RELIGION IN SOCIETY

THE "ISLAMIC REVIVAL" IN DAGHESTAN TWENTY YEARS LATER

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The Caucasian Muslims witnessed a tempestuous Islamic upswing during the last decade of the 20th century and at the beginning of the new millennium. As though by the wave of a magic wand, the region was transformed from Soviet into Islamic. The outer appearance of towns and villages drastically changed, along with the very tempo of private and public life. Islam became the basis on which children and adolescents socialized. Islamic schools and higher education institutions opened. Islamic parties and movements of different trends, Islamic periodicals, and even a Russian-language Islamic Internet appeared. Sufi sheikhs emerged from the underground. In the Eastern Caucasus, the Naqshbandi, Shazili, and Qadiri orders are functioning openly again. Islam has become a marketable political trump card, and every politician is rushing to assure the Muslim how much he loves and wants to protect him. The statements of Daghestan President Mukhu Aliev are typical in this respect: "We have no history without religion, and we will help our traditional religious trends … and strengthen the position of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims with this goal in mind…"[1] Daghestan found itself in the epicenter of the movement. Reislamization has assumed more vehement and at times grotesque forms here.

It will soon be twenty years since the Islamic upswing or revival, as the people in Daghestan like to call it, began. Perestroika set it in motion. It is worth doing some tallying up on the eve of this "glorious anniversary." Particularly since, after all the upheavals of the post-perestroika period, it appears that life both in Russia and the Caucasus has calmed down somewhat. It is time to think about the lessons that can be learned from the Islamic boom in Daghestan. As an ethnographer, I would like to do this by turning to the information gathered in the republic between the fall of 1992 and the winter of 2006.[2] I was lucky enough to

[1] A. Shikhsaidov, "Islam v Dagestane," *Tsentral'naia Azia i Kavkaz*, No. 4, 1999, p. 113.

[2] I would like to thank my Daghestani colleagues and friends A.R. Navruzov, Sh.Sh. Shikhaliev, and K.M. Khanba-

witness both the beginning of the Islamic boom and the slump in the fervor over Islam that began at some point after the mid-2000s. Returning to the problem of the post-Soviet forms of Islam, which I have written about repeatedly, including in *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, I would like to clarify several still not entirely clear questions about the nature and consequences of the Islamic boom. What caused the Islamic revival? How does it correlate with the Soviet imperial past in the Caucasus? What has the Islamic boom done for Daghestan? What ended up being revived, and has anything actually been revived? And, finally, is there a correlation between the revival of Islam and the increase in conflicts and instability in the region?

baev for clarifying several statistics and facts presented in this article.

Islam and Politics

Islam's return to public life was accompanied by the turbulent politicization of society. The collapse of the one-party Soviet system led to the appearance of a whole slew of Islamic parties and movements in Daghestan. They were united by common global goals: restoring the religious freedoms of Muslims, returning from state atheism to Islam, unifying Muslim countries on the basis of the Shari'a, and restoring the high pre-revolutionary Islamic culture as a long-term goal.[3] The Daghestanis participated in creating one of the first Islamic movements in the U.S.S.R., the Islamic Revival Party (IRP, Nahda). It was formed in June 1990 in Astrakhan. Akhmad-qadi Akhtaev, a physician from the Daghestani village of Kudali, was elected the chairman (amir) of the IRP. The party's Council of Alims also included Magomed-Rasul Magomaev, who later became the mufti of the Confederation of the Caucasian Peoples, and Abas Kebedov and Bagautdin Magomedov, brothers from Pervomaiskiy, all of them Daghestanis. Most of them subsequently headed the movement of religious dissident Wahhabis. As early as 1989, Daghestani Khasbulat Khasbulatov from the village of Gubden organized the Jamaat-ul-Muslimi movement. In October 1990, the Islamic-Democratic Party of Daghestan appeared in Makhachkala. Among its founders were future mufti Seidahmed Darbishgajiev, physician Abdurashid Saidov, and ethnologist Surakat Asiiatilov.

By the mid-1990s, the number of parties registered in the republic reached the impressive figure of 187. Three religious organizations, most of the 13 national movements, including the Imam Shamil Avar People's Front, and several foundations, including the Shamil Foundation, announced their adherence to Islamic values.[4] The name of this hero of the Muslim resistance movement against Russia's occupation of the Caucasus in the 19th century became emblematic. As a symbol of the Islamic revival, Shamil entirely replaced Lenin of the stagnation era.[5] Portraits and statues of Shamil adorn government offices, city squares, and existing mosques. Central streets (including former Kalinin Prospekt in the republic's capital of Makhachkala) are named after him. The Shamil Foundation has instituted Shamil medals and prizes. In the fall of 1997, the 200th anniversary of the imam was celebrated throughout Daghestan with great pomp and ado.

In the mid-1990s, political activity in Daghestan began to decline. The post-Soviet Islamic movements proved to be amazingly short-lived. All of them, including the notorious IRP, which disintegrated even earlier into republican divisions unrelated to each other, somehow unobtrusively ceased to exist.

[3] See programs of the Islamic Democratic Party of Daghestan of the Daghestan branch of the Jamaat-ul-Muslimi Islamic Revival Party, in: *Dagestan: etnopoliticheskiy portret*, Compiled by V.F. Gryzlov, Vol. II, Moscow, 1994, pp. 262, 277, 281-282, 284.

