

THE REPUBLIC OF ADIGEY: ISLAM AND SOCIETY AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

Irina BABICH

*D.Sc. (Hist.), leading research associate of
the Department of the Caucasus,
Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, RAS
(Moscow, the Russian Federation)*

So far the Republic of Adigey (RA) has received much less attention from researchers of Islam than other Muslim regions of the Russian Federation. This is explained by the fact that in the 1990s Islam was less developed there than in other RF regions, as well as by the republic's more "peaceful" social and political development. Today, Islam is developing at a fast pace.

This is amply demonstrated by the growing number of newly built mosques and newly organized Muslim communities. During Soviet power all mosques were closed down; the mosque in the village of Takhtamukay was the first to reopen after the Soviet era in 1992; the village preserved the old building, which was then restored.¹ According to information supplied by the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Adigey and the Krasnodar Territory (hereinafter SAM RA and KT), early in 2004 there were 30 functioning mosques in the republic and the same number of registered Muslim communities, the most active among them being the communities of the Takhtamukay and Teuchezh districts, and the least active the communities of the Shovgen and Krasnogvardeyskoe districts.²

Today, the total population of the Krasnodar Territory is 5,300,000. There are about 160,000 Muslims among them (counted as such for purely formal reasons), including 20,000 Adighe; there are 103,000 Muslims among the total RA population of 440,000. The largest communities are found in the RA capital of Maykop (about 500 members) and in Adygeisk (about 150 Muslims).³ Small communities (about 20 to 40 members) are found in mountain villages. Ethnically, the communities are usually patchy: there are Chechens, Daghestanis, and Tartars in the Maykop community together with the Adighe. In 1999, the administration of the RF Southern Federal Okrug moved about 4,000-5,000 Chechens to Adigey (mainly to Maykop), who became the core of the Maykop Muslim community; it also has several Russian members.⁴

The communities of Adygeisk and of the Takhtamukay and Teuchezh districts are also ethnically mixed. This is explained by their closeness to Krasnodar, which has no mosque of its own: the large ethnically mixed Muslim community, which includes Azeris, Afghans, Chechens, Daghestanis, Kurds and other ethnic groups, has to attend the nearest mosques outside the territorial center. Muslims in other cities and towns of the Krasnodar Territory also pray in the mosques of Adigey. On Fridays, the Muslims of the town of Kurganinsk (Daghestanis and Chechens) attend the mosque in the village of Koshekhabl.

The Tartar and Chechen communities are the largest in the RA; they take part in all events organized by the SAM RA and KT. The Tartar Cultural-Educational Society Duslyk functions in Adigey; its leaders are also involved in Muslim activities. It was at their request that one of the community's representatives in the SAM RA and KT was replaced. This shows that the SAM RA and KT takes into account the opinions of the leaders of the Tartar community (who, together with the Adighe, are Hanafis⁵) when it comes to training mosque heads and teaching the fundamentals of Islam to community members. Local

¹ Field data gathered by the author (hereinafter FMA), Adigey, March 2004; FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 8, File 3.

² Archives of the Main Mosque of Maykop. Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 9 April, 2003.

³ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 8, File 2.

⁴ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 3, File 2; Inventory 1, File 3; Inventory 2, File 1.

⁵ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 21 January, 2004.

Chechens who are Shafiites (a madhab practically unknown in the North-Western Caucasus in the previous period) find it hard to blend with the local religious activities.

While in Maykop and Adygeisk the communities have mainly young members, in the mountain villages religious communities attract older people. Women actively attend both urban and village mosques; knowing no Arabic, the older generation has to learn the prayers by heart. Many of the older women actively attend courses on Islam and the Koran. Muslim women, especially the wives of young imams, have started wearing hijabs. At the same time, many of the newly built mosques in villages are inactive even on Fridays: there are not enough clerics to conduct Friday namaz and hutba; and not all the communities have imams. But the main reason for the poor attendance is that the majority of the local population is either totally indifferent to Islam or even hostile to it. There are strange things too: in the village of Koshekhabl, for example, where the mosque has been functioning since 1995, there is a liquor shop next to it on the same plot of land.⁶

