Uzbek Women: Liberation, Representation, and Discourse, 1906-29" (Univ. of Chicago Ph.D diss., 1998), and Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender & Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (2004).

hujum allowed the Party to develop a clear picture of the role of women in Islam; one could not say the same for pilgrimage. This fact goes a long way toward explaining why the Party did not isolate women's rights as a chief hallmark of the Khrushchev-era anti-religious campaign. During the 1950s and 1960s, SADUM was largely left out of the picture in this respect because the state had already developed its own elaborate worldview of the problem; it did not need a spiritual 'consultant' for this reason and also because the problem was seen as stemming to varying degrees (depending on the type of oppression of women) from Islam itself. SADUM had little credibility to make its own contribution.⁷⁴ Women's rights undoubtedly constituted an area of concern for the agents of the anti-religious campaign under Khrushchev. However, this was also the case, on and off, from 1954-57 and before. In other words, the continuity of attention to improving the lot of women appeared weak at times and strong at others, but one could always note its presence. For this reason, it can only fall under the rubric of anti-religious measures tangentially i.e., insofar as the state regarded the problem as partly rooted in Islam.

Generally speaking, the Party consistently regarded the oppression of women in Central Asia as consisting in the following: veiling, payment of bride price (Uzbek, *qalyn*), self-immolation, underage marriage, polygamy and illiteracy. In the Khrushchev years, all of these remained major concerns with the exceptions of veiling and illiteracy.⁷⁵ Of all these phenomena, the Party appears to have been increasingly preoccupied with monitoring self-immolation from the late 1940s onward. The Central Committee demanded reports from *obkoms* in Central Asian republics specifically on self-immolation; these are available for every year under Khrushchev. A 1954 report from the Namangan *obkom* follows the standard pattern for such documents: it lists annual self

⁷⁴ SADUM did actually issue *fatvos* condemning self-immolation, a form of suicide or sometimes self-abuse practiced almost exclusively by females in Central Asia as in other parts of the world, in 1950, 1952, and 1955. Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 546. There was, however, nothing especially new about lambasting a practice as antithetical to the Qur'an's commandments as suicide. Ziyovuddinkhon qori also issued *afatvo* condemning the payment of *qalyn*. In the same opinion, however, he declared the necessity of paying *mahr* (a financial or other form of dowry) for the marriage to have Islamic validity. See Bobokhonov, *Shayx Ziyovuddinxon ibn Eshon Boboxon*, pp. 211-214

⁷⁵ See, for example, a 1960 report from the USSR General Procuracy on Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan (apparently regarded as the most medieval bastions of feudal-boi relations) in RGANI f. 5 o. 31 d. 146 l. 116, for statistical tables on family crimes specifically related to women. The categories given are forced and underage marriage, polygamy, and other crimes. Elsewhere in the report, payment of brideprice receives extensive treatment. For archival sources on self-immolation, see below.

immolation statistics in the province from 1949 to the present and gives brief summaries of the specifics of each case and states whether the suicide was successful or unsuccessful.⁷⁶ Judging from the preponderance of reports coming from *obkoms* in the UzSSR, this republic appears to have been regarded as the most seriously afflicted with the problem. Momentum picked up to some degree with each passing year; the latter part of 1957 and first half of 1958 saw detailed decrees from the Party secretaries of Samarqand, Bukhara, as well as Tajikistan spelling out the measures to be taken in the fight against self-immolation.⁷⁷ The Andijon *obkom* followed with a decree only in May of 1960.⁷⁸

Before jumping to conclusions about the prominence of self-immolation in the anti-religious campaign, however, it is important to examine the extent to which the Party understood it in religious terms. Generally speaking, oppression of women was defined in terms of a spectrum with feudal-boi relations on the one end and Islam on the other. All instances of oppression fell somewhere on the spectrum, closer to one of these two ends depending on its specific description. As the aforementioned report from Namangan Province noted, Muslim clergy did share some of the blame for self-immolation:

"The clergy [*dukhovniki*] and their agents work among these women and there is reason to believe that not only do they judge those who lean towards self-immolation, but also make them think of themselves as martyrs based on their desire to become pure and establish a direct link with God."

On the same page, the report has a theory as to why these women prefer such a painful death over "easier" means of suicide:

"Clearly, this relatively new method is popularized through propaganda. We tend to believe that this is not happening without the participation of the clergy; as a result, self-immolation has become more widespread in recent years."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ RGANI f. 5 o. 31 d. 12 ll. 199-212. All names recorded are Muslim. A separate section of the report discusses cases of males setting themselves on fire.

⁷⁷ These are in RGANI f. 5 o. 31 d. 84. The 'measures' were strictly administrative e.g., calling upon local authorities to conduct propaganda among women through means of lectures, films, etc.

⁷⁸ RGANI f. 5 o. 31 d. 146 l. 64, going into more detail than other *postanovleniia* by identifying alcoholism among husbands as a specific cause of their wives' suicides. In a bizarre twist, a report from Turkmenistan in the same year noted that a certain Ismailova, 21 years of age, had burned herself to death because she "led a careless lifestyle, frequently drank alcoholic beverages, and was called to court more than once because of petty hooliganism." *Ibid.*, l. 117

⁷⁹ RGANI f. 5o. 31 d. 121.209

The implication is that Muslim clergy engaged in this sort of lethal prodding as some sort of exercise in self-righteousness; the report suggested no other potential source of material gain. Even here, though, one must note that the authors did not assail Islam itself. Indeed, the paucity of bureaucratic documents directly linking suicide with Islam, the almost universal focus on psychological factors in individual cases as well as the identification of a feudal attitude towards women as a chief culprit, and, finally, the complete absence of any input from CARC in all correspondence on this topic, all strongly suggest that this growing interest in self-immolation was a development internal to the question of women's rights and not related to the anti-religious campaign, which it seems, had come to focus on issues which were perceived as 'Islamic' in their entirety rather than only in part.⁸⁰ In other words, the 'Women's Question' undeniably had an Islamic angle from the Party's perspective, but the general silence of the conventional actors in anti-religious initiatives (such as CARC and even SADUM) in correspondence on women's rights suggest that this problem was relegated to its own unique, separate analytical arena and treated as separate from that of the 'Religion Question'.

To summarize, the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign in Central Asia retained certain elements of previous, similar initiatives but marked a broad departure from them in scope. Increasingly, specific aspects of the 'problem' of Islam received separate treatment; no longer did the Party speak of Islam as a solitary entity to be effaced from society single-handedly. At the same time, the concentration of responsibility for implementation in the hands of local authorities, as well as the lack of any major break with the previous approach to Muslim women, both marked areas of continuity with respect to past anti-religious enterprises. Within the bureaucracy, officials entertained a high degree of diversity of opinion with respect to the means of implementing the struggle. Unlike the ROC generally speaking, SADUM found itself in something of an unholy alliance with the state for reasons having as much to do with its theological foundations as with *realpolitik*. This chronology, then, provides a picture of the confusing and multi-vectored path of the anti-religious campaign. The measures taken derived their operating instructions or 'code', as it were, from a specific and variegated representation

⁸⁰ It cannot be disputed that references to feudal-boi relations in the correspondence on self-immolation outnumber occasional mention of the clergy. A review of the correspondence in RGANI f. 5 o. 31 d. 84 (on self-immolation) confirms this.

of Islam, the formulation of which had begun before the Khrushchev era but which nevertheless became an active intellectual and bureaucratic process only in the years before and during the campaign. An understanding of how this picture of Islam came to exist and of the specific contributions of certain groups of actors is therefore as important in assessing the anti-religious campaign as the chronology itself.

Islam and the Bureaucracy

Ideology and hardliners notwithstanding, the various bureaucracies which comprised the state were a pragmatically oriented set of bodies and interests. One must view its activities in this light. Its pragmatism consisted in part in monitoring and ensuring the implementation of Central Committee initiatives on the part of local government. Above all, then, the need to fulfill obligations to higher authorities took center stage in the bureaucracy's deliberations. A genuine preoccupation with the horrors of Islam may have motivated the work of some individuals, but this visceral level of anti-Islamic inspiration, so important on the face of things in bureaucratic discourse, hardly appears to have run as deep as one might assume. A certain level of token lip service to the ideology among mid-level bureaucrats was at work. This was nowhere more apparent than in the dry and monotonous repetition of the mantra of "feudal-boi relations with respect to women". At the same time, bureaucrats above all held to the task of fulfilling their given assignments. For this reason, the question of 'why' the bureaucracy looked at Islam in a certain way must be understood in terms of its intended accomplishments.

What was the exact nature of this charge of responsibility given to the bureaucracy by the Central Committee? On the most public level, Khrushchev and other top Communists before him had summed up the Party's goal rather simply: to efface the opium of religion from the hearts and minds of all Soviet citizens. During certain years in previous decades it had appeared that the Party would settle for nothing less than the utter annihilation of religion; one could not be religious. With the establishment of CAROC, CARC, and SADUM, however, this goal had seemingly been put aside for good. An all-out attack became less preferable than chipping away at religion little by little, reducing the number of its adherents gradually but inexorably with propaganda on the one hand and *administrirovanie* on the other. Eventually, the reasoning went, this process would

have its inevitable conclusion either in the end of religious practice on the territory of the USSR or, alternately, in the reduction of the number of observant and believing citizens to an insignificant shadow of its former self. In the meantime, there was no ideological contradiction in creating and cooperating with bodies such as SADUM both for the Party's benefit in other spheres (e.g., international politics) and as a means of regulating religion more closely. It goes without saying that this mindset did not remain consistent throughout; at times it erupted in bouts of vigor - such as certain moments of the campaign - or, alternately, fizzed off like a flat soda, destined to return to the equilibrium of inactive but constant hostility.

