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THE ACTIVITY OF MOSQUES IN THE CITY OF TASHKENT AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Abstract. *This paper discloses the activity of mosques in Tashkent in the second half of the nineteenth century. The author studies the role of mosques in the social life of the city, the influence of Russian colonial policy on religious institutions, and the economy of the mosques. In addition, the article illustrates the staff of the mosques and their incomes. The functions of mosques, apart from being prayer houses, are also examined. Archival documents and the works of scholars of the studied period have formed the foundation of the article.*

Keywords: *mosque, Tashkent, imam, muezzin, waqf, income, colonial policy, Russian Empire, congregation, Friday prayer, daha.*

INTRODUCTION

After Turkestan was conquered by the Russian Empire, imperial officials faced a number of challenges in establishing colonial governance in the region. In particular, the strong religious convictions of the local population, the application of Sharia as the principal legal source, and the integration of social, economic, cultural, spiritual, and even political life with Islam compelled the imperial administration to reassess its approach and to address these issues with greater caution and seriousness.

Although the Russian Empire had prior experience in governing Muslim populations under colonial rule, in this region it was compelled to implement a different administrative policy because of the area's centuries-old statehood traditions, its well-established systems of governance, and the existence of a relatively developed legal framework. More specifically, the colonial administration relied on traditional local systems of governance

to manage the indigenous population, while overall authority was concentrated in the hands of imperial military officials whose primary function was the supervision and control of the local population. Imperial authorities exercised oversight over religious life through local intermediaries, aiming to regulate and subordinate religious institutions and practices. In administrative terms, the Muslims of Turkestan were formally placed under the jurisdiction of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly; in practice, however, cooperation in religious matters between Turkestan including its administrative center, Tashkent and Orenburg remained limited (Crews, 2006).

The correspondence written by K. Kaufman to the Ministry of Education of the Russian Empire shows that he requested limiting the import of the Holy Qur'an to the region, from which it can be inferred that the imperial administration secretly opposed the further development of Islam in the area (NAU, f. 47, d. 2, l. 6). The Russian Empire regarded Islam as a threat standing behind rebellions and movements against colonial policy; the colonialists therefore sought to establish firm governance by weakening the religious beliefs of the population. The administration pursued this policy behind closed doors, attempting to conceal its plans from the indigenous people, particularly local officials and distinguished clergymen, because such groups eminent clergymen, wealthy locals, and others who believed the occupiers' promises of religious freedom participated in the administration of the region and supported the empire in strengthening control over the population.

MAIN PART

Tashkent was divided into four parts (dahas). Since the city covered a large territory whose population was predominantly Muslim, there were many mosques in it, and both local and Russian historians left a great deal of interesting information about them. For example, according to A. P. Khoroshkhin's treatise *Ocherki Tashkenta* (Essays on Tashkent), approximately 300 mosques were functioning in the city in the 1860s–1870s (Khoroshkhin, 1876:86). As is known, the expenses of the mosques were covered by income from waqf properties (Khoroshkhin, 1876:87). N. Maev noted that waqf income was used for the expenses of madrasas, mosques, and cemeteries, as well as taharatkhanas (ablution places) (Maev, 1876:286–287). This information proves that special taharatkhanas functioned at large mosques. O. Kerenskij, who visited various mosques and madrasas, stated that madrasas contained mosques and that taharatkhanas were located in the middle of the madrasa courtyards (Kerenskij, 1892:1). Maev did

not describe the functional activities of the mosques and mostly wrote about them as educational institutions. Muhammad Solihxo'ja's work *Tarixi jadidayi Toshkand* is considered an important source illustrating the history of Tashkent in the second half of the nineteenth century and is regarded as a reliable source of information about the mosques of the city (Muhammad Solihxo'ja, n.d.).

Some other sources record more than 300 mosques in the second half of the nineteenth century. For instance, on the basis of his studies, Robert D. Crews wrote that there were around 400 mosques in the city in that period (Crews, 2006:252). According to archival materials, however, there were 255 large mosques in 1869, and 343 mosques were functioning in the city in 1891 (NAU, f. 36, d. 449, l. 77). Among recent studies, the work of U. Sultonov, *Toshkent masjidlari tarixi* (History of Tashkent Mosques), is a monograph devoted specifically to this issue and is significant because it is based on Muhammad Solihxo'ja's *Tarixi jadidayi Toshkand* (Sultonov, 2010). According to Maev, there were even women's mosques in the Eski Juva and Eshonguzar mahallas (Maev, 1876:291).