[4] See: *Makhachkalinskie izvestia,* No. 24, 9 June, 1995.

[5] Comment by French ethnologist F. Longuet-Marx (see: F. Longuet-Marx, "Le retour de l'imam," *Caucase. Axes anciens, nouveaux enjeux. Nouveaux mondes*, No. 8, 1998).

The leaders of these organizations simply did not re-register them when the time came (1994). The new Islamic organizations that arose during these years positioned themselves as cultural-enlightenment movements. Such were the all-Russia Noor movement (1995) and al-Islamiya created in 1996 by Akhmad-qadi Akhtaev, the Caucasus missionary center in Makhachkala, and the Muslimat (Muslim Women's Association). The Union of Muslims of Russia, which arose in September 1995, announced its task to be fighting "national and religious extremism … keeping in mind the special traits, traditions, cultural heritage, and main provisions of Islam."[6] Daghestani Nadirshakh Khachilaev became its head.

More than ten years have passed since then. Sparks flew around the fantastical plans to declare the Caucasus a confederation of Islamic republics and restructure Daghestan's public order and legislation on the basis of the Shari'a. Not only did the first Islamic parties disappear and fall into oblivion, but the cultural-political movements of the 1990s too. There is no serious Islamic opposition to the government in Daghestan today. Politicians like the Khachilaev brothers, who tried to play the Islamic trump card, were thwarted. Akhmad-qadi Akhtaev died prematurely in 1998, and the leader of the radical wing of the Wahhabis, Bagautdin Magomedov, who I will talk about below, was forced to emigrate from Russia to the Arabian Middle East. His brother, A. Kebedov, spent long years in Cairo. He later returned to his homeland, but no longer participated in politics. The previously well-known names of Kh. Khasbulatov and M.-R. Mugumaev have faded completely from memory. The newspapers and brochures they published became a bibliographical rarity. What is more, the communist *nomenklatura*, the imminent collapse of which the opposition publications predicted so many times, is still going strong in Daghestan. It was quick to forget its communist ideals, having easily reconciled itself to the idea of relying on Islam as the "Daghestani tradition."

All of this is leading to several thoughts. The hopes placed on Islam as a means of political liberation and national self-determination of Soviet Muslims have not justified themselves in Daghestan. Political scientists placed too much emphasis on the significance of the political component of the Islamic upswing.[7] After the euphoria of perestroika and the bloody clashes of the 1990s, it seems that the man in the street (including the Muslim) has grown very tired of politics, which is shown by the empty ballot boxes at every election. At the same time, we should not place any particular hope on the "peaceful traditions" of the Shari'a, which certain journalists and ethnologists repeatedly called for reviving.[8] What the attempt to introduce Shari'a laws with a deft flourish of the pen led to can be judged from the fate of Maskhadov's Chechnia. A strong, even if criminal, local government willing to make compromises is capable of keeping Daghestan away from chaos today.

Islam in Figures

The unprecedented increase in religious Islamic institutions is a more reliable indication of the upswing than politics. The number of jamaat communities and mosques in them has grown a hundredfold over the past eighteen years. Whereas in 1985, the Council for Religious Affairs recorded the existence of 47 registered Friday (Juma) mosques, 27 of them in Daghestan, by 1990, their number had jumped to 431.[9] On 25 November, 2003, the number of mosques in Daghestan reached 1,679, including 1,091 Friday mosques. In other republics and regions of the area, the figures are much lower. In 1997, there were 91 mosques in Karachaevo-Cherkessia, in 2002, 132 in Kabardino-Balkaria, and in 2003, only

[6] A. Shikhsaidov, op. cit., p. 111.

[7] See, for example: A.V. Malashenko, *Islamskoe vozrozhdenie v sovremennoi Rossii*, Moscow, 1998; A.A. Ignatenko, *Islam i politika*, Moscow, 2004; E.F. Kisriev, *Islam i politika v Dagestane*, Moscow, 2004.

[8] For more detail, see: V. Bobrovnikov, "Mythologizing Shari'a Courts in the Post-Soviet North Caucasus," *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 5, June 2000, p. 25.

[9] See: N.M. Emelianova, *Musul'mane Kabardy*, Moscow, 1999, p. 101.

26 in Adigey and Krasnodar.[10] By 1998, the largest mosque in the Northern Caucasus opened, which was built in Makhachkala by the Turks. It holds 7,500 people. Thousands of private prayer houses (*kurma/kulla*) have opened in the Daghestani villages.[11]

At first glance, it seems that after coming full circle, Islam simply swept away everything that was built over the span of 70 years. The figures are more than eloquent. Soviet power struggled with the problem for 20-30 years, replacing Koranic classes (Arabic *maqtab*) at mosques and "colleges"-*madrasahs* with secular general education schools in Russian and the national languages. The cultural revolution did not yield its first fruits until the 1960s. And even in 1959/1960 academic year, there were only 199 secondary schools, 27 special schools and polytechnics, and four higher education institutions (all in the capital of Makhachkala) in the republic.[12] The achievements of the Muslim school during the first 10-15 years of the Islamic "cultural revolution" are more impressive. Between 1987 and 1996, 670 maqtabs appeared here (there were only 398 Soviet primary schools by 1927), 25 madrasahs, and 13 Islamic higher education institutions with branches in rural areas. Courses could be attended in almost every city and village to study Arabic and the basics of Islam, which were akin to the elimination of illiteracy efforts during Soviet times. Up to 14,000 people receive an Islamic education today. Another 33,000 are involved in the unofficial Sufi teaching system. There are Islamic scientific institutions in 40 of the 42 rural regions and 9 of the 10 cities in Daghestan.[13]

