Book Discussion

Stéphane Dudoignon and Christian Noack, eds. *Allah's Kolkhozes. Migration, De-Stalinisation, Privatisation and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm (1950s–2000s)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014)

Accepted version of a book review published in *Central Asian Affairs*:
"Stéphane Dudoignon and Christian Noack, eds. Allah's Kolkhozes. Migration, De-Stalinisation, Privatisation and the New Muslim Congregations in the Soviet Realm (1950s–2000s) (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2014)", *Central Asian Affairs* 3, 3 (2016): 287-300.

Religiosity beyond Cities: Kolkhozes as Bases for Muslim Networks and Cultures

Rahimjon Abdugafurov
Emory University, 201 Dowman Drive, Atlanta, GA 30322
rahimjon.abdugafurov@emory.edu

Allah's Kolkhozes, edited by Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Christian Noack, presents a new approach to studying Islamic revival, transformation, and politicization in Central Asia (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan), the Eastern Caucus (Dagestan and Azerbaijan) and the Volga-Ural region of Russia (the Republic of Mordova and the Penza Region). Illustrated in 11 case studies from kolkhozes (collective farms), the book asserts that Muslims interacted efficiently with Soviet power rather than fight against it. As the editors and authors stress, Muslims within the collective farms negotiated, compromised, and adapted to the Soviet system.

The book challenges the perception that the revival of Islam in the post- Soviet territories was influenced by external versions of Islam from countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Egypt. Instead, it states that the conditions were ripe on the ground for the Islamic resurgence well before the arrival of such ex- ternal influences. Muslims in the post-Soviet territories had to deal with Soviet injustices and desired to rebuild an idealized version of Islam. The volume further argues that the Islamic movements are not only urban, but also inevitably rural as large portion of the population live in villages. Also, Moscow's forced relocation of religious leaders and various population groups into rural com- munities created new Muslim networks and cultures. In addition, the region's state-approved Muslim institutions were avoided either due to their remote location or because they promoted a form of Islam that did not resonate withthe Muslims of these communities.

Kolkhozes, Soviet-era collective farms, provided a space for Muslims to carry out their unofficial religious activities. Informal congregations and networks,

doi 10.1163/22142290-00303004

such as *hujras* (educational cells) and Sufi *khanaqas* (establishments), emerged partly as a response to the fluctuating pressures imposed on the permitted number of official Islamic institutions. The authors pose an important question to scholars of historiography: does a civilization or culture, including religious formations, solely belong to cities? The volume, in this sense, contributes to the new wave of civilizational and cultural studies that emphasizes the role of peripheries—rural and nomadic locales—as opposed to urban centers. The current book is an important and welcome addition to the scholarship on Is- lam in the former Soviet Union, and it is instrumental for students and scholars of anthropology, history, Islamic studies, and political science among others.

Each of the 11 chapters offers a separate case study. The authors employ various ethnographic and historical approaches, including interviews, diaries, formal and informal written works, and archival data. All of the authors use excellent comparative cases from the Soviet region and beyond when appropriate. All the chapters are neatly tied to the central argument of the volume—that rural kolkhozes played an important role in providing Muslims with space and resources to engage in their religious activities. In fact, Muslims, who were initially opposed to the Soviet policies, soon came to find "a safe haven" in these communities, where they could continue their activities, such as worshipping, transmitting religious knowledge, attracting followers, and building networks with less fear of prosecution.

The first chapter, "They Were All from the Country" by Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Sayyid Ahmad Qalandar, discusses several aspects, specifically the re-Islamization of a sovkhoz—which is similar to a kolkhoz—named Turkmenistan in the Qurghan-Teppa District of Tajikistan. This sovkhoz, populated largely by migrants, was the birthplace of the Islamic Revival Movement, also known as "Society" (53). The authors show that the Civil War in Tajikistan (1992–1997) was the result of both regional divisions as well as local-level conflicts, sometimes even within the same villages. The Soviet-era sovkhoz was the center of the Islamic revival.

Beate Giehler's chapter, "Maxim Gorki and the Islamic Revolution in the Southern Tajik Cotton Plain," also focuses on the role of a kolkhoz through a micro-historical study that examines the daily lives of the Muslim residents and the government structure in that locale. Both methodologically and theoretically, Giehler's work is ethnographic in nature, and she shares the processes used to conduct interviews as well as her post-interview discoveries. Similar to Dudoignon and Qalandar, Giehler depicts how the forced migrant population concentrated their economic, political, social, and religious lives in the kolkhoz system and how they took advantage of the unstable Soviet regime.

Ariane Zevaco's chapter, "Mass Resettlement and the Redefinition of Islamic Practice between Tajikistan's Upper Valleys and Cotton Lowlands,"

focuses on a number of collective farms in the New District of Macha, exploring their history, resettlement process, religious life, social networks, and other issues.