Regulation rather than annihilation thus became the byword of the day. It appears that 'regulation' took on an increasingly broad meaning, though. How could one regulate something which one had not investigated to such an extent that every corner of its content had passed under the light of the state's examining eye? The answer to this question necessitated an all-encompassing understanding of Islam. This need may have had roots in administrative realities inevitably brought to the fore by the creation of SADUM. In other words, by creating SADUM the state forced its own gaze into directions in which it otherwise might not have ventured. The increasing concern over shrine pilgrimage, elaborated upon below, led the bureaucrats into two separate but complementary directions: on the one hand, an elaborate statistical enterprise built up a picture of 'Islam as lived', the importance of which had not been emphasized before. That a picture rather than a sound scientific initiative based on any familiarity with Islam in Central Asia was in the works was demonstrated by the fact that the statistics produced could not reflect real numbers of shrines and pilgrims - a state of affairs acknowledged implicitly by some isolated, and apparently ignored, bureaucrats. On the other hand, this mastery-in-progress of the pilgrimage phenomenon forced the state to revitalize some of its stereotypes of parasites. Whereas before these religious figures had been associated with Islam in general, bureaucratic discourse now tied their machinations specifically to shrines. (As this paper discusses below, polemicists also played an important role in 'clarifying' the representation of these parasites to the public.) While therefore by no means the only element of *nazhim* in the campaign in Central Asia, measures against

shrine pilgrimage did represent its chief innovation and consequently afford one the clearest glimpse of the changes taking place.

Just as the aforementioned *qozis* had operated in an ecclesiastical structure with semi-official and undefined ties to the state in the pre-SADUM years, so mosques and shrines had had a similarly precarious and nebulous legal status.⁸¹ SADUM's establishment changed all this: the dichotomy of registered and unregistered (usually meaning illegal) mosques applied to shrines as well. Thus, three bureaucratic categories of shrines emerged in the postwar period: those under the direct purview of the state (i.e., shrines labeled as atheist museums or sites of cultural heritage which nevertheless saw large numbers of visiting pilgrims), SADUM-controlled shrines, and finally those operated by unregistered clergy. These categories were a natural result of the state's increasing awareness of the existence of shrines. For example, in 1947 a CARC official believed that "although the Soviet government had permitted the opening of seven *mazars* in Central Asia, SADUM opened hundreds in the immediate postwar period."⁸² What this statement means in reality is not that the shrines had remained closed in any meaningful sense before 1943, but rather that SADUM had established and/or announced its administrative appropriation of these sites. It is unknown how formal or rigid this de-facto authority was; SADUM may have left the sites untouched while having some limited contact with their ancestral or other caretakers and prayer readers, thereby 'appropriating' them. Certainly, however, administratively centralized channels represented a departure from past Islamic ecclesiastical administrative traditions in Central Asia wherein shrines generally fell under the authority of the saints' descendants and/or followers who resided near the shrine. Although we cannot be sure if CARC's characterizations of SADUM matched reality, there is no denying that the latter took on a form whose formalized character matched the mold of a Soviet organization rather than past ecclesiastical bodies.

On June 1, 1959, Puzin sent a report to the Central Committee on the progress of the anti-pilgrimage campaign in Central Asia. He noted that "at present, we are in the

⁸¹ Starting in the 1920s, the Soviet government did actually develop regulations governing the definition of a religious 'organization' and the steps towards its establishment. However, the responsibility for mosques was less centralized.

⁸² Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, p. 366

process of exposing 'holy' graves, *mazars*, springs, and other 'holy' places of pilgrimage frequented by believers." This CARC endeavor "revealed" 210 shrines in Tajikistan, 114 in Uzbekistan, 42 in Turkmenistan, and 20 in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakstan each.⁸³ Other, republican reports on the pilgrimage decree bear these numbers out, more or less. A report from Karibjanov, First Secretary of the Kazakstan Communist Party, dated July 1, 1959, stated that 26 "so-called 'holy places'" "have been counted" in Kazakstan, and that these consisted of "springs, grottos, and *mazars* (a structure on the burial site of a 'holy' or 'royal' individual)."⁸⁴ In his response, the Turkmenistan First Party Secretary, Tashliev, observed that the republic had 4 registered mosques "as well as 15 graveyards and 6 mausoleum-graves which have 'holy' status."⁸⁵ Sharaf Rashidov, the Uzbekistan Party's First Secretary from 1959 to 1983, did not provide a republic-wide number of shrines in his report, but did note that the Qaraqalpaq ASSR had 15 shrines, at 12 of which pilgrimage had "ceased", and that Surkhandaryo Province had 19, to only 2 of which pilgrimages continued after implementation of the decree.⁸⁶

That these figures did not and indeed could not reflect the actual numbers of shrines will be readily apparent to anyone familiar with Islam in Central Asia. Furthermore, SADUM or for that matter any practicing Muslim in Central Asia must have been aware of this fact. The Party did not have to interview believers to acquire this knowledge, however; officials within its ranks had already conducted studies in previous years which "revealed" vastly larger numbers of shrines. At the end of the 1940s, CARC had "exposed" 275 shrines in Uzbekistan alone. In May of 1950 Puzin's predecessor, I. V. Polianskii, had noted that the actual number was very likely much larger, "for in addition to the better known ones, each settlement in the pre-revolutionary period had had its own holy place." In 1947, CARC had uncovered 51 shrines in Khorezm alone.⁸⁷ (This is almost a third of the number of total shrines accounted for in Uzbekistan in 1959.) These were old and isolated voices, however, and were apparently forgotten all too easily with the change of leadership at the committee. One nevertheless wonders what use CARC's regional representatives were at this time if they could not travel around their

⁸³ RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 125 l. 14

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, l. 113

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, l. 97

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, l. 108

⁸⁷ Ro'i, *Islam in the Soviet Union*, pp. 365-366

oblast 's of responsibility and prepare lists of shrines well known to the local population; undoubtedly, lack of funding had a great deal to do with the problem. Bruce Privratsky's recent study of Muslim life in southern Kazakstan lists 26 shrines in and around the town of Turkistan (site of the shrine of Qoja Akhmat Yassawi) alone.⁸⁸ A recent work published by a Termiz-based journalist lists 15 "great" shrines in Surkhandaryo Province, and another provides the history of 16 in the city of Bukhara.⁸⁹ These two sources, which do not claim to mention all or most of the shrines in their localities, along with the aforementioned CARC report from Khorezm, give a total of 82 shrines in two of the republic's smaller provinces (Khorezm and Surkhandaryo) and one of its cities (Bukhara). It should now be apparent, then, that the figure of 144 shrines for all of Uzbekistan (as well as 20 or 26 for Kazakstan) carries no meaning. Given that the inaccuracy of the figures given for the other republics could also be demonstrated with some ease, one must confront the following questions: Where did these numbers come from? How could CARC list 144 shrines for Uzbekistan when one of its own officials had previously discovered 51 in Khorezm? Did CARC merely sit back and accept that over a third of the republic's shrines were situated in a region with a small portion of Uzbekistan's total population and an even tinier percentage of its territory?⁹⁰

One could propose a number of potential answers. Clearly, some of CARC's representatives did not take their jobs very seriously or could not compile thorough lists due to lack of resources. As for reliance on previously collected data, Polianskii may not have transferred his knowledge onto his successor; the fact that he remained at CARC's helm until his death suggests that he passed away without much warning. It is not clear if Puzin and Polianskii ever met. Much more important, though, are methodological concerns. How did all these different statistical endeavors define a shrine? The two aforementioned books by Uzbek researchers make it clear that the authors had no intention of providing exhaustive lists and that their works only contain references to famous or popular sites. Soviet sources lack such a qualification across the board. It is

⁸⁸ Bruce Privratsky, *Muslim Turkistan: Kazak Religion and Collective Memory* (2001), p. 165. Five of the shrines are situated in the town itself, and the remainder are within a radius of approximately 100 km. of Turkistan. This list does not include the shrines at Sayram and other sites in and around Shymkent.

⁸⁹ Abdulla Kholmiraev, *Surxondaryoning Tabarruk Ziyoratgohlari* (Toshkent, 2001). N. Yo'ldoshev and H. Qurbonov, *Buxoro shahri va uning atrofidagi ziyoratgohlar tarixi* (Buxoro, 2001).

⁹⁰ I guess that the actual number is (and was) in the thousands for Uzbekistan and in the tens of thousands for all of Central Asia.

unclear, for example, if a rarely frequented shrine counted as a 'holy site' in CARC's methodology. More likely than not, its representatives took a hit and miss approach; they almost certainly did not have the resources to visit every village of the *oblast'* in which they worked. Locating many shrines would have required personal interviews with villagers and, in many cases, reliance upon their goodwill and hospitality to serve as guides. An official who did not speak the local language and who, furthermore, did not have the resources to hire staff who could translate, or alternately a representative who knew the language but was just plain lazy, would have found the possibility of fabricating numbers and lists very attractive. Such a 'solution' to fulfilling the assignment may have appeared especially alluring given the remoteness of the possibility that higher ups or even anyone in the local *obkom* would verify the lists.

Still, this is not an entirely satisfactory explanation. Such a lamentable state of inefficiency may indeed have characterized the work of many CARC representatives, but these statistics went to the Central Committee and therefore their compilation must have been monitored on some level. In other words, the fact that the statistics did not correspond to reality does not make them meaningless. Their meaning gets to the heart of the bureaucratic contribution to the presentation of Islam that was in a process of formation. If the numbers do not reflect reality, then what do they reflect, what purpose did they serve, and whom did they benefit?