Archival materials provide detailed and valuable information on the mosques of Tashkent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to these sources, mosque staff primarily included imams, mutawallis (trustees), muezzins, and other functionaries. In addition to leading the five daily prayers as the imam of the congregation, the imam also served as a spiritual guide for the local population, a disseminator of religious and general knowledge, and a counselor for the residents of the mahalla. Beyond advising and educating community members, imams played an important role in resolving various disputes including conflicts within families, between neighbors, among relatives, and in broader social matters and thus occupied a prominent position in society. Furthermore, in their capacity as educators, they taught children reading and writing, instruction commonly being conducted in mosques by imams and muezzins. Mosques were therefore regarded by the population as significant and valuable institutions, serving as centers of knowledge, moral guidance, and learning.

Taking into account the wishes and requirements of the community, the imams of mosques were chosen from among knowledgeable people who had graduated from madrasas. However, the Russian Empire interfered in the religious life of the population and turned its attention to the system of appointing imams. Consequently, various conflicts and intrigues arose, and situations were observed in which one group of people supported one imam while another group supported a different one. Because of such conflicts, people

applied to the governor of Tashkent to resolve the matter. The imperial administration used different methods to sow discord among the population and took measures to strengthen its position in the region. One such statement was written to the governor of Tashkent by the residents of the Sukfurush Mahalla of Sebzor Daha. The letter reads:

(...) writing this statement to you, Sir, we claim that Zoirali Mullo Otaboy o'g'li, who serves as imam at our mosque, is never present at prayer; he is unconcerned and cannot be found when needed. Therefore, we wish Mullo Alim Muhammad okhund Mullo Esh Muhammad o'g'li to be appointed imam in his stead. Having heard the decree that it is the will of a mosque's community to see the person they wish as imam, we ask you to give your order for this Alim Muhammad okhund to be appointed as the imam of our community. We are the citizens who write this statement and 43 people signed with their names (NAU, f. 47, d. 2, l. 6).

This situation, however, was observed in only a few mosques; in most mosques the community continued to follow its existing imam as before.

The age of imams in Tashkent varied, and they were appointed in accordance with their knowledge and ability. According to archival documents of the 1890s, the imam of the Darvozakent mosque in Sebzor Daha was the 85-year-old Shoikrom Shorahim o'g'li, while another elderly imam, Yormuhammad qori Muminboy o'g'li, was actively serving at the age of 81 at a mosque in the Khadrako'cha mahalla of Sebzor. The average age of imams differed across the parts of Tashkent: it was 48 in Shaykhontohur Daha, 44 in Sebzor Daha, 43.7 in Beshaghach Daha, and 46 in Kokcha Daha. Among the imams serving in Shaykhontohur Daha in 1891, roughly 20% were over 60, and 37% were between 45 and 60, while only 7% were between 20 and 30 (NAU, f. 36, d. 3238, ll. 28–30). The imam of a mosque in the Kunkocha mahalla of Kokcha Daha was the 20-year-old Karimberdi Bekberdi, and another young imam, the 21-year-old Sul-tonkhoja Abduwakilkhoja, led a mosque with a congregation of 35.

In 1891, one of the imams serving the Takhtapul Mahalla of Sebzor Daha was Saidmuzaffarqori Shomahdikhuja, who, at the age of 27, was the youngest imam in the daha. Mullo Jamoliddin, son of Nizomiddin, of Chaqar Mahalla, and Akmalxon, son of Yusufkhon, of Samarkand Darvoza Mahalla in Beshaghach Daha, were both 21 years old and among the youngest imams recorded in the city. Overall, the available data indicate that the position of imam was generally occupied by individuals between 35 and 50 years of age.

Besides imams, a noib (deputy) imam and a muezzin worked at the mosques, each with clearly defined duties. The muezzin recited the azan before every prayer, and the

deputy imam led the congregation in prayer when the imam was absent. At mahalla mosques, however, there were no deputy imams; when the imam was absent, the most knowledgeable and respected man among the congregation led the prayer. Although imams spent most of their time at the mosques, they also engaged in occupations such as farming and craftsmanship to earn a living, because the income from waqf was insufficient for imams at some mosques.

More mosques were built in the larger mahallas, and some streets had their own individual mosques. For instance, the Qiyot, O'qchi, Olmazor, Qoryoghdi, and Labzak mahallas in Shaykhontohur Daha each had three or more mosques. There were 8 mosques in the Kokhota mahalla, 5 in the Takhtapul mahalla, and 6 in the "Ichki Takhtapul" neighborhood of Sebzor Daha. At least two mosques functioned in such mahallas of Beshaghach Daha as Eski Namozgoh, Eshonguzar, Chorsu, and Saghbon, while the Chaqchimon, Pichoqchi, and Eshikobod Guzarboshi mahallas of Kokcha Daha also had several mosques. Not all mosques held the Friday and Eid prayers, however; these were performed only at the namazgahs and the large mosques.