The private nature of financing in the contemporary Muslim school is surprising. Whereas during Soviet times, the enormous sums Moscow allotted Daghestan were spent on the development of national education (in the 1929/1930 academic year alone, 7,581,400 rubles, or 34.4% of the republic's budget),[14] the upswing in the Muslim school occurred by means of private donations (Arabic sadaqa) from local businessmen and nouveau riche Daghestanis, for instance, head of the Makhachkala port Muhammed Kharkharov and city mayor Said Amirov, as well as from renting commercial and storage spaces and from small businesses. Islamic education used to exist by means of *waqf*, private property transferred for the charitable and religious needs of Muslims.[15] In 1927, this wealth was nationalized, transferred to peasant cooperatives, and soon all entirely ravaged. In the 1990s, certain waqfs were de-facto restored. But the funds received from them are not enough to support the Muslim school.

Graduates of the madrasahs and Islamic higher education institutions acquire three main "professions" today: readers of the Koran (Arabic *qari'*), mosque imams, and *ulema* (Muslim scholars) with a wide profile. Since Islam has no church or clergy, the position of the Muslim spiritual elite is traditionally unstable and depends entirely on the choice of jamaat, the candidate's training, and his knowledge of the local religious traditions. There are never enough ulema anywhere. There are no exact statistics on their number. At the beginning of the Soviet era, up to 10% of the Daghestanis belonged to this category. This figure was provided by the first Soviet census in 1926. Today there are much fewer of them, a little more than 2,500 (less than 0.1%).[16] This circle of people includes imams and muedzins of mosques, *qadi* judges, teachers at maqtabs and madrasahs, sheikh-mentors of Sufi orders, and other educated Muslims.

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[10] See: K.M. Khanbabaev, "'Shariatizatsiia' postsovetskogo Dagestana: mify i realnost'," in: *Islam i pravo v Rossii*, Issue 1, Moscow, 2004, p. 158; I.L. Babich, "Respublika Kabardino-Balkaria: mecheti i islamskie obshchiny," in: *Islam i pravo v Rossii*, Issue 3, Moscow, 2004, p. 37; idem, "Respublika Adygeia i Krasnodarskiy kray: mecheti i islamskie obshchiny," in: *Islam i pravo v Rossii*, Issue 1, p. 84.

[11] Their number cannot be precisely calculated.

[12] See: *Sovetskiy Dagestan za 40 let*, Makhachkala, 1960, pp. 119, 129, 131.

[13] See: D.V. Makarov, *Ofitsial'nyy i neofitsial'nyy islam v Dagestane*, Moscow, 2000, pp. 5, 71; K.M. Khanbabaev, "Religioznoe obrazovanie v Dagestane," in: *Problemy polikonfessional'nogo obrazovaniia v Dagestane*, Makhachkala, 2002, pp. 118-119.

[14] See: An. Skachko, *Daghestan*, Moscow, 1931, pp. 127-128.

[15] For more detail, see: V.O. Bobrovnikov, "Waqf v Dagestane: iz vcherashnego dnya v zavtrashniy?" in: *Islam i pravo v Rossii*, Issue 2, Moscow, 2004, pp. 150-165.

[16] See: An. Skachko, op. cit., p. 89; V. Bobrovnikov, "Dagestan," in: *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii*, Compiler and editor-in-chief S.M. Prozorov, Vol. 1, Moscow, 2006, pp. 123-124.

This is clearly not enough for Daghestan's rapidly growing population, which reached 2,641,000 in 2006. The number of ulema will continue to decline if we take account of the republic's variegated ethno-confessional composition. The Muslims of Daghestan are broken down into several trends which have gained ethnic hues in the 20th century. Most of them are Sunnis. Daghestanis (and the neighboring Chechens and Ingushes) traditionally follow the *Shafi'i* trend of the religious jurisprudence schools (Arabic *madhab*) of Sunni Islam. The Nogais of Northern Daghestan, like other Russian Muslims, follow the *Hanafi madhab*. In the south of the republic, there are Imamite Shi'ites (4.3%), mainly Azerbaijanis. During post-Soviet times, 20 Shi'a communities were restored here. Apart from Derbent, there are Shi'a mosques in Makhachkala and Kizliar. It has not yet been possible to restore Shi'a education in Daghestan. The language barrier prevents the Daghestani Shi'ites from obtaining an education in the madrasahs and higher education institutions of Iran.