The majority of the village imams are elderly people who live on their pension; and the younger imams have jobs at private or state enterprises. In the village of Takhtamukay, the local imam works at the local Heat and Power Office; he only has time to conduct the morning and evening namazes in the mosque, and all the other prayer services have to be held in the office during working hours.⁷

There are no waqf lands in Adigey to be leased out to earn money for the mosques. There were no such lands in the past, in the 19th century. In April 2003, the Council of SAM RA and KT discussed a government document called "On Allocating Agricultural Lands to the Muslim Communities of the RA." The republic's mufti N. Emizh invited "all those who wish to till land in support of the mosques to send applications stating the exact size of the land plots and their location." No applications were forthcoming. It should be added that the Adighe who moved to the RA from Kosovo in 1990 had experience with the waqf system: in Kosovo all the mosques had such land plots. They were leased out, and the revenue earned was used to support the mosques.⁸ The Kosovo Adighe, however, refused to continue this practice in Adigey.

Under Soviet power, as distinct from Kabardino-Balkaria, the Adighe observed Islamic rites at home. Some of older villagers knew Arabic prayers and could perform Muslim burial rites; they were called efendis. Their children and grandchildren preserved this tradition by heading the local Muslim communities. It should be said that few of them know Arabic and have fundamental knowledge of Islam. In fact, this is true of the entire North-Western Caucasus. There are exceptions to the rule, too. For example, the imam of the Kabardinian village Koshekhabl learned Arabic when he was 60 and attended 3-month courses on the fundamentals of Islam in Syria.⁹ It was the Soviet efendis who convened the first congress of the Muslims of Adigey on 25 October, 1990 in the village of Adamiy.¹⁰ This generation is gradually disappearing; young Muslims are moving to the fore. They predominate in the communities and use the term "imam" to describe the mosque leaders. In some places, the young imam conducts Friday hutbas, while the old efendi is responsible for burials. The community members get together to elect imams who are approved by the SAM RA and KT; it is the mufti's responsibility to appoint community leaders.

The new Islamic leaders are recruited from three categories of the faithful. The first group consists of repatriate Adighe who came back from the Middle East in the 1990s. Some of them still hold their posts. Ibrahim Nihad-hajji, imam of the main mosque of Maykop, started working with young Adighe who began coming from the Caucasus to Damascus in the 1990s. Then he came to Maykop. At that time, there were practically no Islamic activities in Adigey and he started teaching in the Islamic institutes of Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. He was offered the post of imam in the newly built main mosque of Maykop. Two other Adighe repatriates teach the fundamentals of Islam in a school which functions at the mosque. Repatriates from the Middle East organized the republic's first Arabic and Koranic courses in the old mosque. Very soon they were replaced by repatriate Adighe from Syria and Tur-

⁶ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 5, File 2.

⁷ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 4, File 1.

⁸ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 9 April, 2003; FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 6, File 1.

⁹ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 5, File 2.

¹⁰ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 5, File 3.

key.¹¹ Many of the latter were students of Krasnodar higher educational establishments and visited the nearest villages of the Takhtamukay and Teuchezh districts of Adigey to give lectures about Islam. At the same time, Zeytdin from Turkey, an abadzekh by nationality, was teaching in the village of Takhtamukay. His lessons were popular among all age groups, including the older generation. Some time later he tried to open a madrassah; when the local authorities declined his request for land for his school he went back to Turkey. A repatriate Adighe Hussein was teaching in the same district.

The Syrian Muslims, who had been exposed to strict control over Muslim activities in their home country where so-called political Islam was banned, proved to be highly successful: they treated the authorities with respect and maintained close contacts with them. Early in the 1990s, Faiz Autaev, an Adighe from Syria, made an important contribution to Islamic activities in the republic. He was the first to publish Islamic literature in Maykop. His books are still widely used.

The second category consists of the Kosovo repatriates. In the late 19th century, their ancestors emigrated *en masse* to the Ottoman Empire. They came back in 1998 on an invitation from RA President Djarimov when the conflict between the Kosovo Serbs and Albanians flared up. Today they live in Maykop, in the Adaptation Center, and in the village of Mafekhahl built for them. Those who received an Islamic education in Kosovo or Turkey claim the posts of mosque heads and community leaders. Some of them were appointed imams of the mosques in the village of Afipsip and in Adygeisk. Those who came earlier managed to become imams. For example, N. Abaza has been filling the post of imam since 1994. The young Kosovo repatriates are convinced that they could have held more posts. Not being exposed to the Soviet 70-year long ban on Islam, they are fully aware of the difference between the “Kosovo” and “Adighe” versions of the faith.

