

THE PLATFORM

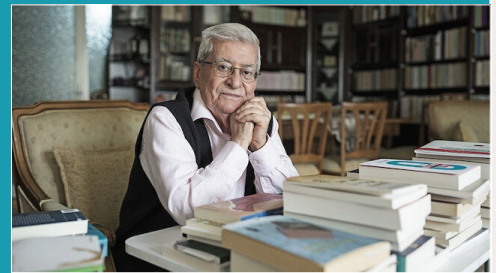
CURRENT MUSLIM AFFAIRS



“The Empathy and Compassion Unified the Muslim World in This Difficult Time”

Earthquake Solidarity of Muslim Societies: An Interview with Hüseyin Oruç from IHH

Islamic Thinking in Modern Times:
Rasim Özdenören



THEME: ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

Research Centre for Social Thought and Policy (TODAM) aims to investigate the problems faced by Muslim societies, in particular Türkiye, including their nature, interconnectivity, and suggest concrete solutions to these problems by combining the experiences from the Turkish society and the Muslim world. With its diverse range of research and publication studies TODAM aims to address the leading problems of Türkiye and Muslim societies such as unemployment, income inequality, brain drain, asylum seekers, urbanization, human rights violations, domestic violence, pension system and housing, and offer solutions to them in the light of quantitative data.

TODAM offers statistical data related to studies conducted in the fields of law, education, economy, and social work, especially in Türkiye and Muslim societies after year 2000, through its database where researchers can compare, combine, and extract different statistical information. It functions as a centre that provides the space and opportunity to conduct independent academic studies by making quantitative data accessible.

PLATFORM

The Platform is published by TODAM under auspices of ILKE Foundation for Science, Culture and Education in an attempt to provide up-to-date and original perspectives on the intellectual, political, social, economic and cultural affairs of Muslim societies. The Platform is published as part of the Thought and Movements in Muslim Societies Project.

It aims to be a platform where the Muslim world affairs are analysed in light of the activities of major think tanks, research centres and institutes, universities, and political, religious, and social movements. The Muslim world's contributions to global issues and its intellectual advances are presented to Türkiye and the whole world through Platform magazine. The magazine keeps its finger on the pulse of the Muslim world and uses its website and database to share news and developments related to different institutions, movements, activities, and personalities.

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Editor's Note

Intellectual Streams in The Muslim World, which started publishing in January 2021, has reached its 25th issue this month. We have presented accurate perspectives on the agenda of the Muslim world by analysing the issues that Muslim societies are currently dealing with in a comprehensive, in-depth, comparative, and holistic manner by experts in their fields. Now onwards, Intellectual Streams in the Muslim World will continue publishing under a fresh title, "The Platform". The Platform will deal with the "real" agenda and issues of Muslim societies using a data-based approach. The Platform has the mission of being a platform that follows and analyses the agenda of Muslim societies in an accurate and up-to-date way.

The devastating earthquake in our country has deeply hurt the whole Ummah, especially our countrymen. Since the first day of the earthquake, Muslim societies had a unified agenda: Türkiye. From Arakan to Azerbaijan and from America to Nigeria, every Muslim all over the world did whatever he could for Türkiye. IHH, one of the world's largest humanitarian aid organisations, was one of the leading NGOs serving in the earthquake region. In this issue, we have included an interview we conducted with Hüseyin Oruç, Deputy Chairman of IHH, about the earthquake and solidarity of Muslim societies based on his observations and experiences in the field. We have also prepared an infographic showing the earthquake donations from Muslim societies so far.

One of the prominent topics in the Platform this month is "Islamic education". The history and current status of Islamic education in Central Asia, Caucasus, Europe and America is evaluated by experts of the field.

Another topic discussed in this issue of The Platform is "Cultural Identity Crisis: Muslims and Jews Living in Jerusalem" written by Jerusalem studies expert Dr Abdallah Marouf Omar. Moreover, the magazine covers the world of thought of Rasim Özdenören, a Turkish philosopher who passed away last year.

We hope that the first issue of the Platform would be equally informative and beneficial for everyone among its diverse and large readership.

Büşra İnce & Selvanur Demircan



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TÜRKİYE: THE HEART OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

44 Muslim countries

720 million dollar monetary support
(Total estimated value from Muslim countries)

1700 Search and Rescue / Health / Military Personnel
(Total estimated value from Muslim countries)



MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Iraq

- 136.5 tonnes of aid with 26 aircrafts
- 30 thousand tonnes of fuel oil aid
- 126 lorries of humanitarian aid
- Search and rescue team

Sudan

- 10 tonnes of medicine
- 90 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- 2 thousand tents
- Search and rescue team and 120 medical personnel

Yemen

- Activist Tawakkul Karman donated 53 thousand dollars
- Tawakkul Karman Foundation will build 50 houses
- 900 thousand dollars worth of relief supplies

Palestine

- 1 million dollars of aid collected in mosques
- 15 tonnes of in-kind aid
- Search and rescue team

Tunisia

- 20 tonnes of aid
- Tunisian Prime Ministry and Tunisian Red Crescent launched a nationwide aid campaign
- Search and rescue team

Egypt

- 144 tonnes of aid
- Relief with 2 military aircraft and 1 military ship

Algeria

- 30 million dollars in aid
- 95 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- Search and rescue team

Jordan

- 10 ambulances, 21 lorries
- 1 field hospital
- 10 thousand tents

Lebanon

- 1.5 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- 3 search and rescue teams

Moritania

- Relief campaign
- 1 aid aircraft

Somalia

- 4 million dollars through a charity campaign
- MPs donated 20 per cent of one month's salary

Uganda

- Ugandan Muslim students collected 10 thousand dollars in aid

GULF COUNTRIES

Qatar

- USD 71.6 million at government and civil society level
- 10 thousand containers, 30 aircraft full of aid
- Search and rescue teams

United Arab Emirates

- 640 tonnes of medical supplies to Turkey and Syria through Donation Bridges and Goodness Bridges aid campaigns
- USD 67.6 million at government and civil society level
- 1 field hospital, 1 mobile hospital
- Search and rescue teams

Saudi Arabia

- 115.5 million USD in cash assistance
- 12 aid planes
- 3 thousand containers
- Search and rescue team

Oman

- 650 thousand dollars with the aid campaign

Kuwait

- 100 million USD in assistance at government and civil society level
- 9 military cargo aircrafts
- Search and rescue team

Bahrain

- 3.7 million dollar raised through a TV campaign
- 55.7 tonnes of aid material
- Search and rescue team

From Azerbaijan to Arakan, from Bosnia to Pakistan, Muslim countries were the first to respond to Türkiye's call for aid. The aid sent by every Muslim as much as they could afford has helped in healing the wounds of Türkiye.



CENTRAL AND SOUTH ASIA

Kyrgyzstan

- 1 million 23 thousand TL donation
- 3.5 million TL from the Mufti's Office
- World Union of Meskhetian Turks \$1 million
- Tent houses
- Search and rescue team

Uzbekistan

- 170 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- Field hospital
- Search and rescue team

Turkmenistan

- 4 thousand blankets
- 3 aid planes
- Medical team
- Search and rescue team

Kazakhstan

- 55 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- \$10 million donation
- Tent houses
- Search and rescue team

Malaysia

- 40 tonnes of humanitarian aid
- Field hospital
- 81-strong military medical team
- Search and rescue team

Indonesia

- 3 humanitarian aid aircraft
- 1 tonne of medical aid
- Search and rescue team

Pakistan

- 100 million TL humanitarian aid
- 21 cargo aircrafts carrying aid
- Over dozen search and rescue teams by govt and civil society separately

Bangladesh

- 12 thousand tents
- 100 tonnes of medical and humanitarian aid
- Search and rescue team

Arakan

- 700 blankets, 200 coats
- Cash assistance

East Turkestan

- Istanbul-based International Union of East Turkistan NGOs provided 400 thousand TL cash support along with bread, food and clothing aid

BALKANS AND CAUCASUS REGION

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- 50 lorries of humanitarian aid
- 25 thousand euro cash support
- Search and rescue team

Kosovo

- Prizren Mufti's Office donated 2.144 USD through a charity campaign

North Macedonia

- Humanitarian aid campaign with blankets, clothes, food aid

Serbia

- Aid convoy of 7 lorries from Serbian Muslims

Bulgaria

- 4 lorries of humanitarian aid from Muslims in Bulgaria

Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia



- 1.5 million USD in cash assistance
- Humanitarian aid trucks
- Search and Rescue team

Azerbaijan

- 441 tonnes of medical supplies
- 734 tonnes of food
- 276 million 385 thousand TL cash aid
- Search and rescue team

USA

- US Council of Muslim Organization, the umbrella organisation of Muslim students in the US, collected \$100 million in cash and in-kind donations
- American Muslim humanitarian organisations send search and rescue teams and relief supplies
- Pakistani doctors living in the US donated more than 365 thousand dollars

“The Empathy and Compassion Unified the Muslim World in This Difficult Time”

Earthquake Solidarity of Muslim Societies: An Interview with Hüseyin Oruç IHH Foundation Board Member

In the campaigns organised in the poorest regions of the world, Arakan camps, Moro, Ethiopia, Somalia and Niger, people collected aid and sent money to Türkiye.