This is an involved question which cannot be answered fully here. However, there may be some scope for examining the republics 'assigned' higher and lower numbers of shrines in terms of other developments in society, namely Russian emigration to Central Asia. What follows does not pretend to masquerade as a statistical analysis leading to definitive conclusions. Rather, a very preliminary hypothesis is presented as to the intentions behind the numbers given for shrines. After all, the need to question these numbers underscores the possibility that the paucity or wealth of shrines believed to have been located in each republic had something to do with that republic's general image. The table below is based entirely on statistics from the 1959 all-Union Census. Column 1 lists the numbers of shrines from the aforementioned 1959 CARC report. Column 2 attempts to present the number of members of 'Muslim nationalities', independent of whether they were Muslim or not - the census did not distinguish believing Muslims

from atheists - per CARC-assigned shrine. It is based on an admittedly arbitrary estimate of the number of 'Muslims' in each republic which was calculated by adding the number of the titular nationality for each republic to the numbers given for the three largest 'Muslim nationalities' excluding Tatars⁹¹. (The reasoning behind counting nationalities other than the titular group rests on the fact that all the republics other than Uzbekistan featured significant Uzbek minorities.) This very approximate number of Muslims was divided by the number of shrines the CARC report assigned to the republic. Columns 3 and 4 display the rural and ethnically Russian percentages of the republican population according to the census: **Shrine 'Assignments' and the 1959 Census**⁹²

	1	2	3	4
	# of shrines (CARC)	# of Muslims per shrine	% of population rural	% of population Russian
Tajikistan	210	7,351 ⁹³	67.6	13.3
Uzbekistan	114	51,343 ⁹⁴	66.5	13.5
Turkmenistan	42	26,937 ⁹⁵	54	17.3
Kyrgyzstan	20	54,538 ⁹⁶	66.5	30.2
Kazakstan	20	151,488 ⁹⁷	57	42.7

I will be the first to caution that these hastily assembled numbers may 'mean' as little as CARC's shrine statistics. Such an admittedly crude table does, however, offer some interesting insights. Surprisingly perhaps, the number of shrines does not generally correspond to the size of the urban population, which was more in touch on a daily basis

⁹¹ It will not be denied that this is very arbitrary. In any event, the inclusion of Tatars would not significantly change the picture.

⁹² All statistics are based on *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi Perepisi Naseleniia 1959 g.* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 206-208 & 240. The lower rural percentages in the two previously nomadic regions are, perhaps, a bitter comment on the ferocity of the collectivization campaign that annihilated the nomads' ancient way of life.

⁹³ Tajik SSR = Tajiks (1,051,164) + Uzbeks (454,433) + Kyrgyz (25,635) + Kazaks (12,551) = 1,543,783

⁹⁴ Uzbek SSR = Uzbeks (5,038,273) + Kazaks (335,267) + Tajiks (311,375) + Qaraqalpaqs (168,274) = 5,853,189

⁹⁵ Turkmen SSR = Turkmen (923,724) + Uzbeks (125,231) + Kazaks (69,552) + Azeris (12,868) = 1,131,375

⁹⁶ Kyrgyz SSR = Kyrgyz (836,831) + Uzbeks (218,640) + Kazaks (20,067) + Tajiks (15,221) = 1,090,759

⁹⁷ Kazak SSR = Kazaks (2,794,996) + Uzbeks (136,570) + Uyghurs (59,840) + Azeris (38,362) = 3,029,768

with Soviet cultural institutions. (Nevertheless, Tajikistan has the highest rural percentage.) With the exception of Uzbekistan, the progression of the data in Column 2 corresponds rather well to popular notions about the backwardness and religiosity of each republic, moving from a deeply medieval and rural Tajikistan to an enlightened and stereotypically Russified Kazakstan sharing its longest border with Russia⁹⁸. Nowhere is the progression more clear, however, than in the percentage of the population constituted by Russian émigrés and their descendants. In case the exclusion of Ukrainians, who also migrated to Central Asia in large waves during the Soviet period, should raise some eyebrows, the following graph is included to illustrate the validity of the trend:

Shrine 'Assignments' compared with C. Asian Russian and Ukrainian Populations ⁹⁹

	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan	Turkmenistan	Kyrgyzstan	Kazakstan
# of shrines (CARC)	210	114	42	20	20
% ethnically Russian and Ukrainian	14.6	14.7	18.7	36.8	50.9

There is some foundation to propose that the negative correlation between the size of Slavic minorities (and one majority) and the number of shrines is no coincidence. Widely prevalent attitudes in the Soviet Union saw Slavs as more intelligent than if not racially superior to 'Muslim nationalities'; it is common knowledge that such assumptions were a

⁹⁸ The traditional stereotype of Kazaks - and perhaps to an equal extent of Kyrgyz - as Russified and 'weak' Muslims originates from the Tsarist and Soviet periods and has greatly influenced the historiography of modern Central Asia. Privratsky's Muslim Turkistan, which demonstrates the invalidity of this historiographical precedent, will hopefully attract more scholars with background in Islamic Studies and anthropology as well as knowledge of the Kazak language to shed light on the richness of Muslim life and tradition in other parts of Kazakstan. In what is perhaps a sign of Privratsky's influence, a recent work subtly rejects the 'weak Muslims' paradigm in reference to the Kazaks. See Carter Vaughn Findley, The Turks in World History (OUP: 2005), pp. 148-149. Another recent and unprecedented work has gone beyond the geographical confines of the environs of the town of Turkistan to include discussions of Muslim traditions (specifically in reference to women) in other parts of Kazakstan and the rest of Central Asia. See Habiba Fathi, Femmes d'autorité dans l'Asie centrale: Quête des ancêtres et recompositions identitaires dans l'islam postsoviétique (Paris: Institut Français d'Études sur l'Asie Centrale, Maissonneuve & Larose), 2004

⁹⁹ *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi Perepisi Naseleniia 1959 g.*, pp. 206-208

hallmark of Soviet administrators in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰⁰ The claim being made here is not that all central bureaucrats were racists or chauvinists, but rather that stereotypes about the relative backwardness or advancement of Central Asian republics depended at least in part on the sizes of 'European' minorities. This was precisely because these Slavs (especially Russians) were regarded as more advanced in education and knowledge and it was thought that they could do much to help their little siblings along the path from backwardness to Socialism. The lines distinguishing this chauvinistic conceptualization of backwardness from its more strictly ideological manifestation as marked by religious observance and feudal-boi relations could easily become blurred. To understand this, it is helpful to examine CARC's non-statistical presentations of the status quo in some of these republics countries around this time in order to find a link between the quantitative and the qualitative.

Before moving forward, though, it will be helpful to address the question of whether the broad trend described by these statistics is in fact feasible - independent of the formal accuracy of the numbers gathered by the Party. Can one read into these statistics a comment on the vibrancy of shrine pilgrimage traditions in each of the five republics? In other words, was shrine pilgrimage much more 'popular' in Tajikistan than in Kazakstan? The answer to this question must be an emphatic 'no' for two broad reasons. First, the methodological obstacles one would face in executing such a comparison would be insurmountable. Even if one were to take the number of shrines in each republic as an indicator of the popularity of pilgrimage, one would first have to overcome the problem of defining a shrine. As we have seen above, the Party's inability or refusal to do so led it to produce inaccurate statistics. A definition of a shrine which would include, for example, only those sites receiving a specified minimum number of visitors a day, would become obsolete, qualitatively due to its inherent arbitrariness and refusal to acknowledge the importance of shrines in peoples' lives regardless of the prestige associated with them, and quantitatively because it would exclude vast numbers of smaller shrines from the equation. On the other hand, the project of counting 'all' shrines in Central Asia - great or small - is impossible to fulfill for obvious reasons. Any quantitative basis of comparison makes unsubstantiated assumptions about the nature and

¹ See Keller, To Moscow, not Mecca and Edgar, Tribal Nation.

significance of shrine pilgrimage as a spiritual element of meaning in peoples' lives. Second, to attempt a comparative analysis of the vibrancy of pilgrimage in each of the republics is to embark upon a project quite similar to the Soviet initiative of quantifying spirituality. If there are in fact fewer shrines in Kazakstan than in Tajikistan - and I know of no source demonstrating this - this says more about the specific practice of shrine pilgrimage in the former republic in relation to the latter than about the popularity of pilgrimage among the Kazaks vs. the Tajiks.