The local people trained in the Middle East or the Northern Caucasus comprise the third group. Since the latter half of the 1990s, they have been playing an increasingly important role in the republic’s religious activities.

I have already written that Middle East Arabs contributed to a religious revival in the republic. Being more active in Kabardino-Balkaria they also affected, to a certain degree, the religious processes in Adigey. The imam of the village of Takhtamukay was introduced to Islam by the Syrian Arabs who studied medicine in Krasnodar in the 1990s.¹² It was Middle Eastern Arabs who opened the first Arabic and Koranic courses in the old mosque in Maykop. Krasnodar Muslims also had an immense influence on the people in Adigey. Farid Rashidi from Afghanistan, who is member of the SAM RA and KT Council, plays a prominent role in this organization.

At the same time, Mufti Nurbiy E. Emizh, a 65-year-old Muslim, plays an important role in Adigey. In Soviet times he filled various posts in republican structures. He believes that Islam should be developed under strict state control (the law enforcement structures in particular).

In contrast to Kabardino-Balkaria, there are no contradictions in Adigey when it comes to electing the village Islamic leaders, the main problem being the lack of imams. Over time, the posts will be filled by young educated Muslims—in the absence of an adequate number of educated religious leaders of the older generation, this will not cause many problems (as was the case in Kabardino-Balkaria). Today, the old and young generations cannot agree on certain issues (the use of skullcaps, the position of the hands during the namaz, etc.). Some of the young Muslims would like to change the content of the Friday hutbas offered by the imam of the main Maykop mosque. The young Muslim community in Takhtamukay headed by imam A. Mamiy cannot agree with the Maykop Islamic leaders on certain points. Ramadan Tsey, a Kosovo repatriate, is even more radical, yet few people side with him.

I have written above that the republican Muslim community is patchy with respect to its ethnic composition. It is made up of Hanafis and Shafiites (Chechens, Ingushes, and Daghestani peoples). There are no contradictions among them, even though the majority of the local and Middle Eastern and Kosovo repatriate Adighe are Hanafis. There is a small number of Shafiites among the local people.

The correlation between the Adighe and Islamic cultures, the Adat and the Shari’a, is the key problem. It has already caused serious disagreements in the republic and affected both Muslims and atheists.

¹¹ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 2, File 1.

¹² FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 4, File 1.

The traditional Muslims and the intellectuals, who are mainly atheists, have found themselves in one camp, while the young Muslims form another camp. The older generation and the intellectuals cherish the local traditions, while the younger generation is attached to the Islamic rules. This also happened in Kabardino-Balkaria where the younger generation too has been engaged in reassessing the local culture.

Here are the results of a sociological poll called "The State and Future of Islam in Adighe" conducted in 2000 by the department of philosophy and sociology of the Republican Institute of Humanitarian Studies. Four hundred people were polled. The question on the correlation between the Islamic and Adighe cultures produced the following answers: 6 percent are convinced that "Islam is more important than traditional culture," 16 percent said: "Islam and traditional culture of the Adighe completely overlap," while 40 percent were convinced that they partially overlap.¹³

On the whole, the Council of the SAM RA and KT and its mufti N. Emizh support the desire of the young Muslims to modernize local Islam and introduce "pure" Islam among the Adighe (and not only among them). One of the republic's prominent Islamic leaders, Najmuddin Abaza, imam of the mosque of the city of Adygensk, said that at first mufti Emizh supported the idea of closer contact and a compromise between the local culture and traditional Islam. Later, in the course of numerous discussions with Faiz Autaev, one of the ideologists of Islamic revival in the republic, the mufti came to the conclusion that the Islamic and traditional life of the Adighe should be altered somewhat.¹⁴