The situation with training staff for the Muslim spiritual Sunni elites is not much better. Today, the entire region is acutely short of educated imams and mosque clergy, teachers, and *qadi* judges. A.R. Shikhsaidov, a prominent present-day Daghestani historian and Islam expert,[17] correctly points out that Islamic higher education institutions of the beginning of the 21st century are mere shadows of the famous madrasahs of the 18th century, which gave Daghestan the worthy title of a "sea of science" (Arabic *bahr al-'ulum*). Nor can sending young Daghestanis to Islamic centers in Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia, where more than 1,500 people are currently studying, correct the situation. Most of the Daghestani students abroad have long given up their studies and gone into the Russian-language tourist business. And those who do return home do not have a very high level of training.[18]

This also leads to the sad conclusion that there has indeed been no Islamic spiritual revival. Islamic experts and politicians, as well as the Daghestani ulema themselves, admit this. Now deceased minister of national political affairs, information, and foreign relations of Daghestan M.M. Gusaev noted bitterly that "the revival processes in Islam are not noticeably advancing the moral and spiritual life of Muslims, due to which Islam failed to become a stabilizing factor in the republic" (1998). Il'yas-hajji Il'yasov, an influential alim scholar and Naqshbandi sheikh who obtained a good Islamic education in the late Soviet era at the Mir-i 'Arab Madrasah in Bukhara and the famous Cairo University of al-Azhar, was even more critical of the present-day Muslim school. He believes that "there are many more spiritual learning establishments in Daghestan than the republic needs… Not one of our numerous Islamic institutes has been certified or accredited… Not one of the rectors of Islamic institutes and universities has higher (or even secondary) secular professional education."[19]

Why is the Islamic culture of Daghestan still in such a deep slump? What is stopping it from shifting from quantity to quality? It appears the roots of the problem lie in the Soviet withdrawal experienced by pre-revolutionary Muslim society and in the reforms. On the one hand, by 1941, all the mosques and mosque schools in the Soviet Caucasus were closed. The backbone of the Muslim spiritual elite perished in Stalin's prisons and camps. In the 1950s-1980s, the needs of Soviet Muslims for "clergy" were satisfied for better or worse by the Mir-i 'Arab Madrasah in Bukhara and the Islamic Institute in Tashkent. Apart from these two schools, where most people found it impossible to enroll, illegal private Koranic circles functioned in the region, but their level of education was low. On the other hand, the urbanization and secularization of the second half of the 20th century reduced society's need for Islamic education. Russian squeezed out Arabic and Turkish as the language of culture, law, and politics. Whereas the prominent Daghestani ulema of the last century, such as Najmutdin Gotsinsky (d. in 1925) repressed by the Soviet government, Abusupyan Akaev (d. in 1931), and Khasan of Kakhib (d. in 1937), hardly knew Russian, today the Islamic press, fatwas, and Sufi

[17] See: A.R. Shikhsaidov, op. cit., p. 110.

[18] See my special article on this topic: V. Bobrovnikov, "Al-Azhar and Shari'a Courts in Twentieth-Century Caucasus," *Middle Eastern Studies* (London), Vol. 37, No. 4, October 2001, pp. 9-13.

[19] Quoted from: A.R. Shikhsaidov, op. cit., p. 110.

treatises only come out in Russian and the national languages. Today, influential sheikh Said-afandi of Chirkey talks about the decline in the importance of the Arabic language in Daghestan.[20]

The influence of the Soviet past on the Muslims of Daghestan, and on the whole of the Northern Caucasus, is stronger than it appears at first glance. It is particularly noticeable in the Islamic higher education institutions, which did not exist before Soviet times. Their names, curricula, and teaching methods were taken from the secular higher education institutions of Russia. Here there is a strange mixture of the traditional disciplines taught in madrasahs (for example, Qur'anic Exegesis, 432 hours a year) and Physical Education (360 hours), Information Technology, History of the Homeland, the Basics of International Relations (72 hours each), as well as Astrophysics (72 hours), which are studied at the North Caucasian Islamic University of Sheikh Muhammad Arif in Makhachkala.[21] The low level of education of the graduates of Islamic higher education institutions is inevitably the result of this eclectic combination, therefore many of them are forced to obtain a second secular education when looking for a job.[22]

In post-Soviet times, economic collapse, unemployment, and the consequences of the two Chechen wars were added to the decline in culture. New mosques are growing up against the background of the unresolved social problems. In order to raise their prestige, businessmen and politicians are investing money in the construction of mosques, while continuing to rake in the profits on the manufacture of alcoholic beverages prohibited by Islam, drug trade, and bank machinations. Today, looking good is more important for Muslim sponsors than rendering real assistance to those in need. So the construction boom did not lead to perceptible results. Many madrasahs and mosques stand empty. The number of schools at mosques has been decreasing in recent years. Between 1996 and 2006, the number of maqtabs dropped almost seven-fold, from 670 to 94. Last year, 38 madrasahs, 184 maqtabs, and 19 branches of Islamic higher education institutions closed down, and the number of students at them decreased by 7,750 people. The construction rates of new mosques have also slowed down. By 31 December, 2006, their number amounted to 1,910. In the last four years, a total of 16 new Friday mosques have been built.[23]

Imperial Heritage in Traditional Islam

The general course of the Islamic revival in Daghestan was largely defined by the ups and downs caused by the changes in the post-Soviet Russian state. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which had run its course by the winter of 1992, aroused a reciprocal collapse of the central bodies of management and control over the Soviet Muslims. In 1991, the Union Council for Religious Affairs, which was responsible for registering mosques and mullahs and executing Soviet legislation on religion, ceased to exist in Moscow. The four regional muftiats (councils for religious affairs) formed in 1943-1944 fell apart due to the new state borders that divided the former Soviet Union republics and autonomous districts. The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus (SAMNC), located since 1975 in Makhachkala at 2, Aliev Street, was the first to be destroyed. Its successor, the Spiritual