Bakhtyar Babadjanov's chapter, "The Economic and Religious History of a Kolkhoze Village: Khojawot from Soviet Modernisation to the Aftermath of the Islamic Revival," offers a narrative about the village of Khojawot in the Namangan Province of Uzbekistan. Locals claim that relatives of the Prophet Muhammad and his successors live there. The chapter demonstrates the diversity of players in the rural and urban communities as well as their interactions with Soviet officials, while simultaneously detailing the relations of ordinary Muslims with religious leaders of differing backgrounds and socio-political affiliations. The kind of pride the people of Khojawot exhibited over a long period of time and how they adapted to the new conditions imposed by the kolkhoz system are thoroughly described in this ethnographic piece.

The following chapter, "The 'Enlighteners' of Koni-Zar: Islamic Reform in a Cotton Kolkhoze," by Bakhtyar Babadjanov and Sharifjon Ismoilov, is mainly about Bahodir Mamadjanov, a rural Muslim leader and founder of a *jama'at* (Muslim congregation). This chapter shows that Bahodir Mamadjanov's Islamic movement (*Ma'riftachi* or Enlightener) differs from both the traditional and conservative forms of Islam as well as from the external "Islams." The authors present a fascinating story in which a local man created his own version of Uzbek Islam (278–284).

Ashirbek Muminov's chapter, "From Revived Tradition to Innovation: Kolkhoz" Islam in the Southern Kazakhstan Region and Religious Leadership (through the Cases of Zharti-Tobe and Oranghay since the 1950s)," also focuses on the Islamic revival and changes in Muslim practices in rural contexts.

The second and third parts of the edited volume cover Central Russia and the Caucasus as well as the Volga-Ural region of Russia. The chapters in these sections also illustrate how Muslims were relocated through forced migration; interacted with the Soviet system in the rural contexts by adapting to the Soviet organizational, cultural, and religious laws; sometimes faced harsh restrictions on their religious practices; at times took advantage of somewhat lax Soviet controls, and even won some of the Soviet officials to their cause. Through such attempts they preserved their religious convictions and spiritual traditions.

One shortcoming of the book is that it does not sufficiently talk about women—the main labor force of the collective farms. Adding more studies related to Muslim women would have been beneficial. For instance, the phenomenon of *eskicha* (old) as opposed to *yangicha* (new) gaps (literally "sentences" but "gatherings" in actual usage) of women, particularly the former one, could be a part of an important discussion on the Muslim networks

in those kolkhozes. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, such women's gatherings, where *Otin oyas* (female religious teachers) transmit religious knowledge similarly to mullahs, became very prominent. However, these are minor points, which do not affect the overall value of the book. The work helps us understand the lives of Soviet-era Muslims who preserved Islamic traditions in rural areas, and how these rural settings played important roles in later revival of Islam.

God, Marx and Man In the Soviet Countryside

Russell Zanca
Northeastern Illinois University, 5500 N. St. Louis Ave, Chicago, IL, 60625
r-zanca@neiu.edu

Studies of Islam in the former Soviet Union, including common beliefs and practices, continue to advance our understanding that go far beyond alarmist predictions or the identification of nefarious elements. As far back as the 1960s and through the 1980s, scholars such as Allworth, Caroe, Carrere d'Encausse, Bennigsen, Lemercier-Quelquejay, Lubin, Massell, Poliakov, and Rywkin discussed Central Asians and Islam in the USSR largely in terms of resistance to communism, modernism, the preservation of traditions and the preservation of faith in secret. These widely read scholars were among the few who significantly advanced our understanding of the Soviet experience for Muslim ethnicities, but their research suffered due to their inability to carry out sustained fieldwork.

With the collapse of Soviet power, younger scholars enjoyed the privilege of working in Central Asian and Caucasian communities for the first time since the establishment of modern social science. While we have learned much from social scientists and historians since the 1990s, many of us operated with new conceits and prejudices toward Muslims and Islam, especially as the idea of religious movements or influence became bound up with international manifestations of Islamic extremism and terrorism. It is not so much a matter of our scholarship being irresponsible as scholars being caught up in the maelstrom of international power politics and the continued, often biased, association of religious revival or religious activity with anti-Westernism, anti-modernism, and, simply, backwardness, especially when we consider liberal democracy, advanced education, and gender equity.