Most mosques in Tashkent were built mainly of adobe and clay pellets, while some large mosques were built of baked brick. They were constructed by the residents of the mahallas or by patrons of the city, who, besides having the mosques built, also supported their annual repair. Wealthy people such as Saidazimboy, Qosimboy, Sharifboy, Khokhuja, Markarimboy, Madjidboy, Roziqboy, Shodjalil, and Alimuhammad sponsored the construction of mosques in the city (NAU, f. 36, d. 3238, ll. 28–30). Some mosques had a history spanning many centuries; for example, the Khoja Ahror Vali mosque in the Mahkama mahalla of Kokcha Daha and the Shaikh Zayniddin mosque in the same area were still functioning in the late nineteenth century (NAU, f. 36, d. 449, ll. 193–211), and they were reconstructed and equipped on the basis of their waqf income.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the wealthy people of the city took the lead in building and constructing mosques (NAU, f. 36, d. 449, ll. 193–211). In particular, Pulatboy financed the construction of many mosques in Kokcha Daha. According to archival documents, scarcely 8.4% of the 343 mosques were reconstructed by the mahalla community, while the rest were reconstructed by wealthy individuals. Certain construction styles were required in order to make the mosques comfortable for prayer, and they therefore shared many similarities in their interior and exterior designs. Mosques were built with a terrace, and their entrance was placed behind the building, since the mihrab had to face the Kaaba (Mecca). In some sources of the late nineteenth century, the mosques of Tashkent were compared to galleries (Kerenskij, 1907:2).

The number of visitors to the mosques varied: some had larger congregations, others smaller ones. For example, large mosques in such mahallas as Qoryoghdi, Okkurghon, and Egarchi had congregations reaching 200 people at the end of the nineteenth century, while smaller mosques had 20–25 worshippers (NAU, f. 36, d. 3238, ll. 28–30). Mosques in the Teshikkopka, Yov, and Rabot mahallas of Sebzor Daha had 100–150 worshippers, and around 200 people usually came to pray at the mosque in the Registan mahalla (NAU, f. 36, d. 3238, ll. 30–33). In Beshaghach Daha, mosques such as Teshikkopka, Yov, Okkirghon, and Rabot had congregations of around 100–130. The congregations of the mosques in the Kallakhona, Ayirish Langar, Chaqchimon, Kulbilboy, Pichoqchi, Eshikobod, and Guzarboshi mahallas of Kokcha Daha numbered around 100–130 people. In the case of three mosques in the Saghbon mahalla, the congregations numbered about 100, 125, and 350, respectively (NAU, f. 36, d. 3238, ll. 30–33).

According to statistics on mosque congregations in 1891, the number of mosquegoers was around 6,000 men in Shaykhontohur Daha, around 4,100 in Beshaghach Daha, over 5,300 in Kokcha Daha, and 4,500 in Sebzor Daha.

As at the madrasas and mausoleums, the economic affairs of the mosques were managed by a mutawalli, who was responsible for financial and economic activities, revenues and expenses, the salaries of the staff, accounting, and similar matters. The income of large mosques from waqf property was sufficient to pay the salaries of their staff and other expenses, and even to educate a greater number of children in two, three, or more rooms, since as mentioned above the mosques also functioned as schools. This can be seen in the example of the large mosques of Sebzor Daha in 1868, where there were seven large mosques in the daha:

(1) Toshmuhammad karvonboshi Mosque the imam is Mulla Orif qori and the muezzin is Mullo Nazar; the waqf of the mosque is 8 stores whose rental income is 16 tillas (gold coins); the imam receives 12 tillas, and the muezzin 4 tillas, if anything remains after the repair of the mosque. (2) Hakimboy Mosque in Pushtihammom Mahalla it has 11 hujras (rooms); the imam and mutawalli is Mullo Azim hoji, the muezzin is Sul-tonboy qori, and the deputy imam is Mullo Muhammad Yoqub qori; its waqf property is 3 stores whose rent is 1 tilla. (3) Tursunboy Mosque in Behisht Hammam Mahalla it has one maktabkhana (school); the imam and mutawalli is Mullo Sodiq okhund and the muezzin, who also works as a teacher, is Avaz Muhammad okhund; its waqf is the rental income of two stores at 6 tillas, together with ten tanabs of alfalfa land in the O'ktepa area,