[20] See his interview with journalist Maxim Shevchenko: M. Shevchenko, "Znanie ot proroka," *Zov predkov*, No. 2-3, 2001, p. 4. Said-afandi's book with the Arabic subtitle *Majmu'at ap-fava'id* (Treasure-House of Blessed Truths), compiled in the form of question-answer traditional for Daghestani ulema, was written and published first in Avar (Makhachkala, 2000), and soon reprinted in Russian in Moscow (2001, 2003). What is more, Said-afandi published *Tales about Prophets* (K'isasul anbiya, Makhachkala, 1999) in Avar.

[21] See: *Uchebniy plan Severokavkazskogo universiteta imeni sheikha Muhammada-Arifa. Podgotovka sviashchennosluzhitelei islamskogo verouchenia* (Curriculum of the North Caucasian Islamic University of Sheikh Muhammad Arif. Sx Year Training in the Islamic Faith for Clergymen), s.a. (manuscript).

[22] Field material of 2002-2005. For more detail about the Islamic higher school in Daghestan today, see: A. Navruzov, "'The Yawning Heights:' Islamic Higher Education in Post-Soviet Daghestan and International Educational Networks," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1 (43), 2007.

[23] See: D.V. Makarov, op. cit., p. 71; Current Archives of the Administration of Religious Affairs at the Government of the Republic of Daghestan. I am grateful to K.M. Khanbabaev for providing the information.

Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan (SAMD), is now located at this address. On 13 May, 1989, a group of Muslim activists captured the building that housed the SAMNC and deposed the last mufti, Makhmud-hajji Gekkiev (1978-1989). After this, until the mid-1990s, the state lost control of Islam for a while in Daghestan, and in Russia as a whole.

The prehistory of the Daghestani muftiat deserves separate attention. By January 1990, it had grown out of the fragments of the SAMNC. As we can see from the statement by the republic's president, with which I began this article, today people are in the habit of regarding the Spiritual Administration of Muslims as a time-honored Islamic tradition. There could be nothing more erroneous. One should not confuse *muftis*—the highest authorities in the Shari'a, who come from the Arabian caliphate—and *muftiats*—institutions created for controlling the Muslims in the Russian Empire during the 18th-19th centuries, from Catherine II to Alexander II, and restored by Stalin at the end of World War II.[24] There is nothing essentially Islamic about the muftiats, for Islam has no church or clergy. As early as the 19th century, Islamic theologians argued about the legitimacy of founding these councils for religious affairs.[25] The gist of the matter was quite clearly set forth by S.G. Rybakov, an expert in Islam of the pre-revolutionary Russian Ministry of the Interior: "Since the second half of the 18th century," he wrote, "the government has considered it necessary to regulate the spiritual life" of Muslims… "This view of governing the Muslims resulted in the creation of the so-called Muslim clergy and Muslim spiritual administrations, which had never existed in Islam…"[26]

In czarist Russia, muftiats were state institutions, and the muftis were supported by the state treasury. In the post-war Soviet Union, they were passed off as public organizations. In actual fact, although the muftis and other representatives of the Muslim clergy restored by the authorities were also transferred to the upkeep of Muslim communities, the muftiats were sooner a Soviet institution, an Islamic tradition contrived by the state. Along with serving the religious needs of some of the mosque communities recognized in the U.S.S.R., the SAMNC and other muftiats defended the interests of the Soviet state. By fulfilling the role of a spiritual court, the SAMNC gathered alms-*zakat* and issued *fatwa*-explanations on questions regarding the *Shari'a*, and also registered mosques and their imams, helped the state to fight illegal Koranic circles (*hujra*) and Sufi communities ("Muridism"), and participated in the U.S.S.R.'s struggle against the capitalist camp. Being responsible for issues relating to the Islamic culture, the SAMNC did not have its own network of Islamic education. The latter was concentrated in the Central Asian muftiat (CASAM) which was in charge of the Mir-i 'Arab Madrasah in Bukhara and the Islamic Institute in Tashkent.

After losing the support of the Union center, the SAMNC broke down into republican divisions. This is how the SAMD arose, which inherited the general structure and property of its predecessor, in which Daghestan always occupied a key position. The priceless archives of the SAMNC were destroyed during the fight for power in the new muftiat at the beginning of the 1990s. The collapse of the muftiats did not stop at the republican level. The SAMD was largely recognized by the Avar jamaats of North and Central Daghestan. In counterbalance to the Avar muftiat, as it was called then, in 1992-1993, the mono-national Kumyk Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Makhachkala and the Spiritual Revival of the Lakh People in Buynaksk were created. In the town of Izberbash, an independent Darghin Kaziat was formed. At the Muslim Congress of South Daghestan in 1993, a separate (Lezghian) inner-Daghestani muftiat was formed with its center in Dagestanskie Ogni.[27] Similar disintegration processes were going on at the time among the Muslim communities of other North Caucasian

[24] For more detail, see: V. Bobrovnikov, "Islam in the Russian Empire," in: *The Cambridge History of Russia*, Vol. II, *Imperial Russia, 1689-1917*, ed. by D. Lieven, Cambridge, 2006.