On the whole, the Muslims headed by their mufti are convinced that the Islam the local people inherited from Soviet times, which authors call "traditional," is in fact "impure" and should not be revived and promoted. It should be restricted, and genuine Islam, which is free from Adighe and other local traditions, be offered mainly to teenagers and young people. It should be said that the mufti supported the younger generation in its discussion of the skullcap issue: the older generation continues wearing skullcaps during namaz. A. Nibo pointed out that young Muslims do not wear skullcaps even for funeral services.¹⁵

The young Muslims are convinced that the following changes should be made in traditional Islam and traditional Adighe culture:

- the dance culture should be limited: men should be allowed to dance while joint dances of men and women can be permitted only if the women are dressed according to the Islamic tradition (long dresses with long sleeves and a kerchief), their partners should not hold their hands;¹⁶
- liquor should be banned during holidays and at marriage feasts. When attending marriage feasts the young Muslims sit at separate tables where no liquor is served;¹⁷
- the local tradition of bride abduction should be limited. The local imams completely agree with this: if such couples approach them with a request for the *nekyah* (religious marriage), they normally refuse to conduct the ceremony.¹⁸ The forms of Adighe culture (Adighe khabze) common among the Middle Eastern and Kosovo Adighe, who actively disseminated Islam among the local people, are different from those of the Adighe of Russia. The imam of the main mosques of Maykop Ibrahim Nihad-hajji pointed out that at no time did the Syrian Adighe practice bride abduction;¹⁹
- funeral feasts should be banned (they normally take place on the day of the burial and on the 7th and 40th days after death). Mourning on the burial day should be limited to the dua (prayer); "Jewish"-style hats should be banned, as well as taking money for washing the dead (the ritual has already developed into a business);²⁰

¹³ See: R.A. Khanakhu, O.M. Tsvetkov, "Islam v Adygee: sostoiianie i perspektivy," *Izvestia Tsentra sistemnykh issledovaniy Maykopskogo gosudarstvennogo tekhnologicheskogo instituta. Filosofia, sotsiologia, kulturologia*, Issue 3, 2001, pp. 71-72.

¹⁴ Interview with Najmuddin Abaza, 15 March, 2004. FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 8, File 2.

¹⁵ See: A. Nibo, "Okh, tiazhela adygskaja papakha," *Shapsugia*, No. 2, 28 January, 2004.

¹⁶ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 1, File 1.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 4, File 2.

¹⁹ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 2, File 2.

²⁰ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 8, File 2.

- reverence for the older generation should be limited. According to imam of Adygeisk Najmuddin Abaza, the custom should be observed only outside the mosques.

Today, the SAM RA and KT mufti and the imam of the main mosque are visiting one mountain village after another requesting that some of the burial rites (funeral feasts on the 7th and 40th days) not be performed. Some of local efendis and imams have joined the campaign and set personal examples. In one of the villages, the young deputy of the imam limited the burial rites for his dead father to three days according to the Islamic tradition and announced that nothing would happen on the 7th and 40th days. To placate the insulted villagers, his mother had to buy a bull and secretly distribute the food among the local people on the 7th and 40th days.

The young Muslims are trying to change the burial rules established during Soviet times. The Adighe still put up gravestones on family burial sites and small fences around them. This is gradually changing. In Takhtamukay, for example, the local efendi banned family burial lots; and in Mamkheg and Maykop all fences were removed from the Muslim cemeteries.

Little by little, the young faithful are forming a new Islamic culture: during the Kurman-Bayram celebration, a concert in the Maykop Palace of Culture included zikirs in Arabic and Adighe languages performed by the Islamey ensemble. The young reformers suggest that children be given Islamic names, a tradition partly lost during Soviet times.