One can observe a qualitative confirmation of the two tables above in a subsequent and important aspect of the correspondence on the fulfillment of the decree, viz., the discussion of shrine closures. CARC documents are very useful in this respect because of the committee's role in the campaign as a monitor; individual *obkoms* and republican secretaries exchanged information with Moscow and took responsibility for the bulk of the implementation, but CARC summarized this information in reports to the Central Committee and also to be sure it stayed abreast of developments that were supposed to fall under its purview. This unique role played by CARC provides some scope for seeing in its foci of attention a reflection of the concerns of the entire bureaucracy. In this respect, one may profitably look at which republics it chose to highlight as implementation success stories. Puzin's aforementioned report from 1959 to the Central Committee noted that the year had seen 123 non-Russian Orthodox shrines "cease their activity". Among these, not surprisingly, 62 were in Tajikistan, 31 in Uzbekistan, and 4 in Turkmenistan. If any closures took place in Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan, the report does not mention them.¹⁰¹ Beyond closures, the document also lists cases where the numbers of pilgrims visiting certain shrines decreased thanks to the implementation of the decree. The only shrines mentioned from Kazakstan and Kyrgyzstan are the tomb of Qoja Akhmat Yassawi and Suleyman-tau, both of which, incidentally, are located in regions where the two republics' Uzbek minorities are concentrated. No statistics receive mention in reference to Kazakstan, however. Repeating the well-worn misconception of the bureaucracy that Muslims conducted pilgrimages to shrines primarily on the two Eids and especially on Eid ul-Adha (most

¹⁰¹ As has already been noted, the Kyrgyzstan First Party Secretary's report claimed that Suleyman-tau had been closed by the O'sh *gorispolkom*. The problems with this statement have also been discussed.

often referred to somewhat mysteriously as "Uraza Bayram"), Puzin claimed that the numbers of pilgrims visiting Suleyman-tau on "Uraza Bayram" had decreased from 18,000 in 1958 to 6,000 in 1959.¹⁰² At the Shoh Fozil shrine, the number had gone down from 20,000 to 15,000.¹⁰³ According to Puzin, Uzbekistan had much more dramatic results to show. On the same holiday in the two years, the number of pilgrims visiting the shrine of Bahovuddin Naqshband had dropped from 15,000 to 2,500. For Uzbekistan, Puzin also had statistics on the number of Muslims visiting mosques (apparently for the holiday prayer, optional in Islam but recommended) on Eid ul-Adha (Uzbek, *Qurbon Hayit*); this had dropped from 2,880,000 in 1958 to 2,000,000 in 1959. In other good news, the amount of charity given by Muslims in Uzbekistan on the same holiday fell from 2,500,000 rubles to 2,000,000. Not surprisingly, however, Puzin gave a much more dismal summary of the decree's impact in Tajikistan. It is significant that *only* this republic receives such poor marks across the board in this report. In fact, Puzin here had no positive developments from the southern republic to list. He claimed that the numbers of Muslims arriving for "services"¹⁰⁴ on "Uraza Bayram" at the Mavlono Yaqub and Jomi shrines had remained constant from 1958 to 1959 at 6,000 and 4,000 respectively. Even worse, "shaykhs" and a "mulla" at three shrines across Tajikistan had succeeded in forcing believers to conduct pilgrimages and even to abandon their work for this purpose.¹⁰⁵

On January 28, 1964, very near the end of Khrushchev's tenure, the chairman of the KGB, V. Semichastnyi¹⁰⁶, sent to the Central Committee a report he had requested from the head of the KGB's Second Department, Gribanov, on the status of unregistered religious activity in Central Asia (excluding Kazakstan). This report takes on a much less conciliatory tone than Puzin's but paints a similar picture to that presented above. For Uzbekistan, it lists 71 officially registered and 1300 unregistered "clergy", "of which 100

¹⁰² The same numbers are given in the report of the Kyrgyz Party Secretary in RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 125 l. 12

¹⁰³ The report lists the shrine as located in Krygyzstan. It is now located in Uzbekistan, although one must drive through the territory of Krygyzstan for a few kilometers (and obtain a Kyrgyz visa, unless one resides in a border district) to reach it.

¹⁰⁴ This is a very strange statement since "services" (sermon and prayers) are only conducted in mosques on Eid ul-Adha. Nor would prayer readers or pilgrims at shrines describe their activities as related to "services" in the sense of those conducted in a mosque.

¹⁰⁵ All statistics and quotations are taken from Puzin's report to the Central Committee of June 1, 1959, in RGANI f. 5 o. 33 d. 125 ll. 13-19

¹⁰⁶ Vladimir Yefimovich Semichastnyi (1924-2001) was KGB Chairman from 1961-1967.

are *ishans*", as well as 62 "illegal *mazars*". Interestingly, the report also comments on the activities of an illegal Muslim group, "Akhdī [sic] koran"¹⁰⁷, noting that "it calls upon believers to not participate in social and political life and preaches the utilization of superstitious religious rituals." The section on Turkmenistan lists 4 registered mosques, 60 "illegal shrines", as well as 100 "priest-charlatans" without specifying whether their number included registered clergy. Concerning Tajikistan, the report lists 18 registered mosques, 870 "illegal Muslim clerics", 12 "khalifas" in the traditionally Ismaili Badakhshon Autonomous Region, and 223 *mazars*, the legal and administrative status of the latter being left unspecified. Finally, the report has little to say about Muslims in Kyrgyzstan except that 33 Muslim "societies" were registered and that the usual antisocial practices continued at Suleyman-tau; almost all of the Kyrgyzstan section expresses concern over "sectarian" groups such as Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists. Significantly more efficient and precise than CARC, it would seem, the KGB report lists much higher numbers of shrines than Puzin's list of 1959. Nevertheless, this document shares much in common with the characterizations of earlier years. It is apparent from the outset that Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan - and notably *not* Kyrgyzstan or Kazakstan - are the chief areas of concern with respect to Muslim clerics. Equally notable are the very large numbers of illegal clerics listed for Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the most pernicious sites of obscurantism with the smallest Russian minorities.

One may also note here the inhuman face given to the "charlatans" by the report's authors. These KGB investigators clearly felt that numbers alone would not have the desired effect; they wanted to impart to their audience a clear image of the conditions in which these anti-social elements operated. Some of the more colorful examples appear in the section on Turkmenistan:

"Individual Muslim cleric-charlatans reside on graves [*prozhivaiut na grobnitsakh*] where they engage in reactionary and anti-social activities. Some of them even try to construct mosques over the graves. Thus, the tomb of 'Zulpi-kepil' is located on the territory of the 'Mir' collective farm in Bayram Ali district. This tomb is the inheritance of one religious family, and its shaykh,

¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, the report contains no discussion as to whether this observation bears connection to any of the groups referring to themselves as *Ahl-e Qur'an* across the Muslim world.

Ogulgozel Joraev, does not work on the farm and lives off a private plot with light earnings... The majority of Muslim clerics live in a parasitic manner, sponging off others. In the city of Ashgabat, Karaja Kalaev has for some time engaged in religio-charlatanic activities and named himself Karaja Mulla or Karaja Ishan. He works absolutely nowhere, illegally trades in home-produced fabric, and is building a big house."

What makes these references and countless others like them interesting is that only in rare cases do they actually emphasize the parasites' specific crimes. These individuals were anti-social charlatans because such behavior stemmed from their very essence as clergy. Thus emerged the stereotypical image of the unregistered (and sometimes official) Muslim cleric: that of a self-serving, cunning, lazy, (and sometimes perverted) manipulator. The unfeasible claim made in the report that some clerics actually lived on top of graves seems to suggest a certain horror associated with the fact of these individuals' residence near the dead. Anti-religious materials mention that children perished as a result of the "healings" these individuals were alleged to have conducted; this particular report mentions one such case. Thus to the parasite's ghoulish proximity to rotting corpses was added the highly dramatic association with vampires (with all the relevant lustful connotations) or even the horrid but perversely relished image of the old Semite drinking Christian children's blood.¹⁰⁸ Terms such as "charlatan" and "activities" allowed bureaucratic and other observers to conveniently tip-toe around the problem presented by the emotional meaning these rituals had for those visiting these "parasites".¹⁰⁹

The bureaucracy's understanding of Islam was extending into new and unknown corners of Muslim life, but its basic emphasis on religion as anti-social remained unchanged. Although Islam's cast of characters became painted with more colors, these parasites stayed monotonously clever and anti-scientific. In this sense, the Party's increasingly grandiose and all-encompassing approach to Islam appeared in the form of

¹⁰⁸ This is not as far-fetched as it sounds. Edward Said has noted how racist characterizations of Jews have been transferred to Arabs (fellow Semites) and, by extension, Muslims in recent times. There is no reason to discount the possibility of Soviet Russian anti-Muslim activists employing such highly effective and powerful imagery, especially when addressed to those in Moscow. See below for a reference to vampires by Liutsian Klimovich.

¹⁰⁹ All statistics and quotations are taken from the KGB report, which is in the archives of the Central Committee's Ideology Department in RGANI f. 5 o. 55 d. 72 ll. 1-25

an active but un-emphasized process; because the bureaucracy largely understood its anti-Islamic measures in terms of *administrirovanie*, there was no palpable sense of the innovative character of the approach that was being taken. This, in turn, may help explain why it appears to have invested virtually no time and effort into examining the effectiveness of the non-coercive religious measures aimed at converting the 'exploited' Muslim masses to atheism. These without fail included the following: scientific-atheistic lectures (often 'exposing' the scientific truth behind 'miracles' at shrines or alternately explaining Darwin), film-screenings, discussion circles, book and article readings, as well as the occasional concert. Training propagandists to lead these events also fell under the category of anti-religious measures. Thus, the responses *ofobkoms* on fulfillment of the pilgrimage decree focus not so much on the shrines themselves but almost entirely on funds and resources being invested in the aforementioned "measures". Statistics on the numbers of atheist lectures given, propagandists trained, pages of lectures read, etc. feature prominently in these responses. This appears to have been the result of a basic understanding of the Muslim masses as an unchanging sea of malleable minds; the monotony that characterized the bureaucracy's impressions of clergy applied to ordinary Soviet citizens (though not Communists) as well. For example, a "concrete sociological study of religious beliefs" based on interviews in an Uzbek neighborhood in Tashkent very tellingly states of its subjects that

"In Uzbekistan, believing Muslims are remarkably homogeneous. The majority of Muslim believers are people of a low cultural level, having primitive and vague religious imaginings."¹¹⁰

A blind sort of faith in the effectiveness of these methods clearly gripped the bureaucracy at the republican and central levels. For this reason, CARC and the *obkoms* attributed the reportedly reduced numbers of visitors to shrines on "Uraza Bayram" in 1959 to the success of these measures rather than other motivations (e.g., fear). Remarkably, a 1979 anti-religious resolution from the Central Committee still calls for "strengthening the ranks of agitators, political informers, lecturers, and reporters" in the struggle against

¹¹⁰ "V Makhalle Yangi-Khayat [sic]" in *Nauka i Religii* (December, 1965), pp. 7-10

religion.¹¹¹ The Party continued to adhere to the same measures that had clearly not worked under Khrushchev.