[25] See: M. Kemper, *Sufis und Gelehrte in Tatarien und Baschkirien, 1789-1889: der islamische Diskurs unter russischer Herrschaft,* Berlin, 1998.

[26] D.Iu. Arapov, E.I. Larina, *S.G. Rybakov i ego "Obzor" organizatsii dukhovnoi zhizni musul'man Rossii (April 1917)*, Moscow, 2006, p. 14.

[27] For more detail, see: V.O. Bobrovnikov, "Dagestan," in: *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii,* p. 123.

republics and territories. The last muftiat at the regional level was the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Nogai Region of the Republic of Daghestan formed in 1999 in the regional center in the village of Terekli-Mekteb.

In the second half of the 1990s, the reverse process of gathering the jamaats under the control of the republican muftiats began. The strongest of them proved to be the Avar SAMD. By 1994, it had defeated the national opposition and monopolized the organization of *hajj*. The Daghestani authorities supported the SAMD, controlling it by means of the Committee on Religious Affairs (CRA) headed by A.M. Magomedov, who fulfilled the duties of the mufti of the SAMNC for a while at the beginning of the 1990s. The mono-national SAMs competing with it did not pass state registration. In recent years, they have disappeared into the woodwork. In 2006, the SAMD rid itself of the control of the CRA. The committee was disbanded and transferred to one of the many administrations in the republic's government. The means and potential of the SAMD became much better. After freeing itself from strict state control, the muftiat created several Islamic higher learning institutions in the republic, in particular the Saypula-Qadi Islamic University in Buynaksk, the rector of which is the chairman of the Council of Alims of the SAMD Arslan-Ali Gamzatov. The SAMD has its own newspapers, *As-Salam* and *Nur-ul-Islam* (which come out in Russian and several Daghestani languages), regularly updated websites ([www.islam.ru]; [sufism.chat.ru]), and a television program called "Peace to Your Home," which comes on the air twice a week.

According to its charter and the letter of the law, the SAMD is a public organization in no way related to the government. Nevertheless, it makes wide use of state channels for spreading its influence in the provinces. In several regions in the north and center of the republic, for example in Untsukul, the regional administrations are lobbying the interests of the muftiat, subsidizing the events they hold, and even paying benefits to the protégés of the SAMD among the rural imams.[28] In turn, the Russian state, which is reinforcing the power vertical in the republics, has shifted to supporting traditional Islam, which was legislatively enforced in the new federal law on the freedom of conscience and religious associations adopted in September 1997, and then confirmed in its Daghestani version in December of the same year. For the first time, Islam was recognized as the most traditional confession after Orthodoxy. The law protects the interests of traditional Islam against foreign missions and other "non-traditional" confessions, the rights of which were significantly restricted after 1997. They are not allowed to open schools, publish or disseminate religious literature, or have foreign representative offices.[29] After returning to the Soviet practice of registering religious organizations, legislation is trying to place Islam under state control.

Metamorphoses of the Wahhabi Opposition

Despite all the efforts of the post-Soviet state and traditional Muslim elite it recognizes, nothing like a regional SAMNC structure has been restored in Daghestan. Most Muslim communities do not recognize the authority of the muftiat. Even in the republic's capital of Makhachkala, 4/5 of the 74 active mosques are in no way associated with the SAMD. Across the republic, no more than 15% of the mosque communities are subordinate to the muftiat.[30] The absence of wide support among the ordinary Muslims explains why many graduates of Islamic higher education institutions controlled by the muftiat cannot find a job in their field of specialization in the jamaats of Daghestan. The situation is

[28] See: K. Matsizato, M.-R. Ibragimov, "Tarikat, etnichnost' i politika v Dagestane," in: *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, No. 2, 2006.

[29] See: Federal Law on the Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations, in: *Legislation Code of the Russian Federation*, No. 39, 1997, pp. 7677-7678, 7667, 7669, 7673, 7674-7676.

[30] See: D.V. Makarov, op. cit., p. 11.

aggravated by acute rivalry which has split the Sufi communities (*virds*) that have emerged from the underground. In present-day Daghestan, there are 19 active Sufi sheikhs. What is more, there are communities grouped around the sacred places (*ziarats*) of well-known Sufi mentors of the 19th-20th centuries. Virds belong to the three orders that penetrated the Eastern Caucasus when it was conquered by Russia. These are the Naqshbandiyya-Khalidiyya, Shaziliyya, and Qadiriyya orders. The latter is more widespread in Chechnia and Ingushetia. It should not be thought that the orders have an ethnic hue. The Daghestani virds unite representatives from different nations, Avars, Kumyks, Tabasarans, Darghins, and even Russians converted to Islam.