The press became a battleground between the Muslims and the Adighe intelligentsia. The dispute began in September 2003 when the *Adighe Mak* newspaper published an article called “Adigeyskie oby-chai i obriady” (Adighe Customs and Rituals) written by M. Bedjanov, a researcher at the Republican Institute of Humanitarian Studies (in the past he held the post of advisor of the RA government Committee for Ethnic Issues). He was resolutely opposed to substituting Islamic customs for Adighe ones. Historian Asker Sokht, head of the republican organization Adighe Khase and publisher of the district newspaper *Nasha respublika* (Our Republic) (the Takhtamukay District) supported him by publishing R. Gusaruk’s article “Islamizm ili adygstvo, chto voz’met verkh?” (Islamism or the Adighe Customs: Which Will Prevail?)²¹

There are more moderate people who want the Islamic and Adighe cultures to cooperate. S. Muskhajiev, a Chechen and member of the Maykop Muslim community with a Ph. D. in History, is one of them. His article entitled “Islam i adygstvo: vzaimodeystvie, a ne protivostoianie” (Islam and Adighe Customs: Cooperation rather than Confrontation) appeared in *Adighe Mak*.²² He pointed out that the Adighe intelligentsia had joined the “bout of anti-Islamic hysteria” which had reached the media. He wrote: “It is very wrong to oppose Islam as a religious teaching and Divine rules and the Adighe customs as a traditional ethnic code. They are not antagonists; they have been living side by side for many centuries; they cooperated, were intertwined and proved their ability to coexist throughout the long heroic and tragic history of the Adighe. Their history does not know a single instance of clashes or enmity on this ground. The Kosovo Adighe are a wonderful example of this: they combine pure faith in Allah with perfect command of their native tongue.”²³

This is not completely true, however: in the past, while Islam was spreading in the North-Western Caucasus the Muslims repeatedly clashed over the discrepancies between the Adighe and Islamic cultures. Islam always modernizes ethnic life. Even though the Hanafi madhab is the most tolerant among the other madhabs, as far as ethnic cultures are concerned, it repeatedly caused confrontations between the older (and therefore more conservative) generation and young reformers.²⁴ In the past, too, the institution of veneration of the older generation was barely accepted.

The SAM RA and KT Council has repeatedly discussed the negative attitude toward the Islamic culture, and in some cases toward Islam in general, demonstrated by the Adighe intelligentsia. The Council members responded to the articles by M. Bedjanov, A. Sokht and R. Gusaruk differently. As a result,

²¹ See: R. Gusaruk, “Islamizm ili adygstvo, chto voz’met verkh?” *Nasha Respublika*, No. 4, 2001.

²² FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 6, File 4.

²³ “Islam i adygstvo: vzaimodeystvie, a ne protivostoianie,” *Golos Adyga*, 20 October, 2001.

²⁴ For more detail, see: I.L. Babich, A.A. Iarlykapov, *Islamskoe vozrozhdenie v sovremennoy Kabardino-Balkarii: perspektivy i posledstvia*, Moscow, 2003, pp. 10-66.

the Council decided to “hold meetings in the villages to discuss issues relating to the Islamic revival and national traditions.”²⁵

There is another problem related to the correlation between the Islamic and Adighe cultures created by the Kosovo repatriates. The middle and older generations of the Kosovo repatriates are aware of the great differences between the local Islamic and ethnic cultures and the culture they were exposed to in Kosovo. On the one hand, their Islam is closer to the Turkish rather than the Adighe version. Until their resettlement in 1995-1998, they had village Sunday schools and madrassahs, while those who wished could receive higher religious education in Turkey.²⁶ On the other hand, the norms of Adighe conduct at home and outside the home (Adighe *khazbe*) changed a lot: certain Adighe traditions were absent in Kosovo. At the same time, the Kosovo Adighe preserved customs no longer observed in Adigey. It should be said that “Kosovo Islam” helped the Adighe preserve their ethnic culture, for example, the tradition of veneration of the older generation. It was normal in Kosovo to reserve the two front rows for the old people. In Adigey and Kabardino-Balkaria, those who come first pray in the front rows—something that invariably arouses displeasure among the older people.²⁷

Modernization has affected the legal sphere of Islam, the Muslim laws which, according to the faithful, should be gradually introduced to replace the *adat* (the legal system of the past which has been partially preserved). Today, the imams perform marriage rites in the republic’s mosques and issue marriage certificates. It should be said that the legal norms of the Shari‘a related to the family sphere are applied when the bride and bridegroom enter into property relations, namely when the concept of *makhr* (property which goes to the wife and not her relatives in case of divorce) was introduced in Adigey. Field data show that when a couple gets married they still agree on *kalym* (the *adat* norm) received by the bride’s relatives and returned in case of divorce rather than *makhr*. Today, when Islam is being revived in the republic, the faithful insist on *makhr* rather than on *kalym*. Since 2000 the imam of the main mosque of Maykop has performed *nekyah* for 200 couples from Adigey and Krasnodar.²⁸