We know that the international aid provided to Türkiye for the earthquake by the Gulf countries alone was larger than the total aid provided by many EU and European countries. In addition to this, Muslim countries such as Arakan, Patani, Mauritania, Somalia, Yemen, which are experiencing economic distress, were among the first countries to provide aid to Türkiye at both state and popular levels. Should this support provided by several countries from the Muslim world, albeit at very different levels in economic terms, be evaluated only with a simple humanitarian aid understanding? How can we relate this situation to the concept of “ummah”?

When there is a crisis or a disaster, every Muslim who is aware of it asks himself the question “what can I do?” In this situation, a reaction develops especially in the field of humanitarian aid. In fact, in a way, we can understand this as a reflection of the “zakat institution”. With the active operation of the institution of zakat, an enormous fund can be created to be used in the crises. When you plan and manage this situation well, you can foresee that it will be a cure for many crises. As a result, today, every Muslim is trying to heal this wound in the best possible way using his best possible means.

In the campaigns organised in the poorest regions of the world, Arakan camps, Moro, Ethiopia, Somalia and Niger, people collected aid and sent money to Türkiye. In Moro, the government of the newly established autonomous region gave one million dollars donation. Under the organisation of young

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While there are Islamic collaborations in many fields, we thought why not establish an international organisation for search and rescue and disaster management. Such an organisation should be established very quickly.

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graduates from Türkiye, people collected money and sent it to Türkiye. Hopefully, they will visit the earthquake zone soon. Money was collected in the refugee camps in Patani and sent to Türkiye. For us, this effort and support is very important rather than the size and quantity of the aid. As a part of an Ummah, we have once again realised what it means to come to the help of those who are in need of it. We have again experienced how humanitarian aid increases exponentially and how it sprouts like a seed in the soil.

Even though our regions are different, our sufferings are the same. The necessity of being an Ummah is to be able to act by feeling these pains. The strengthening of humanitarian aid network will not only be a remedy for today's crises but also for tomorrow's problems.

Muslim countries sent search and rescue teams, cash support, tents, container houses and many

other forms of assistance to the earthquake region. Were international Muslim civil society organisations able to establish an efficient coordination in the region? Do you think the speed and conditions of coordination of international Muslim civil society organisations were sufficient?

Coordination could have been better because the crisis we are going through is so immense. However, no one could have predicted that the crisis would be so destructive. The coordination of Muslim civil society organisations in times of crisis should be much faster and stronger. This is one of the things the earthquake showed us.

When a country calls for international aid, there is no one who does not know how important the first 72 hours are. From the moment the alarm is first raised, we must have a readiness and coordination in which even an NGO on the other side of the world can respond to this crisis immediately.



Azerbaijani Server Bashirli delivers aid to Türkiye in his old rusty car.

Bosnia and Herzegovina team that received search and rescue training through IHH is in Türkiye.



While there are Islamic collaborations in many fields, we thought why not establish an international organisation for search and rescue and disaster management. A similar organisation should be established very quickly. I would like to give an example of a recent initiative in this regard. In cooperation with TİKA, we provided search and rescue training in Lebanon. The trained Lebanese teams came to our country as soon as the earthquake struck and worked in the rubble. They rescued dozens of people. Additionally, IHH was founded in Bosnia. Bosnian teams were the first to arrive in Istanbul after the earthquake. These teams played a role in the rescue of tens of people. Similar initiatives need to be increased.

Search and rescue is a field that literally impacts lives. If we coordinate quickly, it will be possible to achieve much more than the results achieved today. Why not more? It's not something that can't be done.

A significant proportion of the donations from Muslim countries came from non-governmental organisations such as The International Union of Muslim Scholars, the Tawakkul Foundation in Yemen, and many others. As a board member of a foundation that provides humanitarian aid around the world, how do you think the solidarity that has emerged from this earthquake has affected the spirit of civil society in Muslim societies?

Here, we have observed a great reflection of Türkiye's empathy that it has shown in the past years. Hearing that Türkiye was facing such a great humanitarian crisis, both the developed countries and the countries experiencing the economic crisis tried to support Türkiye with great effort. We have seen this closely in the countries we have worked in. For example, as soon as the people in Chad heard about the disaster, they organised aid campaigns at the civil society level and conveyed their support to us. Rather than the size or quantity of this support, it was a valuable work and endeavour. In a way, we have seen a picture of the Islamic world in which the seeds of goodness sown are rewarded; we have seen a picture of the Islamic world in which the borders of goodness are not separated from each other such as geographic borders.

Türkiye is indeed a hope for every Muslim. A disaster in this country came as a psychological shock to many Muslim societies. It is also very crucial that this hope is not eroded, and that Türkiye stands strong. We are currently experiencing difficult days. However, these difficult times should not make us shatter the hopes of Muslim brethren who have long put their hope and trust in Türkiye. Hopefully, we will heal the wounds together and ensure a rapid recovery.

It is seen that Muslim societies cannot reach Northern Syria, another region hit by the earthquake, as much as Türkiye. In a geography already devastated

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We are currently experiencing difficult days. However, these difficult times should not make us shatter the hopes of Muslim brethren who have long put their hope and trust in Türkiye.

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by the war, does the inadequacy of aid after the earthquake mean that Syria is abandoned to its fate? How do you evaluate the aid to Syria?

North Syria is certainly suffering the pain of what happened before. While there should be more than one humanitarian corridors to deliver aid there, the fact that only one door remains open reduces the aid.

When you are blocked in a place that you can reach in a very short time, it becomes harder for the help to reach in the right way. Just as it bothers you when the queue gets longer at a place you can reach in a short time even when you drive through your neighbourhood, imagine that you are going to intervene in a crisis, but the road gets much longer. We are also talking about a place that has been in the destruction for years. While Syria is a place where the infrastructure needs to be improved, the earthquake has worsened the current situation there. Considering the problems in receiving and delivering aid from abroad, unfortunately, it has been insufficient in combating the crisis there.

Many aid organisations tried to respond to the crisis elsewhere while their own country was hit by the crisis. Muslims are like the limbs of a body. We are in a time when the meaning of the hadith “Believers are like a body. They love each other, pity each other and protect each other” could be more deeply understood.

As IHH, we have mobilised both our own means and aid from abroad to create a corridor of goodness from the very beginning. It would not be conscientiously acceptable to ignore that region. Today is a time when the voice of conscience must override all other voices.

As you mentioned, IHH was also providing search and rescue training in countries such as Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the earthquake, these teams made a serious contribution to search and rescue activities in Türkiye. At this point, IHH, which was ready for search and rescue activities, managed an effective coordination with its teams abroad. How does IHH plan to improve its overseas cooperation in the post-earthquake process? What did this earthquake teach IHH?

We, as IHH, saw the results of the search and rescue trainings we gave in Bosnia and Lebanon in this earthquake. As soon as the earthquake happened, these teams from abroad participated in the operations where dozens of lives were saved. Now they will give trainings in their own countries after their return.

As IHH, we had started these activities with the provision “Whoever saves one life, it is as if he has saved all human beings.” (Holy Quran, 5:32). Now, with this principle, we are planning to increase the trainings and coordination for search and rescue both at home and abroad. There is a lot of demand in this regard. We find the sharing and evaluation of experience very valuable in such a field where human is the centre.

Although we have been living in these lands for thousands of years and have encountered countless earthquakes and destruction, the importance of some facts that were being forgotten has been reiterated by this earthquake. The right steps to be taken today regarding awareness and action will return to us tomorrow with much greater gains.

Islamic Education in Central Asian Countries



Ermamat Ergeshov

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.26414/pmdg05>

Central Asia is an important region of the Eurasian continent, neighbouring Asia to the east and Europe to the west. Rich in underground minerals, the region has historically occupied an influential geopolitical and strategic position where the interests of various powers have converged and intertwined. In this work, the current situation in the field of education and training in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, especially the general situation regarding the religion of Islam in public schools within the system of secularism will be discussed. Religious education in religious institutions such as madrasahs and mosques has been researched many times so far. For example, in the 3-volume book titled *Islam in Central Asia - From Representation to Phobia*, edited by Muhammet Savaş Kafkasyalı, this issue has been analysed in a comprehensive way. Therefore, in order not to fall into repetition, the main purpose of our study is to give information about the status of Islamic education in public schools in terms of its new and current problems.