The Naqshbandiyya order split into two branches as early as the 19th century, one of which (Khalidiyya-Mahmudiyya) merged with the Shaziliyya. Journalists, as well as certain academics, often exaggerate the meaning of Sufism in post-Soviet society.[31] In actual fact, the influence of most Sufi sheikhs does not extend beyond the boundaries of their small communities. In terms of their duties, they are closer to the mullah. It is no accident that many prestigious sheikhs, for example, Naqshbandis Il'yas-hajji Il'yasov or Muhammed-Muhtar Babatov, supervise district jamaats on the outskirts of Makhachkala. At the same time, a whole series of madrasahs and 17 of the republic's 19 active Islamic higher learning institutions are under the influence of the Naqshbandiyya-Shaziliyya order. Their curriculum includes the ethics of Sufism. There are two extremely influential Sufis in Daghestan today. They are Said-afandi of Chirkey in the north and Serajutdin of Hurik in Tabasaran (South Daghestan). The latter recently helped the government to resolve a conflict that arose around the Derbent Friday mosque. The *murid*-followers of Said-afandi have been controlling the muftiats in Makhachkala since 1992. Said-afandi's successor in the Shaziliyya order, Arslan-Ali Gamzatov, heads the Saypula-Qadi University in Buynaksk. The intolerance of Said-afandi's followers, who do not recognize most of the other sheikhs, is making relations among today's Muslim elite extremely difficult.

But the dissident Wahhabis are the main enemy of the spiritual and secular authorities. Their opponents from the SAMD gave the movement this nickname, believing that the movement members fall under the "heresy" of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, a reformer from Arabia of the 18th century. The Wahhabis opposed the Caucasian Muslims both in terms of convictions, and in terms of clothing (at least until the beginning of the persecutions at the end of the 1990s). They called themselves "brothers" (Arabic *ihwan*) or the community of true Muslims who follow the testaments of the "righteous ancestors" (Arabic *as-salaf as-salihun*) of the times of the Prophet Muhammad, from where another name for the movement, *Salafis*, comes. Men wear short trousers, grow beards, but shave their moustaches. Women wear a headscarf (*himar* or *hijab*), and at times cover their faces, which was never encountered before among mountain women. The Wahabbis are trying to purge Islam of impermissible innovations (Arabic *bida'*), including honoring of the Sufis, saints, and several local customs, for example, wakes and excessive ritual spending on weddings and funerals. In contrast to the traditionalists, the Wahabbis are looking for "true Islam" outside the madhabs. In their opinion, due to contacts with the unfaithful, the traditional Muslims have long lost all connection with true Islam, having fallen into polytheism (*shirk*) and idolatry.

The Wahhabis are one of the most mysterious trends in present-day Islam. The assessments of them are vague, and the mood of many publications is close to panic.[32] Wahhabism has been repeatedly called "dollar Islam," signifying that Arab missionaries paid the Wahhabi imams (*amirs*) thousands of dollars for every newly converted person. In so doing, they are hinting at the foreign origin of the movement, which was supposedly brought to the Caucasus by Islamists from Arab countries.[33]

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[31] See: I. Maksakov, "Sootnoshenie islamskikh dvizheniy Dagestana," *NG "Religii"*, 18 March, 1998, p. 4; N. Mitrokhin, "Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' i postsovetskie musul'mane," *Otechestvennye zapiski*, No. 5, 2003, "Islam i Rossia," p. 127.

[32] See: *Izvestia,* 10 February, 1998; 21 April, 1998; 25 April, 1998; *Novye Izvestia*, 29 May, 1998; *Osobaia papka NG. Chechnia—2000*, No. 2, 29 February, 2000, etc. (for more detail, see: M. Etkin, "The Rhetoric of Islamophobia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 1, 2000).

[33] See: A.A. Ignatenko, op. cit., pp. 181-188.

The facts do not confirm these rumors. In actual fact, the movement was born in Daghestan in the 1990s. Later, it did indeed receive money and humanitarian aid from foreign foundations, such as Taiba, al-Haramain, al-Igasa al-Islamiya, and others. But even larger funds went through the SAMD and other officially recognized Caucasian muftiats.[34] Not only Wahhabis, but also traditionalists often participate in the mass hajj revived since 1990 (last year, 2006, its quota for Daghestan amounted to 13,200 places).[35] As early as the 1970s, the movement ideologists Akhmad-qadi Akhtaev, B. Magomedov and his half-brother A. Kebedov, along with the future Sufi enemies, created illegal circles-*hujrs* where young people were taught the Arabic language and the basics of Islam. Their ways parted in the struggle for power over the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Daghestan (SAMD), which was seized in 1992 by the supporters of Sheikh Said of Chirkey. By December 1997, the traditionalists forced Bagautdin Magomedov to flee to Urus-Martan in Chechnia. Soon after that, as has already been mentioned, Akhmad-qadi Akhtaev died.

All of this made rapid radicalization of the movement possible. By this time, the Wahhabis were drawn into the armed confrontation between Chechnia and Russia. They shifted from the peaceful preaching of "pure Islam" to an armed struggle to protect the faith (Arabic *jihad*), viewing the entire Caucasus as a "zone of war" for it (Arabic *dar al-islam*). The Jamaat of Daghestan Party established by Bagautdin Magomedov served this purpose. Veterans of the Afghan and Chechen campaigns joined this movement, including Saudi Arabian Samir Saleh Abdullah Al-Suwailem, who is better known as al-Khattab (1969-2002), and Chechen terrorist Shamil Basaev (1965-2006). In May 1998, four Darghin villages in the Buynaksk District of Daghestan declared themselves a Shari'a territory (the Kadar zone) independent of Russia. In the summer of 1999, Basaev's units made raids into the north of Daghestan, but they were quickly destroyed by the Russian troops and Daghestani militia. At that time, the Kadar zone was taken by storm. According to the law adopted in September 1999, all Wahhabi mosques, schools, and newspapers in Daghestan were closed. Many supporters of the movement were thrown into prison. After this, outlawed and deprived of a leader, Wahhabism went underground. The traditionalists sustained the victory in Daghestan.