With all its competing interests and the different foci of its various components, the bureaucracy did not approach Islam as a solid and unitary entity. At the center of this galaxy of information stood the Central Committee, receiving information from the *obkoms* and CARC, processing it, and issuing declarations which in turn triggered new processes of data gathering and sharing. The bureaucracy was therefore in a constant state of movement and action. Its conclusions, presented in the form of varying and often contradictory statistics, characterizations, interpretations, and suggestion for action, all served as a means of legitimizing its role in the process of exercising power over the masses. Although it never claimed expertise on Islam in a scholarly capacity, it did jealously guard and maintain its monopoly on the empirical aspects of the analysis of Islam and Muslim life. Left to dangle on its own, though, this part of the picture was in its crudeness all too reminiscent of the anti-Muslim attacks of the Stalin years. Something more sophisticated was needed, a buttress of support to raise up the specter of a 'full' Islam apprehensible and ideologically palatable (even if negatively so) to the Party both empirically and intellectually.

The Orientalists

Under Khrushchev, Soviet Orientalists found themselves propelled to unprecedented levels of respectability and authority. In comparison to the stultifying intellectual atmosphere of the Stalin years, the Party gave these Communist scholars more leeway to 'think out of the box', relatively speaking of course. While continuing to adhere to the ideology, then, Orientalism under Khrushchev took some liberties in adopting an independent tone and outlook. For this reason, the Party's delegation of an important role to Orientalists in the anti-Islamic campaign did not take the form of a conscious process; those senior bureaucrats cooperating with and reading the materials of these scholars would undoubtedly not have described their relationships in such terms. Rather, the Party became significantly more open to the idea of relying and calling upon

¹¹¹ "O dalneishem uluchshenii ideologicheskoi, politiko-vospitatel'noi raboty" in *Zakon, Religii, Tserkov'*, p. 66

these Orientalists - many of them academics - as consultants whose scholarship could shed light on the dark corners of a religion which was increasingly being viewed as multifaceted and complex in a negative way.

The career of Liutsian Klimovich, which reached its peak under Khrushchev during his time at the Gorkii Institute of Literature, illustrates the changing prominence accorded to the Orientalist. Klimovich was the ideological Orientalist *par excellence*, setting the stage for the more involved sociological studies of phenomena such as pilgrimage of the 1970s. He influenced a whole generation of scientific atheist researchers and changed the Party's understanding of Islam to such an extent that few other academics could match his reputation and power. A comparison of his work under Stalin with the pieces he authored during Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign is therefore in order.

His first major work, Islam in Tsarist Russia (1936), purported to definitely prove that Muslim clergy across the territory of the Russian Empire had collaborated with Tsarist authorities as a means of solidifying their power base. This phenomenon, he appears to have taken for granted rather than argued, stemmed directly from the essence of Islam itself. The book's first sentences state that its goal is to "expose Islam's reactionary role in the history of Russia and her colonies".¹¹² Uncompromising and rigid in his slavish fealty to a highly reductive simplification of history into ideological terms, Klimovich clearly feared taking any especially innovative steps that could draw unwanted attention in the awful environment of the mid-'30s. Thus, Islam had to be accommodated to a perfect and therefore unchanging ideology; there could be no discussion of expecting the ideology to fit a mold and allow for some nuance to match the specific demands of Muslim history:

"Islam, the Muslim church, 'Muslim' institutions and a wide array of dogmas and sects do not represent anything exceptional when compared with other religions and religious organizations. Islam appeared and developed as an ideology and organization of the ruling classes."¹¹³

¹¹² Liutsian Klimovich, *Islam v Tsarskoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1936), p. 3

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 5

There is something unavoidably quaint in all this. Klimovich regarded his task as in some sense an empirical one, to add to the body of knowledge about the pernicious activities of the clergy throughout the ages without examining Islam itself in any truly critical sense. The fact that the protagonists in his story were Muslims did not make much of a difference, nor did the book's focus on Islam. Because Islam was identical to all other religions from an historically materialistic perspective, it did not demand any analysis tailored to its specificities. A simple presentation of the historical skeleton of Islam's appearance and expansion sufficed; beyond this, the status of the clergy who collaborated with Tsarist authorities as Muslims had little to do with Islam itself and everything to do with the history of class struggle.

The young Klimovich's very scant attention to shrine pilgrimage falls within this 'un-Islamic' rubric rather neatly. In the book, four shrines are mentioned, each in one instance alone. Regarding the shrine of Qoja Akhmat Yassawi, Klimovich had only to say that "the exploiters, having launched their sermons, engage not only in spreading this 'spiritual vodka' but in the sale of their goods as well."¹¹⁴ On this and the following two pages, the shrines of Bahovuddin Naqshband, Hazrat Ali (at Shohimardon), as well as "Zanga-aty [sic]" (Zangi ota) and his wife, "Anvar-bibi [sic]" (Anbar bibi) also receive mention, all in reference to specific "reactionary" events of varying importance alleged to have occurred at them. Wrapping up this brief treatment of some of the more pernicious shrines, Klimovich wrote that "the description of these 'holy' places could have been enlarged. In Turkestan alone there were hardly more than 200 of them."¹¹⁵ He thus confirmed this lack of focus on shrines as well as the importance of placing Islam within the class paradigm. Equally important is the lack of distinction here between a respectable Islam of scholars and a popular religion practiced by masses at the instigation of parasites.

As Klimovich asserted, this first work of his marked the fullest treatment to date of "the little-studied history of Islam among the peoples of USSR".¹¹⁶ It may be

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 117. Klimovich quotes a "bourgeois researcher", N. F. Petrovskii, who visited the shrine in 1906. As sermons are not read in or around *any* shrine (unless in a mosque), including this one, it is not clear what Klimovich means. On pp. 358-361, he discusses an incident during the 1916 rebellion in which "majnuns" opened up the tomb of Khoja Ahror outside Samarqand to count the number of graves inside.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 119

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 3

submitted then, that before the Khrushchev era the need to understand Islam in any sense beyond the class paradigm, to paint a full picture of it, was not felt broadly. Certainly, the views expressed by the same author from the first half of the 1960s appear to confirm this conclusion. By this point, of course, his star had already risen significantly. A piece in the March 1962 edition of *Science and Religion*, for example, called on the country's most prominent experts on scientific-atheist work to present their views on the progress of anti-religious propaganda. Included in the illustrious list of contributors, Klimovich lamented the fact that "practically no one here has spoken of Islam." Furthermore, in a telling sign of his increased confidence and changing approach, he wrote that "it must be noted that the official Muslim clergy represent only a small percent of the clergy actually operating among the population."¹⁷ What a significant departure from his perspective of 26 years ago, at which time he did not even acknowledge any difference between official and unofficial clergy! One year after Khrushchev's fall from power but very much in the vein of his work during the years of the campaign, Klimovich noted down his chief and most lasting contribution to the study of Islam: the 'official' / 'folk' dichotomy:

"In recent years in the Soviet Union, relations between representatives of the mosque-based and social currents [*mechetskogo i obshchinnogo techenii*] have become significantly aggravated. Portraying themselves as representatives of the authentic faith, the heads of the mosque-based current, managing the spiritual administrations, increasingly resort to forms of 'kicking out' their competitors. Taking advantage of the doubts of the believers with respect to questions about the history of Islam, the clergy *issue fatvos* - spiritual explanations and decisions [sic] portraying shaykhs, ishans, pirs, and their disciples, murids, as defenders of heathenism and idol worshippers."

In contrast to his previous writing, Klimovich now had worked out a specific place for shrines in this framework:

"The lack in Islam of canonized 'saints' paved the way for the appearance of an enormous number of local cults, often unknown in other countries. The graves of

¹⁷ Liutsian Klimovich. "Nepochatyi krai" *Nauka i Religii* (March 1962), p. 17

many of these 'saints' opened at the shrines of the ancient religions which Islam had fought against."¹¹⁸

These statements represent the author's most comprehensive appropriation *ofijozat* or interpretative authority, for this enterprise was at the root of constructing an Islam that matched the perceptions of the bureaucracy. His reasoning here begins with an administrative category imposed on or at least established in the name of Muslims by the Soviets in 1943 i.e., the division between SADUM and an undefined mass of figures frequently referred to as "illegal clergy". The dichotomy here then is not one inherent to Islam but rather a legal / administrative one. Klimovich's contribution was the transformation of this dichotomy into that of partially respectable versus uncontrolled, anarchic Islam. This set the stage for the crystallization of the normative (official) / folk (popular) Islam dichotomy¹¹⁹ that became a hallmark of all studies dealing with Muslims in the Soviet Union and which has retained its all-important status in relevant literature through the present day. Equally important here was the notion that the 'mosque-based' current somehow existed antagonistically and in opposition towards the popular, 'social' tendency. The problem here is one of partial fabrication: SADUM did indeed issue *fatvos* on the pernicious character of folk healers and *some* of the activities carried out at shrines. However, the notion of "non-SADUM clergy" never received a clear definition: it referred to a vast host of types of figures performing various spiritual functions ranging from sweeping the floor of a shrine to reading prayers. No one, Klimovich included, ever bothered to ask these individuals whether they understood their activities in terms of "competition" with SADUM or indeed if they thought of themselves as "clergy" on even the vaguest level.¹²⁰ Thus, the SADUM / non-SADUM and registered / un-registered dichotomies carried meaning on an administrative, not religious, level, and the mosque / social and normative / folk dichotomies which they spawned had their roots entirely in Soviet administrative realities rather than a sound and sincere study of Muslim life. It would, of course, be futile to deny that the imposition by the Soviets of a certain kind of

¹¹⁸Liutsian Klimovich. "Chto za religiiia Islam?" *Nauka i Religiiia* (July 1965), p. 24, the first of a six-part series on "Islam and Modernity".