There is a common approach to religious education in Central Asia, but this approach is based on more specific policies in each country. In general, Central Asian governments are cautious about Islamic education as they fear the uncontrolled expansion of Islam, as the experience of some other Muslim states shows such as Afghanistan. Therefore, they approach religious education through a security discourse. According to the authorities in the region, the newly independent countries are faced with several religious challenges and need to organise religious education under state control in order to counter fundamentalist groups that seek to fill any moral or political vacuum. However, the secular system in the countries cannot fully control religious education. This is because all three countries grant the right to freedom of religion as per their constitutions that were adopted at the time of their independence. This freedom is granted under Article 3 of their Constitutions that deals with “freedom of religion and religious organisations”. The Constitution of Kazakhstan (1992) in Article 5, the Constitution of Kyrgyzstan (1991) in Article 6, and the Constitution of Uzbekistan (1991) in Article 7 have included religion and education to protect the principles of secularism.

In most Central Asian countries, the teaching of Islam in its theological dimension is restricted to state-approved secondary religious schools, madrasahs,

and some higher education institutions. Although religious education is kept under control by the state, a quite different picture emerges today. *“The governments of Central Asian countries have a limited and controlled network of religious schools. These institutions are designed as places for the dissemination of established religious doctrine and for the regrouping of religious power under the control of political power. The Qur’anic schools have no choice but to submit to government policy. Their role is limited to educating the elite tasked with maintaining power and its discourse.”* (Baysalov, 2020) These statements emphasise the willingness of states to provide religious education in general and Islamic education in particular. It is a fact that every state endeavours to control all religious educational institutions, especially religious institutions. However, what they lacked was to leave religious education in the hands of private schools.

In general, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are more welcoming to religious education. Uzbekistan, which previously followed a restricted policy on religious education, has also started to follow a moderate stance. Various studies demonstrate a considerable increase in religiosity in Central Asia, which is reflected by a growing interest in religious education. Apart from prayer and the other four pillars of Islam, which all believers must obey, religious education is considered a duty and a form of worship. For most people, religious knowledge is something that must be learnt at a very early age in a private (family) or public (school) environment. The World Values Survey found that half (54 per cent) of the population of Uzbekistan

and about a third of the population of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan favoured religious education in public schools (Mikhaylov and Ternov, 2020, p. 249). All three states realised that new decisions had to be taken on religious education and that the Salafist system of thought had become a political force. They have significantly revised their steps in religious education in an attempt to combat Salafism, which are perceived as a threat to their security.

Republic of Kazakhstan

In Kazakhstan, the Law on “Freedom of Religious Belief and Religious Organisations” was restructured as the “Law on Religious Activities and Religious Organisations”. In 2012, additional decisions were taken to regulate and facilitate the implementation of this law. In Kazakhstan, the Law on “Freedom of Religious Belief and Religious Organisations” was restructured as the “Law on Religious Activities and Religious Organisations”. In 2012, additional decisions were taken to regulate and facilitate the implementation of this law. The Kazakhstan Education Law does not authorise religious education for any religion or belief in primary and secondary education institutions in Kazakhstan. However, by the decision of the Founding President Nursultan Nazarbayev, a course called “Fundamentals of Religious Studies” was added to the curriculum in the 9th grade of secondary education institutions. The aim of the Fundamentals of Religious Studies course is to provide students with general knowledge about the history of religions and religious beliefs. The



Religious education in Kazakhstan



According to the authorities in the region, the newly independent countries are faced with several religious challenges and need to organise religious education under state control in order to counter fundamentalist groups that seek to fill any moral or political vacuum.



content of this course is designed to cover not only one religion or sect, but all religions, in accordance with the state's understanding of secularism. On 3 November 2010, by the decision of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the curriculum of the elective course, Fundamentals of Religious Studies was approved. Currently, the textbook Fundamentals of Religious Studies is taught compulsorily in more than 7,600 schools in Kazakhstan for one hour a week in the 9th grade. The aim of the course is to provide students with general information about the history of religion and religious beliefs and to contribute positively to their spiritual and personal development. No religion is prioritised in this course (Erpay, 2003, pp. 42-45).

In the first part of the book, there is basic information about religion, religious education, religious ideology and the functions of religion. In addition, in this first chapter, the subjects of shirk and monotheism are explained. In the second part, the development of religion in the historical process from ancient times to the present day is analysed. In this section, ancient religions such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greeks and Romans as well as the religions of societies such as India and China are discussed from the historical perspective and then the Turkish understanding of God is explained. In the third section, general information about Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and their movements is included. In the Islam section, topics such as the birth of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Qur'an, Islamic sects, science and civilisation in Islam, Sufism in Islam, religious festivals, and jihad in Islam are also covered. In the fourth chapter, the religious situation in Kazakhstan, especially the Muslims of Kazakhstan, the arrival of Islam in Kazakhstan, the religious philosophy of Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, the historical heritage of Islamic civilisation in Kazakhstan, the role of Islam in the formation of Kazakh civilisation are examined. In the fifth chapter, new religious movements are discussed and ways of protection from the influence of harmful religious

movements operating in Kazakhstan after gaining independence are presented. "Kazakhstan: Centre for Interreligious Harmony" deals with the religious legislation in Kazakhstan, the unity of faith based on tolerance in Kazakhstan and Nursultan Nazarbayev's initiatives in these areas (Erpay, 2003, pp. 42-45).

Republic of Kyrgyzstan

Kirgizistan 1991 yılından bugüne kadarki süreç içinde, In the process since 1991, Kyrgyzstan has managed to move away from the totalitarian-communist model of religion-state relations to a liberal version of religion-state relations (Kaptagaev, 2001, p. 9).

"Iyman Sabagi" course, which can be considered as an example of formal religious education, started to be taught in Kyrgyz secondary schools in 1992. This course aimed to provide moral education within the framework of general culture. In this framework, the religious knowledge in the curriculum was not given in a systematic way as were given in the Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (RCMK) course in Türkiye. We can say that basic religious knowledge is given within the framework of moral education. In addition to Islam, general information about other religions was also covered. Before the Iyman Sabagi curriculum, the contents of the "Ideology of education for children of the Kyrgyz Republic" and "Ideology of moral education for children of the Kyrgyz Republic" were presented to the community and then officially adopted by the ministry. Ethno-pedagogue scientist Sabyr Iptarov had a great contribution towards the development of this content. The Iyman Sabagi syllabus was developed by the Kyrgyz Academy of Sciences within the framework of these ideologies and in accordance with the principles of general teaching methodology. Iyman Sabagi was taught as an elective in some schools of Kyrgyzstan until 2003. However, since the official programme and textbook of this course had not been prepared by the Ministry of National Education for public schools until then, teachers implemented various

programmes in different places. Despite being in demand by the public, the *lyman Sabagi* course did not achieve the expected pedagogical success due to the lack of a common programme and textbook and the shortcomings of the teachers in the field. The course is planned for 1st-11th grades. The content of the programme consisted of centuries-old social and spiritual values, customs and traditions of the Kyrgyz people. Since 1992, the course was taught as an elective in schools, but with the amendment made in 2003, it was made compulsory in public schools for one hour a week. However, due to the fact that the word “*lyman*” in the course caused different perceptions and interpretations, the name of the course was changed to “*Adeb Sabagi*” by the Ministry of National Education upon the recommendation of the Kyrgyzstan Academy of Sciences. Since 2003, there has not been much change in the curriculum (Basic curriculum for teaching adaptation in general education schools, 2004, pp. 2-3).

Today, the Kyrgyz state is in the process of seeking solutions to major problems in the political, economic and socio-cultural spheres. The state does not ignore the development of the religious sphere, which has been subjected to assimilation for centuries. The organisation and application of special programmes to implement moral education remain one of the most important issues on the agenda. The increase in social problems in the society and the rise in crime rates necessitates the production of urgent and qualified solutions in this regard. The *Adep Sabagi* course aims to restore the moral and spiritual values of society, to educate students in accordance with the principles of national ideology, to instil in them virtue, basic moral, spiritual and human values. The development and efficiency of *Adep Sabagh* depends on the co-operation of school administrators, teachers, and parents (Akramova, 2006, pp. 26-53).

After *lyman* and *Adep Sabagi* were removed from the curricula of public schools, the “History of Religious Culture” syllabus was introduced in 2016. However, since controversial issues and obvious inaccuracies were identified in this book, it was cancelled and the book “History of the Development of Religions” was revised and started to be taught in public schools as of the 2022-2023 academic year. The topics followed in the new curriculum are as follows:



Religious education in Kyrgyzstan.

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Various studies demonstrate a considerable increase in religiosity in Central Asia, which is reflected by a growing interest in religious education.

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1. Foundations of World Religions Course

- The concept of the foundations of religions
- Foundations of Buddhism
- Foundations of Christianity

2. Principles of Islam

- The main sources of Islamic law
- Belief
- Worship (worship)
- Morality
- Contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad: History of the Sahaba

3. Hanafi sect and Maturidi creed in Kyrgyzstan

- Imam Azam and the Hanafi school
- Characteristics of the Hanafi sect
- The spread of the Hanafi sect in Central Asia
- Abu Mansur al-Maturidi and his school of faith
- State and religion co-operation
- State policy of the Kyrgyz Republic in the field of religion
- Interreligious harmony and tolerance
- Subversive, extremist, and terrorist organisations in Kyrgyzstan

An annual report on this textbook will be issued at the end of this year and will determine the successes and shortcomings of the teaching of religion in education (State Educational Standards of the Kyrgyz Republic, 2022).