Despite the persecution of the movement's supporters throughout the Northern Caucasus, the traditionalists, as well as the Russian authorities, just could not rid themselves of their fear of Wahhabi recidivism. The Wahhabi amirs were either killed or emigrated. Ayub (Anguta) Omarov, a former student of Bagautdin Magomedov, left the rich community of Wahhabis in Astrakhan. But all the same, the specter of Wahhabism would give the authorities no peace. They thought they could see it in the disturbances aroused by the "nouveau riche Muslims" and in the series of terrorist acts that swept the Russian Caucasus in 2004-2006. Basaev's seizure of the school in Beslan in September 2004, the attack of the Yarmuk jamaat on the Administration of the State Drug Control in Nalchik in December 2004, and the "hunt" on policemen in Daghestan are the most well known.[36] I do not think it productive to see the hand of the Wahhabis behind all of this. It is obvious that the Wahhabis should not be ascribed Satanic traits. They do indeed pose a threat, but not to the world, rather only to certain Muslim societies of post-Soviet Russia. They are a nihilistic trend and are causing a new split among the Muslims.[37] The Wahhabis have raised their hand against their own believers and hallowed places, for example, the holy grave of the mother of sheikh Kunt-Hanji, which they tried to destroy in Chechnia.

[34] See: D.V. Makarov, op. cit., p. 47.
[35] See: Ibid., p. 47; Current Archives of the Administration of Religious Affairs…
[36] For more detail, see: V. Bobrovnikov, "The Beslan Massacre," *ISIM Review*, No. 15, Spring 2005, p. 13.
[37] For more on the attitude of the Wahhabi movement to post-Soviet forms of Islam, see: V. Bobrovnikov, "Post-Socialist Forms of Islam: North Caucasian Wahhabis," *ISIM Newsletter*, No. 7, March 2001, p. 29.

Old Fears and New Barriers

Russia is reinforcing its southern borders against the Wahhabi threat. Since the fall of 2004, a military settlement has been going up in Botlikh in Daghestan, where there are plans to deploy Russian troops from Georgia. Passport control had been toughened up. It might be thought that history has retreated two centuries to the time when the entire region was dissected by the reinforced Caucasian Line. The old fears have resurfaced about the Islamic threat from abroad. Even serious experts are talking about the "export" of Islamism to Russia from the Arab world.[38] Like the old warriors of the 19th century Caucasian War, the Russian military in Chechnia are, out of nostalgia for the empire's lost grandeur, promising not give up a single clump of "Caucasian soil soaked in Russian blood."[39] They see the Caucasian Muslims as the potential allies of foreign terrorists. Of course, a resolute fight against terrorism must be waged in the Caucasus. Along with the failures, such as the Beslan tragedy, the Russian power-related bodies have sustained definite victories in the Caucasus. Among the latter we can note the destruction of the Yarmuk jamaat in Nalchik in January 2005 along with its amir Seyfulla (M. Ataev). The situation in Daghestan has also stabilized somewhat in recent months. Nevertheless, the repeated clashes with Muslim radicals, be it in Kabardino-Balkaria or in Daghestan, are giving food for thought.

Such a movement can only be neutralized with the support of the peaceful Muslim population, both the traditionalists, and the nouveau riche Muslims. Forceful measures alone will not help here. I see the solution to the problem in rejecting imperial ambitions and seeking a dialog with both factions of the Muslim spiritual elite. It stands to reason that those republics are in the most difficult situation today whose authorities played on the contradictions between the official muftiat and the opposition in the 1990s. This primarily applies to Daghestan. The attacks on policemen were to some extent a reaction to the violence wielded by the keepers of the peace over the Daghestanis during the years of suppressing the Wahhabi opposition. The recent disturbances in Kabardino-Balkaria, as Russian ethnologist A.A. Yarlykapov correctly noted,[40] were due to blunders of the authorities, which closed mosques and organized a raid on the people praying, as well as grossly affronting the religious feelings of the opposition in other ways. It is characteristic that in Adigey, for example, a conflict between the muftiat and young Muslims was avoided thanks to the policy of mufti N.-h. Emizh, who recruited young people to work in the SAM and created a youth organization under it headed by Cherkessian repatriate from Kosovo N. Abazi. While recognizing Islam as the reality of the present-day Russian Caucasus, the authorities should preserve the secularity of the state declared by the Constitution and not allow any of the Muslim groups at loggerheads with each other to lead them by the nose.

[38] See, for example: A.A. Ignatenko, op. cit., pp. 181-188.

[39] A. Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire*, Montreal, London, 2002, p. IX.

[40] See: A.A. Yarlykapov, "Islam na Severnom Kavkaze: sovremennye problemy. Severo-Zapadniy Kavkaz," in: *Etnicheskaia situatsiia v stranakh SNG i Baltii*, Annual Report, ed. by V.A. Tishkov, E. Filippova, Moscow, 2005, p. 37.