Those village imams who received marriage certificate forms from the central mosque can also perform *nekyah*. Few men have two wives. There is a Kabardinian in one of the mountain villages who has two wives—a senior and a junior. So far there have been no divorces or division of property according to the Muslim rules in Adigey, yet people frequently ask the imam of the central Maykop mosque for Shari‘a divorces and division of property. On the whole, the Adighe avoid the rather complicated Shari‘a process in favor of the *adat* rules, which demand that the woman be satisfied. The Kosovo repatriates stick to the Muslim rules of inheritance and draw up their last wills and testaments.

In 1991, the first congress of the republic’s Muslims held in the village of Adamiy created the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Adigey and the Krasnodar Territory. Since then seven congresses have been held, which changed *muftis* several times. This happened for several reasons: two of the *muftis* were old and soon died, and another went into business.²⁹ The seventh, special, congress was held in November 2003. It was attended by 166 people, including Premier N. Demchuk, deputy chairperson of the Republican Press Committee M. Shkhalakhova, and the Bishop of Adigey and Maykop Panteleymon. The congress elected Nurbiy E. Emizh the new *mufti*.

The SAM RA and KT has a Council of 25 members and an Executive Committee made up of 5-7 active and respected Muslims. It is the task of the Executive Committee to discuss all issues related to the Islamic revival and proliferation of Islam in the republic before they are submitted for the Council’s consideration. The latter consists of representatives of all districts and all ethnic groups of the republic and territory.

The SAM is engaged in mosque construction and proliferation of Islam. The Council members meet local people to discuss the ways and means Islam can be restored in the republic; the media are also in-

²⁵ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 29 March, 2003.

²⁶ Interview with Iskander Tsey, 14 March, 2004. FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 6, File 2.

²⁷ FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 6, File 2.

²⁸ Interview with Ibrahim Nihad-hajji, 17 March, 2002. FMA, Notebook 1, Inventory 2, File 2.

²⁹ Interview with *Mufti* of SAM RA and KT N. Emizh, Maykop, 9 March, 2004. FMA, Republic of Adigey, March 2004, Notebook 1, Inventory 1, File 1.

volved in the process.³⁰ An Islamic newspaper *Din-Khase* has been published in the republic since the mid-1990s. The *Adighe Mak* newspaper publishes an appendix in the Adighe language on the fundamentals of Islam. Its editor is Azamat Bogus, deputy of the State Council-Khase and member of the SAM Council. He is also responsible for a series of broadcasts about Islam regularly shown on republic TV. Mufti Emizh is responsible for Islamic programs aired on local radio. The Takhtamukay community publishes an Islamic paper called *Chitay*. Our polls in mountain villages showed that people are interested in TV and radio broadcasts and Islamic publications. Recently Al-Jazeera opened its branch in Maykop to cover the problems of the North Caucasian Muslims. There are new forms of Islamic propaganda. For example, imam of the Djerokai village plays football with the local teenagers to develop their interest in Islam; leader of the Maykop community A. Kardanov opened a fitness and a computer center to attract young people.

Religious education is another concern of the SAM RA and KT. So far the republic has no complete system of religious education. The process is very slow: in 1992-1994 there were 23 Sunday schools in the republic, today only 10 of them are still functioning, even though they constantly experience shortages of classrooms, books, chairs, tables, and programs. There is a school in Djerokai at which the local imam, an abadzekh from Turkey, teaches. The mosque schools are not particularly popular with the local people; the majority cannot teach even the fundamentals of Islam. The system must be developed; with this aim in view the SAM plans to distribute religious literature. I have already written that early in the 1990s F. Autaev started publishing Islamic literature in Maykop. The venture was a success. There is another important aspect of the SAM's efforts: it is actively working with the Islamic leaders of all generations; the village imams attend short-term Islamic courses in the main mosque in Maykop.³¹ So far, the results are not impressive.