Republic of Uzbekistan

In addition to sanctuaries such as mosques, churches and synagogues, the registered faith groups in Uzbekistan have a large number of institutions and organisations officially providing religious education and training. As of 2018, there was one university, one institute and 10 madrasas for Muslims, and one Seminary (church school) each for Orthodox and Protestants. Although the words of secularism are not mentioned in the Constitution, Uzbekistan adopts secular policies in religion-state relations. This attitude has been maintained after Shavkat Mirziyoyev. In this direction, a series of legal arrangements were made in 2016 and 2017 to strengthen the secular structure of the education system. In particular, the curricula of secondary and vocational education institutions were reorganised in order to adopt and disseminate

secular values. According to the relevant laws, the central governing bodies of religious organisations may provide religious education for the training of religious and other staff. Religious education institutions can start training after registering with the Ministry of Justice and obtaining a licence. According to the law on education, students who have completed primary education can apply to the relevant institutions to receive religious education at the secondary level (madrasa). According to the law on religion, those who teach in specialised areas in religious education institutions must have received religious education and must also be licensed by the central administrative authorities.

In the early 1990s, there were over 100 madrasas in Uzbekistan. Only 20 of these madrasas, most of which were opened with funds and facilities from abroad, were affiliated with the Administration of Muslims of Uzbekistan, while the rest were uncontrolled institutions that provided education far from a determined curriculum. These madrasas, which came under the influence of “extremist” groups over time, were closed down towards the end of 1999 (Mushtaq, 2015, p.3). Candidates who are willing to study in madrasas, which are accepted as vocational education within the second education and whose education period is 4 years for the winter term, can apply to the local representative office of ÖMI with the documents to be obtained from the neighbourhood organisation and the school they graduated from (at the end of 9 years). After the application, an exam is held in Uzbek language and literature, spirituality, foreign language and history courses; those who pass the exam are entitled to study at the madrasah (Madrasahs of Uzbekistan, 2022). In 2003, a government decree added general education subjects to the madrasa curriculum, giving madrasa graduates the same right to enter universities as other secondary school graduates. In addition to full-time education, citizens of Uzbekistan between the ages of 15-35 can also study in madrasas for three-month periods on a part-time basis during the summer period. In the 2017-2018 academic year, the status of madrasas was raised to undergraduate level with a new change in the curriculum of madrasas (Gafurov, 2020, pp. 7-10). As can be seen in Uzbekistan, the policy of separation of religion and state is still maintained, and there is no place for religion classes in public schools.



Conclusion

In contemporary Central Asia, especially in the Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, religious education has been recognised as essential for both modern states and religious institutions. In contrast to the atheism policy of the Soviet period, there are efforts to develop education and training programmes based on the traditional understanding of Islam. When we mention religious education in Central Asia, we mostly mean the activities of religious organisations in the training of clergy. For that purpose, religious organisations have the right to establish religious educational institutions, but subject to certain requirements. Religious educational institutions may not be established by any religious organisation, but only by religious centres or central government bodies (all countries except Turkmenistan) with the permission of the Council of Ministers by the state body responsible for religious affairs under the Head of State. Graduates of private educational institutions (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) and/or persons who have received permission from the governing bodies of religious centres (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan) or a state authority may provide religious education.

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Islamic Religious Education in Europe and America



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Modernisation and secularisation in the last century have affected the provision of religious education in schools all over the world. Both Islamic and Christian religious education institutions have been unfavourably affected by this situation. While Christian religious education continues in church schools and their foundations, Muslim communities living in Europe and America have sought solutions within the Islamic schools affiliated with mosques and non-governmental organisations.

In the face of the modern schools that emerged with modernisation, madrasas providing Islamic education could not survive and most of them were closed down. Those that were open were not in demand as much as before. As a result of this situation, a new question has emerged that Muslim societies need to answer; “How to provide Islamic religious education in modern schools?” Muslims living in Europe and America are trying to answer this question with the integrated education programmes they have developed. In this article, Islamic education programmes, which are a response to this question, will be examined in context of the pre-school age group.

IQRA' Foundation Preschool Education Programme in America

IQRA' Foundation was established in 1981 in Chicago, USA to develop educational programmes and materials for Islamic schools. The founders of the foundation are Dr Abdullah Ghazi and his wife Dr Tasneema Ghazi. Tasneema Ghazi is also an academic with a PhD in curriculum development in education. IQRA' Foundation provides educational programmes and teaching materials including Islamic education at pre-school, primary and secondary levels. The educational programmes and textbooks produced by the Foundation are preferred by Islamic schools in the USA, Europe and South Asia.

In addition to curriculum development, IQRA' Foundation also carries out academic research on teaching methodology for Islamic education in combination with secular education. As a result of these researches, the foundation has developed “unified curricula”, which attempts to synthesise classical

Islamic madrasa education with modern pedagogy and address all levels of education from kindergarten to senior high school. In addition to the curricula, the foundation also publishes textbooks, exercise books, teacher support books and student support books. The Foundation's educational programmes and its 150 educational materials are used as a resource in Islamic schools, especially in North America and other English-speaking countries around the globe (Uzun, 2016).

The "Islamic Experiences" learning area of the Foundation's pre-school curriculum is one of the first examples of a curriculum in this field and has been widely used by Islamic schools in America, Europe and South Asia for nearly forty years. The Foundation's "Islamic Experiences" learning area is organised under four headings: Qur'anic Studies, Life of the Prophet Muhammad, Fiqh and Worship, and Islamic History. It is seen that this branch distribution is maintained in the same way in the Foundation's primary and secondary education programmes. Therefore, the "Islamic Experiences" learning area of the IQRA' preschool programme constitutes the first step of a 12-year religious education process.

When the general objectives of the programme were analysed, it was found that there was an almost equal distribution among the learning areas, with the affective area being predominant. On the other hand, when we look at the objectives of the Islamic Experiences learning area, it has been determined that 92% of the objectives are related to the cognitive field. It would be appropriate to re-evaluate this situation in the light of current data in terms of the contribution of a knowledge-oriented religious education to children's religious development in the early period. Current research in this field states that religious education that prioritises the affective domain before the cognitive domain in the early period contributes more to the religious development of children in the long term (Uzun, 2022).

When the curriculum was analysed in terms of content, it was found that it did not include the teaching of reading the Qur'an. The reason for this is that the same lessons are also included in the primary school level and all related branches (Arabic, English, Qur'an). In addition, the programme includes topics such as revelation, heaven, hell, angels, which are difficult for pre-schoolers to make sense of and may be frightening for some sensitive children. In terms of the appropriateness of these subjects for a certain age group, the programme should be revised in line with current data.

In addition, it is seen that the programme makes a special effort to integrate religious education with other branches. For example, while teaching science to children, it is seen that the perspective of creation by God is emphasised and an understanding of science that gives an Islamic perspective is aimed to be established.

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The foundation has developed “unified curricula”, which attempts to synthesise classical Islamic madrasa education with modern pedagogy and address all levels of education from kindergarten to senior high school.

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Tarbiyah Foundation in America

Prof. Dr Dawud Tawhidi, The founder of the Terbiye Project, (1950-2010), is an American-born Muslim educator. Immediately after converting to Islam in 1972, Tawhidi studied Arabic at Leigh and Pennsylvania Universities. In 1980, he completed his Usulu al-Dīn studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo and began teaching in Muslim schools in Philadelphia. After completing his master's degree in Islamic Studies at the University of Michigan in 1983 and PhD in 1985, Tawhidi worked as a lecturer at the university. Tawhidi's research interests are as follows: Model of Islamic Philosophy of Education, Early Islamic Educational Institutions, Semantic Structure of the Qur'an, and Worldview of the Qur'an.

Dawud Tawhidi has made a major contribution to the shaping of Islamic education in North America, and his most important work in the field of religious education is the Terbiye Project. The Foundation has published an 80-page framework educational programme, "Tarbiyah Overview", which explains the

basic philosophy of the project. The Terbiye Project is a values education programme developed within the framework of the concept of Tawheed, which is followed by Muslim schools in the USA, Indonesia and Malaysia, especially the Crescent Academy schools founded by Dawud Tawheed in the USA.

The American Tarbiya Project is a curriculum framework that considers it necessary to take into account Islamic knowledge and the Islamic perspective at all levels and in all subjects when formulating the curriculum. The purpose of the Tarbiyah Project is to determine the principles of applying Islamic knowledge to the education system or curriculum. The programme ultimately aims to develop a God-centred, comprehensive perspective based on a universal outlook. The most fundamental goal of the programme is to bring the human nature to perfection. The Education Programme argues that learning is a transformative process rather than a purely informative process.

The Terbiye Project proposes an educational programme based on the Integrated Learning Model (IILM) developed by Dawud Tawhidi. This programme



proposal offers a holistic model of Islamic education based on the principles of tawheed and decency, which incorporates the answers to the fundamental questions of education such as “What should we teach?” and “How should we educate?”.