¹¹⁹ Although its roots are to be found in Klimovich's writings, the 'normative Islam' paradigm is associated with Ira Lapidus, a scholar articulating this concept decades later.

¹²⁰ In fact, most shrine caretakers of at least the recent Soviet past as well as the present (independent of imams) worked full time in day jobs and undertook other spiritual duties in their spare time as a means of winning God's mercy.

administrative compartmentalization upon Muslim clergy in Central Asia (as embodied by the directorates) did in fact have a real impact on the way registered clergy viewed various actors, figures, and individuals with religious associations who lacked registration. However, one can also not deny that the category of "unregistered clergy" was a fabricated one since there is no evidence that those individuals falling under this description actually defined themselves as clergy (or, more importantly, that they were viewed as such by Muslims). It is for this reason that the equation of the category of unregistered clergy with a 'non-normative' Islam represents an attempt by Klimovich to redefine Islam on a basis alien to traditional and contemporary (Soviet) Central Asian and Islamic contexts.

In early 1965, Klimovich published his second and final book on Islam, which he had begun work on during the final years of the Khrushchev era. When compared with his youthful writings of 1936, one can hardly believe that the two books share the same author. Although the class references obviously still exist in the later work, they are much less pronounced. Klimovich's eleven-page introduction to this book is an important document both in his career and as a milestone in the development of Soviet Orientalism in general. For here, the ideas alluded to in his article of July 1965 are codified as a set of Orientalist principles opposed to the incorrect approach of "bourgeois" Islamicists in the West. This comes clearly across in the following statement:

"Strong is the tradition of bourgeois Islamicism, which does not consider (as it should) that the very particularities of Islam which have been accepted as a true reflection of the actual state of affairs are in fact no more than fabricated schemes of the clergy."¹²¹

In other words, *any* observable aspect of Muslim life had a hidden meaning, the discovery of which only a Soviet Orientalist armed with Marxist tools of analysis could undertake. Not only did SADUM have it all wrong; it was actively concealing the truth about its activities and the religion it professed in order to strengthen its exploitative hold over the masses. This was a far cry from the same author's claim of 26 years ago that one could understand Islam in the same way one analyzed any other religion due to the identical nature of all faiths. But such a simplistic and rigid ideological conceptualization

¹ Liutsian Klimovich, *Islam* (Moscow, 1965), p. 13

could not do justice to the demands being made by the state at this time. After all, destroying mosques and murdering clergy and believers alike had not 'solved' the problem of the popularity of spiritual faith and ritual among Soviet citizens.

If the devil was in the details, Klimovich was up to the task. He faithfully worked towards the implementation of his new-found mission to 'explain' Islam in such a way that its true essence could be accessed by those in the Party who were not Islamicists but nevertheless required this information for the good of the country. In addition to discussing the history of Islam, its division into "sects", as well as Sufism, a whole section of the book discusses "rituals" and saints. Klimovich patiently explains how shrine pilgrimage derived from pre-Islamic gods and indigenous traditions as well as the "pre-Islamic mythology of the peoples of Central Asia and the Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Ingush, and Russians (vampire)."¹²² He also charged that its *fatvo* notwithstanding, SADUM was not only doing little to stop pilgrimage in practice but was actually "supporting the cult of saints and a variety of graves and tombs associated with them, extracting benefits from pilgrimages to holy places."¹²³ Based on his own travels in Central Asia, he found SADUM to be lifting not even a finger to tackle the superstitious behavior he observed at certain shrines, almost all of them not surprisingly in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Of these shrine-related superstitions, he appears to have been most unsettled by the phenomenon of the holy stone. He referred, for example, to recent 'sightings' of holy stones at shrines in Badakhshon, Karachay, Chechnya, Ingushetia, and specifically at the Abdi Dirun shrine in Samarqand. First comparing these to the black stone at the Ka'aba, he noted that "'holy' stones, like bones, horns, signs with yak tails, etc., constitute one of the chief relics of revered graves and *mazars*."¹²⁴ Here, Klimovich placed the *hajar al-aswad* (the black stone at the Ka'aba in Mecca kissed by pilgrims) alongside these various other 'holy' stones he had seen or heard about; the *hajar al-aswad* was thus implicitly assigned to the category of unofficial, popular Islam. What he appears to have missed in this case is that kissing the stone at the Ka'aba is a practice

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 265. He appears to suggest that vampires entered Islamic mythology through the Russians, but presents no such examples in Muslim cultures as evidence.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 263

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 267. Perhaps Klimovich confused "signs with yak tails" with the horse tails affixed to tall wooden posts at the tombs of many Sufi saints in Central Asia and elsewhere. He also expressed his horror over the *hajar al-aswad* and stones in general in another installment of the "Islam and Modernity" series. See *Nauka i Religii* (August, 1965), p. 55

sanctioned by the example of the Prophet Muhammad; one could not say the same for a stone in Samarqand. Islam has no issue with the idea that a stone can be holy, but such holiness must rest on recognized authority. Thus, the stone example furnishes yet another example of the processes of 'presenting' Islam occurring among contemporary Orientalists.

Although Klimovich was the most prominent and prolific of the Orientalists writing on Muslims in the country during this period, he was by no means alone. Other scholars, some of them his associates, produced materials focusing on various aspects of Islam's 'mosque-based' and 'social' faces. Here it should be noted that semi-respectable Islam was by no means immune from the Orientalists' criticisms. In some cases, individual scholars even presented their own novel theories as to the 'content' of Islam, even if this departed from conventional understandings accepted at SADUM and its international partners such as al-Azhar. For example, the Orientalist Belyaev, editor in chief of the "Science" Publishing House which published *Science and Religion* as well as Klimovich's *Islam*, wrote a review of an anti-Islamic brochure in August of 1961. He lamented that the brochure "could have discussed the Sunnah, Sharia, *adats*, Muslim sects, fasts, and holidays."¹²⁵ The word "*adat*" is key here: what does it mean? Whatever it is, its inclusion in a list of otherwise signature aspects of Islam suggests that it, too, is understood by the author to constitute an element of 'official', respectable Islam. Depending on the language and context in Central Asia, the word in question may refer to a body of customs observed as regulations (i.e., customary 'laws' not part of Islamic or civil law), or it may alternately refer to a specific custom, tradition, or practice alone. In any case, neither usage refers to *adat* (Uzbek, *odat*) as a necessarily Islamic rather than local concept. Belyaev, in fact, executed a reverse of the process of re-appropriation described above in reference to holy stones; he took a concept specific to the cultures (not even religious practices) of Muslims in the USSR and transferred them to the sphere of 'official' Islam.

Ol'ga Sukhareva, a contemporary Orientalist / ethnographer who specifically focused on Central Asia and published four books during the Khrushchev years alone, furnishes another example of this process at work. Her anti-religious brochure of 84

¹²⁵ E. Belyaev, "Islam Segodnia" in *Nauka iReligiia* (August, 1961), p. 93

pages, *Islam in Uzbekistan* (1960), focuses almost entirely on the history of Islam's growth in the region in terms of class struggle. Her tone is less severe and more business-like than that of Klimovich, perhaps because propagandists constituted the brochure's intended audience, but the author had nothing good to say about Islam. A few pages are devoted to shrines, primarily characterizing them as a dying relic of the past. In one of the few references to shrines in modern times, she noted that "often in mountainous areas one may encounter a heap of rocks, on top of which stands a piece of wood with strips of cloth tied to it. This is a *mazar*."¹²⁶ Because the author provided no definition of a *mazar*, it is unclear if she thought that all heaps of stones marked a the purported burial site of a saint, or, alternately, if a heap of stones with holy associations was in fact a *mazar* regardless of whether a saint was believed to be buried there. To put it in simpler terms: whereas the word 'mazar' is commonly associated with graves and tombs, Sukhareva defines a heap of stones - more generally marking the spot of a miracle rather than a burial site - as a 'mazar'. The dynamic is therefore one of redefinition: the definition of a 'mazar' is broadened to include any kind of pilgrimage site, over and above distinctions pilgrims might have made between various types of shrines.

To summarize, then, the contribution of Orientalists to the anti-religious campaign resembled that of the bureaucracy in its internal diversity. The small circle of scholars with ties to top bureaucrats, however, appears to have been less characterized by acrimonious internal debate and intrigue than the bureaucracy. This undoubtedly stemmed from the status of figures such as Klimovich, whose recognized supremacy left little room for disagreement and lively intellectual debate. This was only natural given that Soviet Orientalists did not seek to study Islam as an endeavor worthy of effort in and of itself, but rather sought to clarify the essence of the religion as a means of assisting their senior fellow Communists in the execution of their ideological enterprises. That the Party did act actually rely on these figures as partners is evident both from the prominence accorded to even the smallest of their articles as well as the greater liberties they took during the Khrushchev years in explaining and interpreting Islam with a degree of innovation that went out of the rigidly ideological box of the Stalin era.