In the 1990s, Nurdjular and Suleymandji, two Turkish radical organizations, as well as certain Muslim structures of Azerbaijan tried to set up Islamic schools in Adigey (in 1994 a private lyceum was opened in Maykop; in 2003, a school in Afipsip, in which Mina Saliam was director, etc.).³² The law enforcement structures and the republican Federal Security Service are closely watching what the Turks are doing in the republic; and the SAM is in complete agreement with this. In 2003, by way of responding to certain active efforts of opening Turkish religious schools, the SAM Executive Committee issued a decision that all those wishing to open a school at a mosque should acquire permission from the SAM RA and KT and the Federal Security Service.³³

Mufti Emizh respects the young Muslims and their plans and maintains close contacts with them. He initiated a youth center (based on the Muslims of Adygeisk and the Teuchezh and Takhtamukay districts) within the SAM. The SAM and its youth branch are working toward purification of Islam; they are seeking closer contacts with other public organizations, including the Adighe Khase—there are Muslims among its members.

In the 1990s, certain international organizations tried to organize and extend the range of their activities in the republic. The World Islamic Call Society (hereinafter WICS) headed by Eliachkhamudi Abdunnabi was the most successful among them; during Muslim holidays it organized charity events.³⁴ Recently, the state republican structures, including the law enforcement bodies, have been limiting or even banning similar activities. The bans and limitations were imposed not only on the radical Turkish organizations, but also on WICS very much approved of by the SAM and the Islamic communities. Foreign foundations frequently act like sponsors giving money to the Islamic activities in this republic and elsewhere in Russia.³⁵

The good contacts between the SAM leaders and the republican authorities, as well as with the young Muslims, some of whom are in opposition, created an atmosphere in which Islam, like Christian Ortho-

³⁰ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 9 April, 2003.

³¹ Ibidem.

³² See: Iu.N. Ansimov, V.N. Altunin, *Antiterroristicheskaia deiatel'nost i bor'ba s ekstremizmom: opyt, organizatsia, pravovaia osnova*, Maykop, 2003, p. 197.

³³ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 15 July, 2003.

³⁴ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 15 December, 2003.

³⁵ Archives... Verbatim report of the sitting of the SAM RA and KT Council of 15 July, 2003.

doxy, is developing within the mainstream and does not take on radical forms (this is what happens to a certain extent in Kabardino-Balkaria). There is no anti-Wahhabi or anti-Islamist propaganda in the republic. Still, there are certain elements of political censorship: the law enforcement structures, the FSS Administration headed by Iu. Ansimov, the Regional Antiterrorist Commission headed by N. Demchuk, who is member of the government, and V. Altunin carefully study all the publications about the Islamic revival in the republic to spot pieces which they think “fan national and religious strife.”³⁶ They are out to stop attempts by international radical structures (mainly Suleymandji and Nurdzhular) to put down roots in the republic. Certain authors say that the Turkish Muslims use Islamic rhetoric to give “ideological justification” to their openly separatist and corporate aims. These authors say: “It cannot be excluded that the nationalists will use ideological propaganda to present traditional forms of social organization among the North Caucasian peoples (*khase* among the Adighe, *mekhk-khel* among the Chechens and *jamaat* among the Turkic-speaking peoples) as the traditional forms of Islamic collectivism.”³⁷

The above-mentioned structures do not infringe on religious life; there are no cases of discrimination against the Muslims, even those who criticize the SAMRA and KT. There is no interference in Muslim rituals; Sunday schools are closed not because they are banned, but because they are highly unpopular among the republic’s atheist population. The militia normally keeps away from mosques. There were several cases when militiamen entered mosques during services: they checked documents during an evening prayer service in the Adygeisk mosque on the strength of information that it was being used to store drugs. The same happened in the mosque of Novaia Adigey (New Adigey). It seems there are no prerequisites for a worsening of the sociopolitical situation in the republic because of the Islamic revival and proliferation of Islam. On the whole, Islam in Adigey is very tolerant of those who think differently and loyal to state power and the law enforcement bodies.

³⁶ Iu.N. Ansimov, V.N. Altunin, op. cit., p. 201.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 197, 200.