The framework programme, which aims to help determine the content that is critical to the Terbiye Project is based on seven main themes that emerge from a God-centred perspective. These themes are: God-consciousness, noble character, useful knowledge, healthy living, human relationships, faith-based action and public service.

The project divides an academic year into three semesters, and in each semester it chooses two or three core subject areas. For example, if the subject of the first month of the first term is Spiritual Literacy (God Consciousness-Tawhit), teachers at all levels and in all branches are obliged to address this subject in their lessons and social activities and

to synthesise the subjects in their curricula with the subject of Tawhit.

The draft curriculum developed by the Terbiye Foundation is crucial in guiding how Islamic education can be integrated into the modern education programme at all levels and in all branches.¹

UK Islamic Shaksiyah Foundation

The Islamic Shaksiyah Foundation in the UK was founded by Muslim mothers who did not want to entrust their children to secular state schools (Ahmed, Sabir, 2019, p.119). Shaksiyah Foundation Schools aim to educate children as a whole in physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects.

The foundation’s schools do not have Islamic Religion classes and teachers as a separate subject (Ahmed, Sabir, 2019 p. 120). Instead, in primary schools, class

¹ For detailed information on the Terbiye project, see the author’s paper titled “A New Methodology in Programme Development in Islamic Education: The Case of the American Terbiye Project” in the Proceedings of the International Islamic Education Congress 2018.



teachers lead circle times, which begin with the recitation of the Qur'an and end with prayer, usually with a curriculum-determined topic that has a relevance to Islam (Ahmed, Sabir, 2019 p. 120). The aim of the circle time is to provide children with an Islamic perspective and critical thinking skills, where questioning is encouraged. The aim of the circle time is to introduce Islam to children by connecting it with their daily life experiences. For Muslim children living in a non-Muslim society, circle time is also considered to be a safe space to understand and discuss how non-Muslims view Muslims' worship and lifestyle and where they differ from Muslims (Ahmed, Sabir, 2019, p. 121).

The daily circle time conversations provide the basis for the religious education curriculum of Şahsiyet Schools. The religious education programme, which is referred to as the circle curriculum, includes the topics of memorisation, tarbiyah, talim and tedip in Şahsiyet Foundation Kindergartens. Memorisation covers the memorisation of short suras, hadiths and prayers at the preschool level. What is meant by the concept of discipline is to conceptualise the connection between children's daily life experiences and Islamic teachings. While basic knowledge about the Islamic faith and teachings is given under the title of talim (instruction), information about the children themselves, their relationship with Allah and their

awareness of servitude is given under the title of tedip (treatment) (Ahmed, Sabir, 2019, pp. 120-122).

The Foundation has a kindergarten in London called Tifli Daycare, which gives education to children between the ages of 3-5. The basic activities included in the daily programme of the Foundation's Kindergarten are as follows;

- Morning Prayer, Hadith Reading and Memorisation
- Circle Hour (includes Aqeedah, Worship, Sunnah, Adab and Morals)
- Teaching Arabic Reading and Writing
- Qur'an Reading and Memorisation
- Islamic Children's Songs and Music Education

Apart from these, the activities that are included on a daily basis are story reading and telling, drama, art, lego and building games, sand and water activities, garden games, technology and media, which are also used in other preschools.

The education programme of the Islamic Şahsiyet Foundation is important as an opportunity to set an example of how Islamic religious education can be delivered without a separate Islamic religion course, synthesised with the curriculum and made a part of the institutional culture.

USA Noor Kids Character Development Programme

In addition to these programmes, there is an example of an Islamic education programme developed in the USA called Noor Kids, which is developed for use in home-schools and schools and has an online education infrastructure. Noor Kids is an educational institution that creates programmes and produces digital and printed resources in the field of early childhood Islamic religious education. It was founded in 2016 in the USA and receives educational counselling from Harvard University (Aaser, n.d., p. 2).

The “Noor Kids Character Building Programme” was developed as a result of research conducted at Harvard, Berkeley and San Francisco State Universities. The programme is used by 25,000 families from 25 countries. Families participating in the programme receive two educational storybooks prepared for children aged 4-9 per month. Besides, the programme includes weekly online children’s sermons prepared for children. In the children’s sermons, the topic of the week is explained through stories, art activities and a humorous style. Children collect the badges in the storybooks in their Global Muslim Citizen Passports given to them by the programme. In addition, animated films, professionally drawn and dubbed, related to the theme are produced for children and shared with the participants of the programme (Aaser, n.d., p.3). There are 36 themes in the programme covering character, citizenship, and faith. Each month, documents related to a theme (two storybooks, an animated film, and a weekly online children’s sermon) are sent to the children participating in the programme. In addition to the home-school programme, Noor Kids also provides consultancy to Islamic schools on curriculum, materials, and teacher training.

The main characters of the storybooks, Emin, Shirin, Amira and Assad, are four Muslim children attending a public school in a non-Muslim society. The characters of the cartoon film are represented by animal figures in order to be at an equal distance to children of different ethnic backgrounds. Each storybook contains two stories. In the stories, sample events and problems that children may encounter in their daily lives are included, and questions are asked to encourage the development of critical thinking skills to solve problems (Aaser, n.d., p. 5).

Conclusion and Assessment

Muslims living in the last century have developed different approaches and educational programmes to find a place for Islamic education in modern schools. IQRA’ Foundation, Tarbiyah Foundation, Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation and Noor Kids are just a few examples of these programmes that are reviewed in this analysis. The efforts of Muslim societies to create a space for Islamic education in modern societies and the resulting educational programmes and materials are of great importance as an example for institutions in similar pursuits.

The IQRA’ Foundation Programme can be considered as a version of the Imam Hatip Schools that exist in Türkiye, which also provide education at pre-school and primary school levels. The Islamic Shakhshiyah Foundation is an example of how religious education can be provided at an early age without religious education classes and teachers. The Tarbiyah Foundation sets a precedent on how to prepare a whole school curriculum from an Islamic perspective, while the Noor Kids Programme is a good example of online Islamic education.

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Muslims and Islamic Education in the Caucasus



*An Interview with Selim Burak
North Caucasus Coordinator in
Directorate of Religious Affairs*

As someone who coordinates the religious affairs of the Caucasus region, we are interested in your journey from Türkiye to the Caucasus. Could you briefly tell us about your life story?

I belong to a Circassian family who settled in Kayseri after the exile from the Caucasus in the 1890s. I completed my secondary and high school education at Imam Hatip schools in Kayseri, and after a while, I came to Kabardino-Balkaria Republic in 1995 to work in religious affairs through Kayseri Caucasian Association and at the invitation of Mufti Pshihache Shafiq. I graduated from Karachay-Cherkesk Higher Islamic Institute. Since 2015, I have been appointed by the Presidency of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye and I have been the coordinator of the North Caucasus region consisting of 10 republics. I am also the Deputy Head of the Religious Administration of Muslims of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. Since 1995, I have worked as a lecturer, imam hatip, coordinator for various courses such as history of religions, Qur'anic education. Currently, I am the founder and supervisor of 65 Qur'anic courses in the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic.

It is very pleasant to be here with its bitter and sweet, all aspects. As my grandfathers İshak Efendi, İsmail Efendi, Alim Efendi, who came from Caucasia and served Islam in Anatolia, my prayers to serve Islam and our compatriots in Caucasia were accepted. I am eternally grateful to my Lord for accepting my prayers.

The Caucasus, which is quite rich in terms of language, culture, belief, and demographic structure, is also an essential part of the Islamic world due to the dense Muslim population. Can you tell us about Islamic life in the region and the general condition of Muslims?

Islam was brought to the Dagestan region by the Arabs and to the western and north-western Caucasus regions by the Turks (especially during the Ottoman period). The 40 graves of the Companions, known as «Kırklar» in the Dagestan region, have become a symbol of Islam's arrival in these lands and are considered sacred by Muslims. One of the main factors that ensure unity, solidarity, mutual respect and love in this region, which hosts many linguistic and ethnic differences, is the ummah consciousness and ummah unity provided by being a Muslim.



The majority of Muslims living in the republics of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia in the North Caucasus belong to the Shafi'i sect. Most of the Muslims in these regions are followers of tariqa; Naqshbandism and Shazism are widespread in Dagestan, while Qadirism is widespread in Chechen and Ingush regions.

In other Muslim regions of the Russian Federation such as North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Stavropol, Kalmykia, Adygea, Krasnodar and Rostav in the central and western regions of the North Caucasus, the Hanafi sect is popular.