¹ O. A. Sukhareva, *Islam v Uzbekistane* (1960), p. 32

The Polemicists

The most common type of anti-religious material available to the Soviet reading public, and by extension to bureaucrats and scholars who read newspapers and journals in addition to their work-related correspondence, emphasized emotional impact over accuracy or the authors' qualifications. Polemicists could claim a much broader audience than academics or bureaucrats, and their articles appeared across the spectrum of periodicals. Typically, a major popular newspaper such as *Truth of the East* featured these kinds of short anti-Islamic articles infrequently. Surprisingly, a journal with a relevant focus such as *Science and Religion* did not necessarily employ the services of these authors more often: from 1959-65, the periodical featured only 18 anti-Islamic short stories and articles by polemicists and Orientalists. (This works out to one article every four months.) Indeed, the paucity of anti-Islamic material in popular literature during this period seems to suggest that the Party organizers of anti-religious initiatives did not prioritize mobilizing the public through the press. This, of course, is not surprising, since these articles were more likely than not to cause great offense to believers reading them and therefore did not have a role to play in attempts to 'convert' them to atheism. Polemical writers did not have a unique set of backgrounds. *Science and Religion* provides their names and information about their education only very rarely. They all appear to have never studied Islam or Muslim history with the possible exception of materials designed exclusively for propagandists. The polemicists roughly fall into two categories: authors of satirical short stories and the 'investigative reporter' who equated his severely prejudiced observations of Muslim life with sound knowledge about Islam.

Polemicists played a role in the anti-religious campaign that differed greatly from that of the Orientalists or the bureaucracy. The spirit of rational moderation found in the November 1954 Central Committee resolution, which called for scientific atheistic propaganda to proceed without offending believers' sentiments, had no currency among polemicists and was certainly not enforced with respect to their writings. For this reason, these articles come off as much more bitterly and extremely anti-religious than almost anything found in the other two domains. They rarely distinguished between official and unofficial clergy and routinely called for their collective annihilation through unspecified means. As a whole, the body of polemical anti-Islamic material reflects an anarchy of

conflicting and often spontaneous opinions and observations. Indeed, this very spontaneity derived from the high level of comfort these authors felt in recording generalizations, analyses, and judgements of Islam in spite of their complete lack not only of any familiarity with the religion or its history but also of the scientific, empirical and qualitative edifices that the Orientalists and bureaucracy had conceptually based their initiatives upon. Thus, the polemicists' contribution was not negligible but at the same time carried much less importance in the construction of the presentation of Islam than the two other domains.

Broadly speaking, then, it had three functions: first, to relay the tension, drama, and continued existence of the campaign to the public; second, to express de-facto public affirmation of and support for the Party's enterprises; and third, to serve as a bulwark of support for the Party by providing confirmation of the picture of Islam that was in the process of formation. Of these three *raisons d'être*, the third is the least obvious and therefore the most complex and interesting. In this respect, one might legitimately ask the following question: considering that these freelance authors could claim very little fame or prominence in the eyes of senior bureaucrats, and that they certainly were of a low level when compared to the likes of a Klimovich, then how could the polemicists be aware that a process of representing Islam was in the works, and how, furthermore, could they obtain inside information as to what characteristics of this Islam they should relate in their articles and short stories? The answer is that they did not consciously know that an active process was taking place - no one 'knew' in a concrete sense - and that they did indeed not have any clear idea as to what characteristics of Islam their pieces should highlight. (It was a given that the portrayal needed to be entirely negative.) No 'solution' appeared to resolve this confusing state of affairs other than to allow each author to write whatever he or she wanted within obvious limits. Undoubtedly, figures such as E. Belyaev at the "Science" Publishing House may have given hints to some of these authors indirectly by editing their pieces. *Science and Religion*, however, did not have a regular staff of polemicists; it accepted submissions from journalists around the USSR. For this reason, the contributors attempted to fulfill the three aforementioned goals with all the considerably literary skill and woefully amateurish fabrications about Islam and

Muslim life that they could muster. Two recurring 'images' in such literature during this period - the cleric and the shrine - merit some discussion.

This paper began with the rather uncomplimentary portrayal of an unregistered Khorezmian 'cleric' by the name of Vaisov. In addition to describing him as a sexual predator and a liar, the same author also claimed that "he does not know the interpretation of even one prayer." Earlier, the aforementioned "Pir Niyaz Khodja", the "twenty first descendant of Muhammad" who had for moral reasons abandoned his highly profitable career in "ishanism" and become an atheist, noted that "among the Muslim clergy there are many completely illiterate people who know neither the Arabic language nor the writings of the Qur'an."¹²⁷ Another article from Kazakstan in 1963 referred to "mullas... who, as a rule, are characteristically ignorant. Not knowing Arabic, they cannot read the Qur'an, and because of this each one plots in his own way."¹²⁸ These two writers seemed to suggest that the backwardness and ignorance of clerics stemmed in large part from their lack of knowledge of Arabic as reflected through their inability to understand the prayers they read. Then, the implication is that if they learned Arabic they would become knowledgeable and respectable. One can look at how well this played out in practice by examining the treatment of SADUM's imams, who as a rule could read and understand the Qur'an, by the polemicists. The same "Kamill Ikramov" who slandered Vaisov, however, had the following to say about "educated" imams:

"The situation is even worse for the official Muslim clergy. With each day it loses its authority among the population more and more. In recent years the number of believers performing the holiday prayer (juma namaz) [sic]¹²⁹ has noticeably decreased. Thirty clerics work in Khorezm's three [registered] mosques, and they are fed primarily from what they make at funerals or through folk medicine or thievery."¹³⁰

¹²⁷ "Pir Niyaz Khodja", "Tak Gasla moia Vera" in *Nauka i Religii* (May, 1960), p. 45

¹²⁸ U. Sharipov, "Neponiatnoe Blagodushie" in *Nauka i Religii* (August, 1963), p. 74

¹²⁹ This little mistake, wherein the author equates the weekly congregational prayer on Friday with the holiday prayer, strongly suggests that he or she belonged to a Russian or other 'non-Muslim' nationality. Juma means Friday in most, and very likely all, of the 'Muslim' languages of the USSR.

¹³⁰ "Kamill Ikramov", "Yarkii Svet - Rezkie Teni" in *Nauka i Religii* (July, 1960), p. 26. Considering that the mosque in question was very likely the only registered one in the province, the number of 30 clerics is not unfeasible. Most of these were probably apprentices and deputy imams.

Thus, even a cleric with extensive religious education remained as despicable and ignorant as a prayer reader who did not understand any Arabic. Only the path of departure from Islam into the light of atheism taken by "Pir Niyaz Khodja" could save one from becoming a parasite. This polemicist, at least, implicitly contradicted himself, revealing that he could not reach any involved conclusions about Islam beyond the simple reality that it was a force of backwardness and, consequently, could not provide any meaningful suggestions as to how to address the problem. All these amateur writers completely lacked the relatively reliable consistency of the Orientalists.

Of the 18 anti-Islamic pieces published in *Science and Religion* from 1959 through the end of 1965, only 2 deal exclusively with shrines. They are both written in the investigative journalism style. It is probably not a coincidence that both focus on the Farghona Valley: one on a certain shrine by the name of Aloma buva near the village of O'tarma, Baghdad district, Farghona region, and the other on Suleyman-tau in O'sh. According to the author of the former piece, who wrote under the pseudonym of "Talot-bek", O'tarma featured many of the trappings of Soviet civilization such as "13 medical workers, 22 pedagogues, and 8 *agronoms*". The town's population received 1000 copies of newspapers and journals every day, including "*Science and Religion, Science and Life, and Soviet Medicine!*" For this reason, pilgrimages to Aloma buva stopped. One day, however, an "unattractive and small old geezer in a beat-up white turban" appeared in the presumably smaller village of Miliboi 10 km away and, going from door to door, tried to convince people to conduct pilgrimages to the shrine. Most people "sent him packing", but he convinced 10 women along with 12 of their children, ages 2-5, to accompany him on a pilgrimage. At Aloma buva, the old man sacrificed a bird and, holding a dripping red knife in his hand, poured the blood on the ground in front of the shrine. All the children began crying hysterically at this gory spectacle, whereupon the old man forced them to roll around in the blood-stained dust. (The slaughter of an animal was presumably an uncommon site for these village children.) If this was not bad enough, their mothers subsequently did the same. He concluded the article by noting that each *raispolkom* had lists of propagandistic lecturers who had worked in the area over the past 8-10 years, but that all this was quaint at best.¹³¹

¹³¹ "Talot-bek", "Ul'tarminskie [sic] palomniki" in *Nauka i Religiia* (June, 1960), pp. 32-33

The author of the 'exposé' on Suleyman-tau, entitled "The Shadow of Mount Solomon", attempted to adopt a somewhat less sarcastic and more investigative tone in his piece. Also in its shadow, from the author's perspective, was the *qadamjoy* of Hazrat Ali at Shohimardon - famous site of the murder of the anti-religious activist and author Hamza Hokimzoda Niyozii in the 1920s - over a hundred kilometers away. After some quaint observations about the history of the invention of the shrine, he goes on to make some general observations about the nature of shrines. This author clearly had a more constructive focus, at least in terms of propaganda, and appears to have felt genuine pity for the duped and exploited masses of pilgrims. "Were one to expound on the history of some Muslim 'saints' in the south of Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan, a whole book of bloody crimes would surface." Thus having established that shrine pilgrimage led not only to colossal exploitation but routine murder as well, the author focused on what means of scientific-atheistic propaganda would best match the mindset of the pilgrims. The work of "explaining the evils of pilgrimage to the pilgrims" should continue through the means "of print, radio, lectures and chats" in order to make clear to them "the history of the establishment of any 'holy place' and bring forth facts about the thuggery of the servants of the cult." In perhaps the single perceptive comment to be found in the collective body of polemical literature, the author lamented that "the chief weakness in the struggle against reverence for 'holy places' is the unsystematic character of atheistic propaganda."¹³²