whose revenue is 7 tillas; the muezzin receives two tillas, and the remainder is spent on prayer mats, lighting, and repairs. (4) Pulatboy Mosque in Registon Mahalla the imam is Mulla Saidahmad okhund and the muezzin is Shohalim; its waqf is 4 stores with a rental income of 8 tillas; the imam receives 6 tillas and the muezzin 2; the mosque has 8 rooms. (5) Azamatshoh Mosque in Tinchob Mahalla Mulla Erkaboy is imam and Okhund shoh makhsun is muezzin; its waqf is three stores with a rental income of 3 tillas; the imam receives 2 tillas and the muezzin 1. (6) Khujayakka Mosque it has 8 hujras; the imam is Mullo Abdurahmon and the muezzin is Mullo Bekmurod; its waqf is 8 stores, and the 5-tilla rental income is spent on the mosque's expenses. (7) Sharifboy Mosque in Mahsiduzda Mahalla there are ten hujras; the imam is Otoullo olim and the muezzin is Ibodullo khuja; its waqf is two stores with a rental income of 3 tillas, spent on the mosque's expenses (NAU, f. 36, d. 449, ll. 221–222).

It can be observed from the available information that the income of the mosques derived from waqf properties was primarily allocated to imams and muezzins. Since they were engaged in leading the five daily prayers, they had limited opportunity for additional employment. The main financial support for the mosques was provided by the worshippers and the residents of the mahallas in which they were located. However, as the lands and commercial properties endowed to the mosques as waqf assets came under increasing interference by the Russian Empire, their income declined significantly, and serious problems consequently emerged in the economic maintenance and financial support of the mosques.

Friday was a day of rest for the population and was observed in a festive mood, and the holidays of Ramadan Eid (Eid al-Fitr) and Kurban Eid (Eid al-Adha) were celebrated joyfully during the year. The dates of the holidays were declared by the chief qadi of the city. Maev noted that in 1875 Kurban Eid was celebrated on 5 January and Ramadan Eid on 22 October (Maev, 1876:275). In 1876 and 1877, Ramadan corresponded mostly to September; it fell in May in 1886, in December in 1901, and in September in 1909. According to information published in the press, chaikhanas, craftsmen's shops, and stores did not operate during the daytime in Ramadan (M. Z., 1908). Another source described how the "old part" of the city came alive at night during Ramadan: various performances were held in crowded places, most of them organized at the Eski Juva bazaar and in the garden of the Shaykhontohur mosque (Ostroumov, 1908). The performances expanded especially on Thursdays, Fridays, and Sundays, when there was not a free space

the size of an apple in such places (Ostroumov, 1908). Russians and members of other nationalities living in the new part of Tashkent came to the bazaars on these days. When people broke their fast after sunset during Ramadan, the chaikhanas and their terraces were full of people, with kebab cooks, fruit sellers, sweet sellers, vegetable growers, water sellers, and others; local circus performances lasted until midnight, and the shops were open until midnight as well.

In addition, Qur'an reciters who had studied the Qur'an in daloilkhanas and madrasas recited selected passages, while many people spent most of their time in the mosques engaged in prayer. The night between the 26th and 27th of Ramadan is "Laylat al-Qadr," and it was observed by Muslims in a magnificent mood (Ostroumov, 1908). The madrasas suspended their activities during Ramadan, while the schools continued teaching (Ostroumov, 1908:12). All madrasa students observed the fast during Ramadan; however, since most schoolchildren were young, fasting was not obligatory for them and they generally did not observe it. Thus the educational process continued, even though the teachers themselves were fasting.

Pupils usually arrived at the mosque schools at about seven o'clock in the morning and studied until around ten. Afterward they returned either to their homes or to chaikhanas for lunch, and, having eaten, they resumed their studies until about one o'clock in the afternoon (Sredne-aziatskaya zhizn, 1906). Pupils spent most of their time in lessons on the days when classes were held. Instruction in the schools was based on the Uzbek alphabet developed from the Arabic script. Although the educational system operated according to certain regulations and supervision, pupils were absent on some days; nevertheless, considerable attention was devoted to the educational process.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the mosques of Tashkent were considered an important social factor in the life of society at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, and the main reason for this was connected with the religious beliefs of the population. The colonial administration could not openly confront the activities of the mosques in the region more precisely, the mosques of Tashkent, the center of Turkestan nor could it candidly resist the existence of Islam in society. The construction of new mosques and the restoration of existing ones had to be carried out by local people. During the Soviet period, most of the mosques were destroyed for various ostensible reasons.

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