Salafism and Wahhabism, which have not found a place in the Islamic formations and traditions in the Caucasus for centuries, penetrated the region due to the conditions after the Russia-Chechnya war and after the 1990s, when young people in the region went to Saudi Arabia, Syria, Egypt and Jordan to receive religious education. Salafism and Wahhabism were not allowed to spread in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. It is assumed that the prevalence of Sufi tariqas in these regions prevented the spread of Salafism and Wahhabism. In recent years, the regions where these movements are widespread are the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, the Stavropol Territory, the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia, the Republic of

Adygea and the Krasnodar region. In these regions, their intensity is noticeably observed in the Islamic life of the societies. In the first place, they attach great value to symbolism, which is widespread among young people.

In the Northern Black Sea regions, Adygea and Ossetia, where Muslims were once the majority, they are currently a minority. I am of the opinion that the main factor in the Christianisation of the Black Sea region was the extermination of the Muslims of the region and the exile of some of them, as well as the settlement of Christian populations in these regions. As for the Ossetians, taking into account their religious administration and authority, it is my opinion that they were one of the last regions to be reached by Islam and that the state of that period carried out special studies on the re-Christianisation of these regions before the entire society became Muslim.

Some of the inhabitants of the Mozdog region of Kabardia still practice Christianity. In one village in this region, there are both Muslim and Christian Circassians. Their churches and mosques are side by side. Although their cultures are completely the same, their religions are different. However, this difference does not constitute a major problem and they live in harmony.

Republics and Muslim Population in the North Caucasus Region

Republics and Regions	Total Population	Proportion of Muslims in Total Population		Number of the Mosques	Congregation
		Number (Calculated according to the rate)	(%)		
1. Republic of Adygea	440,000	118,800	27	55	2,160
2. Krasnodar Territory	5,230,000	115,060	2.2	28	4,109
3. Republic of Kalmykia	290,000	29,000	10	10	2,900
4. Karachay-Cherkess Republic	490,000	318,500	65	120	2,654
5. Stavropol Region	2,800,000	224,000	8	50	4,480
6. Kabardino-Balkaria Republic	1,000,000	800,000	80	160	5,000
7. Republic of North Ossetia-Alania	717,000	143,400	20	30	4,780
8. Republic of Ingushetia	415,000	406,700	98	50	8,134
9. Republic of Chechnya	1,270,000	1,219,200	96	520	2,345
10. Republic of Dagestan	3,250,000	3,055,000	94	1,790	1,707
Total	15,902,000	6,429,660	50	2,813	38,269

Source: It is based on information obtained from the religious administrations in the region.

Qur'an course students in the Caucasus.



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In the North Caucasus region, where no religious organisations were allowed before 1990 and no religious monuments remained except for a certain number of historical mosques and madrasas, today there are nine religious administrations under one presidency and thousands of mosques, Qur’an courses and madrasas.

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In regions with dense Muslim populations, Islamic practices are very effective in the social life of Muslims. Most of the society has a high level of sensitivity about the five daily prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and zakat. In regions where Muslims are in minority, Islam is not influential in daily life. In these region, people act with the conscience that they are Muslims; they attach importance to matters such as Eid prayers, sacrifice, halal slaughter/consumption, fasting and tarawih. However, they are not sensitive about the five daily prayers and alcohol consumption.

As the coordinator of religious affairs in 10 republics in the Caucasus region, we would like to ask you about religious education in the region. What is the status of Islamic education in the region? Could you briefly describe its past and present in a comparative way?

In the North Caucasus region, where no religious organisations were allowed before 1990 and no religious monuments remained except for a certain number of historical mosques and madrasas, today there are nine religious administrations under

one presidency and thousands of mosques, Qur’an courses and madrasas. Currently, there are 12 Islamic Universities, Higher Islamic Institutes and academies in the Russian Federation. Courses such as religious culture and ethics, and history of religions are taught in public schools. In all regions where Muslims live, there are Muslim religious administrations and mufti offices. There are Muslim Qur’an courses, hafiz courses and madrasahs in each region.

I would like to say a few words about the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria, where I am currently serving, as an example of the Caucasus region in general.

I am about to complete my twenty-eighth year of service in the region, where I came for one year at the invitation of the Head of the Religious Administration of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. During this time I have not witnessed any legal obstacles to the practice of Islam. Not only Islam, but all faiths are practised freely, as long as people do not interfere in the political sphere of the state. In 2005, the Foundation for Strengthening Religious Education, Culture and Religious Administration was

Islamic Higher Education Institutions in the Republics of the North Caucasus Region

Higher Education Institutions	City
Russian Higher Islamic Institute	Kazan, Tatarstan
Moscow Higher Islamic Institute	Moscow, Russia
Islamic University of Russia	Ufa, Bashkortostan
Islamic University of Ingushetia	Malgobek, Ingushetia
Islamic University of Russia (Kunta Haji)	Grozny, Chechnya
Higher Islamic Institute of Karachay-Cherkessia (Imam Abu Hanifa)	Cherkesk, Karachay-Cherkessia C.
Islamic University of the North Caucasus	Nalchik, Kabardino-Balkaria
Dagestan Gumanitar Institute	Makhachkala, Dagestan
Dagestan Islamic University	Makhachkala, Dagestan
Bolgar Islamic Academy	Bolgar, Tatarstan
Kazan Islamic University	Kazan, Tatarstan
Higher Islamic Institute	Sunja, Chinistan

established. The main purpose of the establishment of this foundation is to provide financial support for religious education and organisations in this country.

As of today, there is a Muslim religious administration in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. Our religious administration is represented by 1 president, 1 mufti, 3 deputy muftis, 8 imams in 8 regions (with the status of provincial mufti), 165 religious officials, imam hatip and their assistants. One of the 8 Islamic universities in the Russian Federation, the North Caucasus Imam Abu Hanifa Islamic University is located in Nalchik, the capital of the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic. Also, in Nalchik, under our religious administration, there are 65 Qur'an courses where more than a thousand students, from seven to seventy, are taught basic religious knowledge every year and where our esteemed professors take part, whose programme and supervision is carried out by me.

Annually, our religious administration organises national and international seminars and conferences with the support of the state. Under the leadership of the state, our administration organises religious, moral, cultural and educational programmes in state-owned educational institutions, universities, prisons, various colleges and all schools, primary and high schools of the Republic. On holy days and nights, in particular every Friday evening and every Friday morning, religious programmes are broadcast on state television and radio.

Each year all our religious officials, their assistants and volunteer participants attend two-week long

proficiency courses. Every year in our republic the birth of the Prophet (SAW) is celebrated with mevlit programmes for a month. During the month of Ramadan we organise Iftar and Irshad events, and on the Eids of Ramadan and Eid al-Adha we hold educational programmes.

On 7 June 1995, in Nalchik Muftiate, where I was appointed for one year, I led Friday prayers for only 18 people, and today 3,500 people attend Friday prayers in the capital Nalchik. In our republic, there is no village or city in which the call to prayer is not heard. Prayers are performed five times a day in all our mosques. Wherever a Muslim is, if he wants to learn Islam, he can access it at any time, alhamdulillah. The number of our mosques and courses is increasing with each passing day. This alone is enough to show the point reached.

In addition, we have students from these regions who have received religious education in Türkiye and are now continuing their education in their home countries. Under the coordination of Directorate of Religious Affairs, Türkiye Diyanet Foundation, Ministry of National Education students from the Caucasus receive education in Imam Hatip high schools, theology faculties and Qur'an courses in Türkiye through various programmes. We have students who have master's and doctorate degrees and are still continuing their education. These brothers and sisters make great contributions to religious education in the Caucasus after returning from their education.

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Value-Based Leadership: An Islamic Perspective Seminar Held

İLKE Foundation Centre for Social Thought and Research (TODAM) hosted Dr. Basil Mustafa, Researcher at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, at İLKE Foundation. Basil Mustafa discussed theories of management and leadership, Islam and leadership relations authentic leadership concept and the Prophet Muhammad's understanding of leadership.

Mustafa started his speech with a strong correlation between modern management theories and the concept of values, stressing that the concept of values is at the centre of every leadership theory and business strategy. According to Basil Mustafa, striving for social and economic development without having a system of values creates serious risks for the well-being of societies.

By giving examples from the life of the Prophet Muhammad, Dr Mustafa revealed that the value-based leadership approach in modern theories is already existing in Siyar-i Nebi. Mustafa emphasised that siyar narratives can be a crucial reference for human resource development and organisational leadership skills. Because siyar narratives contain the best examples of value-centred leadership, which is a source of motivation to support the positive transformation of all individuals and societies. According to him, the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad was crucial in establishing the remarkable religious, moral, social and economic transformations that took place in time and space. The life of Prophet Muhammad has a great capacity for many of the leadership competencies proclaimed by contemporary



“Siyar contain the best examples of value-centred leadership, which is a source of motivation to support the positive transformation of all individuals and societies.”

leadership models. In the seminar, the speaker stated that the Islamic teachings should be transferred to life, not only in theory, and underlined that when Islamic teachings are put into practice not only at home or in places of worship, but also in the workplace, their effects will resonate and benefit the society more. What distinguishes Mustafa Basil’s presentation is that Siyari is not only a source of religious knowledge and moral instruction for Muslims, but also a

valuable resource for human resource development, leadership education and training. Adapting Siyar to the contemporary period and seeing it as a source for solving the problems can be regarded as a hope for both academia and various sectors. Given the need to integrate modern management sciences with Islamic concepts, such efforts can be read as signs for a more just and prosperous world.