Both these articles, which vary in tone but share a common goal, employ the stereotypical images of a denizen of a shrine which one would expect to find in such polemical literature. In this respect, they clearly followed the lead of the campaign, starting with the 1958 anti-pilgrimage decree. At the same time, another dynamic plays out in both pieces which would have been familiar enough to many Soviet readers, especially bureaucrats, *viz.*, that of the *proverka*. A word which conjured up all sorts of negative connotations for many, the *proverka* denoted an investigation of the work practices of an administrative body conducted by individuals external to that body. For example, Moscow regularly conducted such *proverki* of republican parties, as did the republican parties *ofobkoms*. Here, "Talot-bek" and Petrash attempted to appropriate a

³² A. Petrash, "Ten' Suleiman Goryi" in *Nauka iReligiia* (October, 1961), pp. 42-45

level of authority no one in the Party had given them by masquerading as independent sources of critical authority in the struggle against pilgrimage. They could criticize the laxity of local authorities in addition to proposing their own theories as to why propaganda had failed in some areas and what one could do to improve it. At the same time, they provided confirmation before the public that highly ineffective propaganda measures such as lectures were not only valid but also the sole means of furthering the campaign. In O'ltarma, for example, the population abandoned Aloma buva as a direct result of the widespread popularity of relevant periodicals. Only in a town which lacked these close ties to the world of urban print could the "crazy old geezer" recruit pilgrims. (This description constitutes an unusual interpretation of how and why Muslims embark upon pilgrimages). In another telling example, Petrash concludes his article in signature *proverka* style i.e., with a highly generalized lamentation over the regrettable state of affairs. While rightly noting the chaotic character of the progress of the campaign to date, the author here did not attempt to criticize the measures of propaganda used or to propose new ones. This underscores the fact that the polemicists did not have an independent role to play in the anti-religious campaign; for reasons that are by now apparent, the Party did not regard their work as a source of inspiration or innovation. At the same, their comfort in pontificating on the failings of local Party organs and in reaffirming their support for the measures currently in use demonstrates that they operated as a domain independent of the other contributors involved in the campaign. It is telling that Petrash took no issue with the lectures and chats in and of themselves but rather with the way local authorities organized these events and measures. Such 'localism', in his view, became detrimental to the campaign as a whole because it had not been adequately systematized i.e., coordinated in toto from a central anti-Islamic apparatus. This mania over the laziness, incompetence, or preservation of self-interest on the part of local authorities (especially in Central Asia) also closely matched the predilections of the central bureaucracy. Such a chaotic and disorganized dynamic then characterized the polemical contribution to the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign in Central Asia. It will be readily apparent that the state accorded the polemicists the least prominence and authority in the struggle. At the same time, this should not be taken to mean that polemical articles did not constitute a separate and largely independent domain of activity and thought. That the

focus and sphere of this domain focused on influencing the reading public rather than repressing and influencing believers directly does not minimize its very real psychological contribution, both in giving those involved in the campaign a sense of moral support and in consolidating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in the minds of practicing Muslims. Thus, one should not make the mistake of overlooking the significance of the decisions these writers made as to how they could contribute individually to the overall enterprise.

Conclusion

It is common knowledge that the Khrushchev-era and other Soviet anti-religious campaigns did not succeed in erasing the "opium" of religion from Soviet society. This paper has demonstrated, however, that the campaign witnessed and facilitated unprecedented and long-lasting changes in how the government as well as Soviet academia analyzed Islam and Muslim life. An unintended and, at the time, unacknowledged result of the campaign, these changes stemmed from the delegation of specific responsibilities and types of contributions to different categories of actors. First and foremost, a qualitative change may be observed in the approach of the bureaucracy to Islam starting from the 1940s but especially during the Khrushchev years. This paper has suggested that there was a marked difference in the Party's understanding of Islam in the 1920s and 1930s on the one hand and in the 1940s and especially the 1950s on the other. Increasingly, criticism of Islam came to hone in on specific aspects of Muslim practice in various regions. This is observed most clearly in the intense scrutiny of Muslim life which culminated in the anti-pilgrimage component of Khrushchev's anti-religious campaign. It has also been suggested that the rising specificity of anti-Islamic measures was a result of the increasingly detailed statistical data on Muslim life available to the Party in the 1940s and especially after the founding of SADUM in 1943. The prominence accorded to these bureaucratically generated statistics as a basis for analyzing Muslim life in Central Asia has been demonstrated in the discussion of inaccurate reports on numbers of shrines which were apparently accepted as legitimate by high-level bureaucrats. As such a detailed and novel representation of Islam emerged based on these statistical reports, various regions of Central Asia were classified as more Muslim than others (in

some cases validating stereotypes about certain peoples or republics). The bureaucratic contribution to this new presentation of Islam and the anti-religious campaign that rested upon it was therefore primarily an empirical one.

While lacking the means to assess the situation 'on the ground' through various networks of *obkoms* and *upolnomochennye*, Soviet Orientalists and Islamicists (*vostokovedy* and *islamovedy* apparently being used interchangeably at times) also made an important contribution to this process of elucidating Islam for the benefit of the Party and the efficacy of its anti-religious initiatives. The transformation of the official / unofficial administrative dichotomy into the religious categories of respectable versus popular Islam acquired ratification, legitimacy, and currency in the bureaucracy and scholarship alike thanks to the writings of Orientalists. What is most important here is the connection between the Party and the Orientalists on the one hand and the Party and SADUM on the other. It has been suggested in this paper that from the 1940s onwards the Party required a full, detailed presentation of Islam because Marxism and the class struggle paradigm (i.e., that of a clerical group manipulating the proletariat in cooperation with the feudal *bois*) no longer proved adequate for its purposes. One might think that SADUM, composed of clergy loyal to the state if not Party members themselves, would present itself as the ideal source to fill in the gaps in the state's knowledge of Islam. Increasingly, SADUM did indeed play the role of giving the state some degree of control over the religious life of its Muslim citizens. However, it emphatically did *not* advise the Party on what Islam was and was not. As the state felt this need more and more, Orientalists such as Klimovich (rather than SADUM) took on the role of consultant to the Party with respect to all matters Islamic. This is, of course, understandable, since the Party placed full trust in neither the ROC nor SADUM; it appears that the only government organs permitted to engage in full contact with these ecclesiastical bodies were CAROC and CARC respectively. In this paper, the theme of the appropriation by the Orientalists of *ijozat* or interpretative authority has been brought up more than once precisely because SADUM was so aggressively excluded from the formulation of a new presentation and definition of Islam.

Lowest on the scale of importance and consultative authority, polemicists writing in various journals and newspapers sought both to maintain a healthy level of suspicion

of religion within society at large and to offer their support to the Party's anti-religious initiatives. In and of themselves, one cannot regard the polemicists as having initiated a broad departure from polemical writings of previous decades. Within the broader context of the changing dynamic of the Party's approach to Islam, however, these writers had an important sustaining and supportive role to play as they transmitted their understanding of the Party's initiatives to the Soviet reading public and, increasingly, focused on specific practices such as pilgrimage or conducted analyses of a low level of sophistication of specific localities, mosques, and individuals. Given that the discussion of Islam and Muslims in these articles lacks the consistency or analytical approach of the bureaucratic reports or scholarly works mentioned above, it seems that these writers were not organized in any meaningful way and that the state accorded relatively little importance to their activities. Nevertheless, as the popular (if inconsistent and chaotic) 'voice' of the anti-religious campaign to the public, their contributions deserve recognition as a reflection of the overall changes in the state's approach to Islam occurring at this time.

The Party viewed the anti-religious campaign both as deeply rooted in the Marxist progression of history and, more importantly, in the attempts of previous decades to extirpate Islam. As has already been mentioned, the relevant actors would very likely have had difficulty in perceiving the existence of three contributory domains at the time, and, furthermore, would not have recognized the innovative and unprecedented nature of their emergence. For this reason, it has been emphasized more than once that, as the campaign played out, the process of imagining Islam unfolded in an active but unconscious manner among its protagonists. Khrushchev's anti-Islamic campaign in Central Asia was a deliberate attempt to control and limit the practice of Islam. The specific form this campaign took, however, resulted from a qualitative change in the Party's approach to Islam which was neither planned, foreseen, nor organized. Furthermore, it appears that this change was never acknowledged as such at any level of those involved in anti-religious endeavors. To those actors participating in these initiatives, the increasing specificity of the attack on Muslim life may have seemed like a natural evolution of the state's anti-religious efforts, resulting from its increased familiarity with the peoples and regions under its control. It does not seem far-fetched to

suggest, however, that the establishment of SADUM in 1943 was the catalyst in this process because this set down administrative channels connecting the Party to religious life at the most local level. Even if these connections were indirect because of the position of SADUM as an intermediary of sorts, they inadvertently brought the Party into contact with aspects of Muslim life which the nebulous, pre-1943 ecclesiastical status-quo had kept hidden (against, perhaps inadvertently) from its glance. If these ecclesiastical structures of the pre-1943 era had been left untouched administratively (i.e., as religious bodies which did not have a meticulously defined place in Soviet society and law), it may not be unreasonable to surmise that Islamic shrine pilgrimage would have never become a major concern for the Party; in any case, one can reasonably propose that the simple class struggle paradigm vis-à-vis Islam might have seemed adequate for at least a little longer and that the anti-Islamic drive of the state would have taken different forms. If this was the case, then the establishment of SADUM had consequences beyond those which the Party had intended. Moreover, the new, indirect administrative channels connecting the individual Muslim believer with top officials in Moscow laid an important foundation: they established the setting for radical changes in how those officials - and the many levels of officialdom between them and individual Muslim, Soviet citizens - conceptualized Islam.

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