Click the link to access Mustafa Basil’s interview in Voices from the Muslim World programme and articles on “Value-Based Leadership” published in ILKE Analyses:
<https://linktr.ee/ilkeplatfom>

Cultural Identity Crisis: Muslims and Jews Living in Jerusalem



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*Indeed, living next to
“the other” cannot be
more challenging than
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holiness is claimed
by followers of three
monotheistic religions.*

”

Living in Jerusalem under occupation is not easy when it comes to identity and culture. Since the occupation, Israel has been trying to strip off the city from its long-lived Arab-Islamic-Christian culture, and change the city’s face into a western-shaped Tel Aviv-like city that represents European Jewish culture. After all, Israel has always presented itself as a “Western Country in the heart of the Middle East”. However, it seems clear that Israel failed this mission, at least in the eastern side of the city, where all the historical sites are located. Eastern side of Jerusalem is in fact the main part where the character of Jerusalem manifests. The old city with its ancient walls, the Holy Sepulcher Church, the most important church in the world, and al-Aqsa Mosque with its two main landmarks, namely the Dome of the Rock and the Qibly Mosque, are all located in the eastern side of the city, which fell under occupation in 1967.

When Israel declared the “unification of the two sides of Jerusalem” soon after the occupation in 1967, the government established an approach for statistics that guarantees the superiority of the Jewish component of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Israel occupied and ethnically cleansed about %82 of the Jerusalem in 1948, currently known as Western Jerusalem. The remaining %18 of the city, namely the eastern side, was inhabited by Palestinian Muslims and Christians. In 1967, Israel occupied this part of Jerusalem and annexed it, making the majority of the inhabitants of Jerusalem theoretically Jewish. However, the missing point here is that the majority of inhabitants of the Eastern Jerusalem, occupied in 1967, are still Muslim and Christian Palestinians. The Jewish community in Eastern Jerusalem is still a minority.

Since 1967, Israel has been trying to plant settlements and settlers in the heart of the Arab neighborhoods in Eastern Jerusalem. Over 30 settlements have been established on that side of the city since 1967, while tens of thousands of Israeli settlers have been brought to live there in order to create a Jewish demographic superiority. Yet this has not succeeded despite all efforts. The reason for this failure is that the Palestinian population in Eastern Jerusalem still lives in a confined area. Palestinians are not allowed to live on the Western side of Jerusalem. Therefore, they are restricted to almost the same area where they were living before the Israeli occupation. This

actually makes the Israeli penetration attempts in the Palestinian neighborhoods almost impossible.

Nonetheless, Israel tries to solve this issue by planting small outposts in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods. These outposts are usually heavily guarded by Israeli police and cost Israel substantial funds in order to protect them.

This raises important questions about the effects these outposts and settlements have in Jerusalem culturally and socially. Indeed, living next to “the other” cannot be more challenging than in Jerusalem, whose holiness is claimed by followers of three monotheistic religions. Jewish settlers in Eastern Jerusalem, especially in the Old City, are still considered a minority despite the Israeli continuous attempts to raise their numbers. Even if the “Jewish Quarter” in the Old City is to be included in statistics, the Jewish presence will still be a minority. One must not forget that even the Jewish Quarter was once inhabited by Muslim families. Nearly 135 homes were destroyed in the “Maghariba Quarter” and several hundred homes were evacuated in “al-Sharaf Quarter” in 1967. These two neighborhoods were annexed along with the historical Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem, making its area raise from 5 dunams (5,000 sqm) to almost 120 dunams now. The Palestinian inhabitants of those homes were all evacuated and sheltered in the Shu’fat refugee camp, now a part of Eastern Jerusalem. This makes it indeed hard for these refugees to engage culturally or in any other way with the Jewish current inhabitants of their homes.

Jews who reside in Palestinian once-owned homes cannot be expected to feel welcomed by the

Palestinians and, thus, engage with them culturally by any means.

On the other hand, Israel sees itself not part of the cultural heritage of this city as this heritage contradicts the narration that Israel promotes, trying to justify its presence in the region. Israeli excavations in Jerusalem have always been trying to find any links or connections with the Israeli narration of the history of Jerusalem. Not finding sufficient evidences that supports its claims, Israel started actually stealing the historical findings by baselessly claiming that they belong to the Jewish era of the history of Jerusalem. Muslim Umayyad palaces suddenly became “ablution pools” that date back to the “First” and “Second” Temples! No Carbon examination of artifact was allowed hence the Israeli narration remains unchallenged. The forceful elimination of Palestinian Arab and Palestinian Muslim cultural heritage for a long time by Israel reflects cultural crimes committed by the latter.

Palestinian women associations organised a protest near the Qalendiya military checkpoint between the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem on International Women’s Day.

Thus, the Palestinians in Jerusalem seem to strongly withhold their culture and heritage. For example, in the face of Israeli Western-shaped neighborhoods, one can find the Palestinians keener to show their heritage and culture in many ways, such as in food, clothes, songs and other aspects of their oriental heritage. This makes Israel try to annex the Palestinian culture as it did with Palestinian neighborhoods. Israelis adopt many aspects of the original culture



of this land, even in Hebrew language. For example, you find Israelis promote “Falafel” as “The National Snack of Israel”, and the same is done with Hummus, Shawarma, and other items from the Palestinian Arab cuisine. Even the names of these dishes are said in Arabic and they are clearly different than the Hebrew in language and etymology. Israeli Airlines flight attendants have some Palestinian symbols on their uniforms such as the Palestinian “Tatriz” (the Palestinian embroidery). This embroidery can be clearly seen on Palestinian ladies’ “Thobe” (traditional dress), but can never be seen on Israeli ladies’ clothes.

This shows that the main aspect that characterizes the Palestinian-Israeli cultural encounter in Jerusalem and in Palestine is generally conflict. In my opinion, it is not possible to get to a positive cultural encounter between the two communities as long as there is an occupation. This can be easily proved by a simple look at the history of Jerusalem. For centuries, Muslims, Jews and Christians lived in Jerusalem in a total harmony, especially under the Ottoman Empire. Followers of the three faiths lived together in their quarters, and they were not segregated even with the presence of a Muslim Quarter, Jewish Quarter and Christian Quarter. These quarters were mainly meant to be named according to the presence of holy sites and buildings of worship. Yet many Muslim shops for example were in the heart of the Christian Quarter, and many Jews lived in the heart of the Muslim Quarter, etc.

However, since the beginning of the British occupation, and later the Israeli occupation, Jerusalem started witnessing segregation based on religion and culture. Israeli settlers who live within the Muslim



Quarter now do not leave homes without being heavily guarded. Christian visitors are warned by Israeli tour guides not to walk alone in the Muslim Quarter and wait for an Israeli guard to accompany them. This crack in the cultural harmony in Jerusalem was caused by the Israeli occupation. This is not, however, the first time in the history of Jerusalem that a rift has marred its cultural harmony. During the Crusades, Muslims, Jews and Orthodox Christians were excluded from Jerusalem for the benefit of the Catholic Christians. This was not normal, and even though it lasted for nearly a century, the occupation at last came to an end, and the harmony of the city was restored. I believe this is the situation now in Jerusalem. Once the occupation comes to an end, the harmony and cultural engagement among cultures will be restored and the city will return to its norm, as a city that gathers different cultures, religions and backgrounds, and blends them all within its unique holiness.



Islamic Thinking in Modern Times: Rasim Özdenören



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Life of Rasim Özdenören

Özdenören was born in Kahramanmaraş in 1940. After completing his primary and secondary education in Maraş, Malatya and Tunceli, he graduated from the Faculty of Law and Journalism at Istanbul University. There is no doubt that Özdenören's experience in education, culture-art, research, bureaucracy and civil service spread over one geography has provided him with a broad perspective. Özdenören, who was involved in literary circles since his early youth, shaped his intellectual personality with the experiences provided by being with people had made valuable contributions to the Turkish world of thought. It is known that the late Sezai Karakoç and Necip Fazıl Kısakürek had an influence on his intellectual accumulation. Özdenören passed away in 2022 and left behind an intellectuality that we keep thinking about.

Rasim Özdenören's Corpus

Rasim Özdenören has many short stories and essays to his credit. His essays such as *Müslümanca Düşünce Üzerine Denemeler* (Essays on Muslim Thinking), *Essays on Muslim Thinking*, *Kafa Karıştıran Kelimeler* (Confusing Words), *Müslümanca Yaşamak* (Living a Muslim Life), *Yaşadığımız Günler* (The Days We Live), *Yeni Dünya Düzeni'nin Sefalati* (Misery of New World Order), *Düşünsel Duruş* (Intellectual Stance), *Kafa Karıştıran Kelimeler*, *Müslümanca Yaşamak*, *Yaşadığımız Günler*, *Yeni Dünya Düzeninin Sefalati*, *Düşünsel Duruş* and his stories such as *Gül Yetiştiren Adam* and *Çözülme* are some classic examples. Özdenören, in his works in the story genre, gives a lot of space to dichotomies such as ontological anxiety-mysticism, life-death and different types of alienation themes. This situation points to the thematic similarity between his essays and stories, and thus to the wholeness of the issues that Muslims face. The dilemmas of the society and the individual who have moved away from their core values and the stance against the dissolution constitute the main theme of his works (Bulut, 2013, p.771).

It is possible to trace the phenomenon of alienation in Özdenören's stories as well as his essays. In Özdenören's stories, which deal with rapid and radical changes and their striking effects on individual and community life, alienation of man from himself,



Rasim Özdenören (1940-2022)

society, family members, cultural and moral values, space and order is in question. As a result of the religious, economic and cultural crises of modernisation, the individual has lost the quality of being a subject in modern society and has been objectified. This situation reveals the alienation of the individual from himself. Different types of alienation are the subject of his works such as *Mâni Olunmuş Adamlar*, *Ölünün Odaları*, *Toz*, *Hışırta* (Mantu, 2019, p.174).

It is noteworthy that the author wrote his writings intensively in the 1980s and 1990s, despite the repressive conditions of the period. His preferred words and clear expression in his stories and essays make it easy to understand the subjects he deals with. However, when the whole of his corpus is

The confusion of meaning we experience today has deepened with democracy, which is a product of the modern period, and then with post-modern thought.

analysed, it is noticed that the author touches upon recurrent issues. This situation, nevertheless, is considered valuable in terms of opening the door to liaisons and analyses between different concepts in each work.

Possibilities of Islamic Thinking in the Contemporary Period

The titles of the chapters in his work “*Müslümanca Düşünme Üzerine Denemeler* (Essays on Muslim Thinking)”, in which he presents his ideas on Muslim thinking, are remarkable: *Panorama*, *Sağlıklı Düşünmeye Doğru* (Towards Healthy Thinking), *Müslümanın Nitelikleri* (Qualities of Muslim), *İslam’ın*



Özdenören points out that the understanding and interpretation of Islam by associating a non-Islamic way of thinking is a diversion and delusion.

Özgünlüğü (Authenticity of Islam). A careful reading of these chapters and their discussed ideas will contribute to a thorough understanding of his thought.

According to Özdenören, the democratic way of life has brought along a point of view that lacks a solid foundation. What should be comprehended here is that the concepts or meanings of the democratic order are not strong and reliable. The confusion of meaning we experience today has deepened with democracy, which is a product of the modern period, and then with post-modern thought. This situation causes concepts to lose their constancy and be easily manipulated. In addition, this situation reveals the problem of trust in politics and society. It has been noted that with the capitalist order accompanying democracy, the fear of hunger has emerged in people, and this phenomenon is filled with a materialistic conditioning. It can be said that selfishness and utilitarianism have taken the place of altruism and unrequited cooperation as a result of the increase in the concern for sustenance and commodification (Özdenören, 2003, p.18-19).

Raising the problem of not comprehending Islam, the author insists that Islam cannot be understood within the framework of Western thought. According to him, Islam can only be comprehended through a Muslim way of living and thinking. In this book, he states that the metaphysical aspect of Islam cannot be understood with the profane and materialistic aspects of Western thought, with which we are surrounded (Özdenören, 2003, p.24).

In the chapter titled “Towards Healthy Thinking”, Özdenören deals with how basic concepts are viewed from the perspective of diverse concepts and actors. Here, issues such as the dialectics of believing, the differences between the concepts of truth and right, the emphasis on the importance of basic preference, and the issues such as looking at Islam with foreign words are examined through an evaluation between Islam and the current time/age.

In the section titled “The Qualities of a Muslim” Özdenören touches upon the necessity of the theory-action unity, the effect of the temperament factor on approaches, the necessity of obtaining Allah’s consent as the ultimate goal, the method to be carried out in obtaining guidance and commitment, the possibilities of being a good Muslim in a world that is corrupt, the methods of understanding ourselves as a servant and obtaining knowledge, and the importance of being conscious.

Under the title “Authenticity of Islam” Özdenören argues that the basis of Islamic infrastructure is law, not economics, and points to the dialectical structure of Islam. Culture, philosophy, science, mysticism, asceticism, spiritualism and materialism, traditionalism, rationalism of Islam and their connection with human beings are questioned by the author and the misguided thoughts and behaviours of the people of our age are examined.

According to the author, one of the requirements of thinking as a Muslim is to adopt and live Islamic morality. It is observed that in order to enjoy the good,

Rasim Özdenören indicates that one of the most serious problems faced by the Muslim individual in the contemporary period is the misinterpretation of certain concepts.



to forbid the bad and to ensure the consistency of thought and action, Islamic belief and certain moral qualities are underlined in his works. Standing against oppression, acting with a sense of community, giving zakat, avoiding interest, staying away from doubt in faith, remembering death, paying attention to worship, being moral in state administration, not compromising honesty and truthfulness, taking care to preserve decency and good manners are some of them. Contrary to these, behaviours such as unfaithfulness, greed, being sarcastic, envying and being ungrateful are also morally disapproved actions.

Özdenören emphasises that Muslim morality must be protected against the troubles of modernism. In Özdenören's intellectual and literary works, we frequently encounter thoughts on the virtues of Islamic morality against the manifestations of modernism such as individualism, lack of love, capitalism, secularism, economy of waste in state administration, international relations, consumption practices and social life. He opposes the adoption and use of Western concepts by Muslim societies. The way out of the resulting depression is seen to be possible through the individual and collective realisation of Muslim morality and its accompanying thought. The philosopher argues that the goal of obtaining Allah's consent with the "understanding of piety" he emphasises is more comprehensive than all other moral understandings that will form the basis for universal integrity (Filiz, 2019, pp.106, 107).

An Attempt to Eliminate the Confusion of Concepts

Rasim Özdenören indicates that one of the most serious problems faced by the Muslim individual in the contemporary period is the misinterpretation of certain concepts. The thinker emphasises this in his classic work titled "*Kafa Karıştıran Kelimeler*" (Confusing Words) and several other essays. For him, with Türkiye's Westernisation process, our very own concepts have lost their meaning. Stating that this situation has caused a confusion, Özdenören emphasises the necessity to use them in the context of Islamic thought.

Özdenören points out that the understanding and interpretation of Islam by associating a non-Islamic way of thinking is a diversion and delusion. He underlines that the search for a new synthesis that can be created by combining Islam with its antithesis will produce a result that is incompatible with Islam (Özdenören, 1994b, pp.70-71). In the face of criticisms about Islam and its practice, Özdenören states that Islamic thought is not just a theory apart from practices, that it has a liveable nature, and this can be experienced in the Qur'anic and Prophetic examples (Özdenören, 1994b, p.76).

A State of Desolation: New World Order

In his book *The Misery of the New World Order*,

Özdenören argues that the concept of the “New World Order” emerged with the Gulf War in 1990 and claims that the world has become unipolar and that the hegemonic paradigm is now liberalism. Özdenören notes that the Cold War period lasted only from 1950 until the detente period, after which the United States and Western Europe established global supremacy, while USSR socialism lost power day by day. The USSR’s need for foreign investments and advanced technology caused it to open the door to global capitalism during the detente period (Özdenören, 2022, p. 102). As the colour of the threat changed from red to green, Western European countries and the United States perceived Islam as an ontological threat. On this issue, Ömer Çaha, in his work *Open Society Writings*, states that the West in general and the United States in particular have based their relations with Islamic countries on the principle of utility. While the United States does not bother with countries that serve its personal interests, even those ruled by dictatorships, it oppresses countries that oppose its interests on grounds such as human rights and democratisation. In this respect, global modernisation is not perceived as sincere by Islamic countries and is not approached for adoption due to the double standard foreign policies of Western states (Çaha, 2004, p. 61).

While globalisation, which is an indispensable part of the new world order, envisages the integration of the world under Western economic and cultural hegemony, Islam rejects such a unification. Based on this idea, Özdenören states that all countries of the world should preserve their cultural uniqueness while establishing mutual relations (Özdenören, 1997a, p.9). Apart from the above mentioned, the ideas on common international relations are included in detail in Özdenören’s *Cross Relations* (Özdenören, 1997a, p.8).

Conclusion

Rasim Özdenören has contributed in determination of today’s problems and has tried to bring justified answers to the question “What should be done?” As we have discussed in this article, the thinker has made clarifying explanations on how to think in a Islamic way, how to live as a Muslim and in accordance with the idea-action harmony that accompanies Muslim thinking, and how the effort to make sense of global developments and the state of action should be. In the light of his writings on thinking correctly and avoiding misinterpretation of concepts, the importance of developing them in accordance with Islamic principles and having a Muslim mindset is becoming even more crucial, especially in the face of modernity.

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