Only over the past 20 years (and, in most cases, really the last 10–15) that scholars from Europe and the United States have begun accommodating and

learning to respect the ideas, thoughts, and opinions—the scholarship—of our Central Eurasian colleagues. It has not been easy for us to relinquish much ground in controlling the discourses of scholarship vis-à-vis Islamic studies of the former ussr. Fortunately, the research work of scholars including Abashin, Babadjanov, Ilkhamov, Khalid, Peshkova, Privratsky, Ransanayagam, and Roi has helped us bridge previous divides or even walls that separated Western research from Central Eurasian studies. And now with the contribution of this edited book from Dudoignon and Noack, students of Islam and rural Central Eurasia will learn much from many fine-grained studies that demonstrate how Muslim communities or *jama'at islami* (22) have survived, developed, and changed since the 1950s.

Published almost obscurely as volume 314 of the German Klaus Schwarz Verlag Islamkundliche Untersuchungen/Islamic Studies series, the book presents a wide and rich assortment of Muslim attitudes, understandings, and unique qualities in relatively isolated collective farming areas in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, southern Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Dagestan, the Middle Volga, and Mordova. The chapters are written by an assortment of historians and area specialists, including Soviet-style "Orientalists," and most of the chapters are well written and replete with knowledge and data that could be had only by using social scientific methods, such as interviewing local residents and staying *in situ* for considerable periods of time. Photos and maps that have been inserted in most of the chapters give readers important visual and precise geo- graphical senses of where the work was conducted. What helps bind this book together conceptually is its sponsorship by the Volkswagen Foundation and the fact that most of the research was conducted from 2009 to 2012. In various chapters the authors make clear that they have been aided in their research by fellow contributors; Sagitova, for example, acknowledges archival help from Minnullin (456).

With a lengthy introduction and 11 chapters of separate cases, *Allah's Kolkhozes* is a hefty 500-plus pages. While one could discuss the pros and cons of 11 representations as opposed to seven or 15, the fact is readers will come away from this book with a sense of solid representation of rural Islam throughout the post-Soviet region. While this reviewer enjoyed all of the chapters, I will focus on those I found particularly strong for the intriguing and innovative content they reveal.

The first chapter, by Dudoignon and Qalandar, discusses the variety of directions that Islamic revival and Islamization took since World War ii. Perhaps based on Dudoignon's previous research on factional issues in the Tajik Civil War (1992–1997), the authors delve into issues as diverse and complex as land reform, demographic shifts, and population resettlements, and even the importance of finding sustainable water sources; all are intimately bound

up with religious beliefs and convictions. Examination of Deobandi, Wahhabi, and Sufi tendencies manifest a variety of time periods and local interests about what collective farmers see as appropriate Muslim belief and activities, given various political regimes from the Soviet period to Tajik independence and into the present. Curiously, the authors show that solidarity networks in rural Tajikistan often came about by the forced resettlement of highland populations onto rural flatlands; while populations were moved they kept their integrity in new places, and this provided a basis for oppositional politics based on religious sensibilities (Zevaco pursues a somewhat related theme in the third chapter, but focuses more on groups of people from sacred lineages—ishans, sayyids, and khwajas—who were re-settled). Islam, then, took shape as a force capable of allowing rural people to organize politically and fight for national power. Thematically, this well-documented point serves many of the other case examples in the book. Moreover, Giehler's chapter shows how Soviet modern- ism was itself manipulated to enable young people to explore religion given their good-quality Soviet educational experiences from the 1970s. Discussion circles that focused on Islam often met at collective farms and other Soviet institutions.

Chapter 4, by Babadjanov, and 5, by Babadjanov and Islamov, provide rich historical and ethnographic detail about Uzbek Ferghana Valley villages that have endured a whirlwind of changes in the course of 60 years, including eco- nomic and spiritual shifts. As is true of nearly all of the authors, they establish well-argued links between particular types of rural political economy and the role the varying micro-economies play in sustaining and even expanding religious life—from buildings to trips to education to a sort of relative village autarky that enables inward and outward foci that the rural communities can regulate to a degree. Perhaps, ironically, Babadjanov asserts that Soviet kolkhoz institution enjoys support among villagers today owing to its benefits (276–277). He also effectively portrays generational cleavages concerning how to challenge power as well as the growth or relatively tolerant and intolerant religious orientations (236).

Unlike Babadjanov, Muminov's accounting of key religious figures in south-ern Kazakhstan's collectives, such as Tayaqti Ishan and his renegade approach to the main state-sponsored Muslim Spiritual Directorate, concludes that the Soviet experience was devastating for religion in the region and colonialist in nature (358). Bobrovnikov and Shikhaliev also cast the Soviet experience as ruinous for religious practices and activities in Dagestan, although they discuss intricate details of resettlement and exile of various communities from World War ii through the 1980s. The Dagestani case highlight the intricacies of moving among traditional Sufi organizations and contemporary conservative

orientations that condemn the "traditional" practices of older generations. This divide, naturally, extends to many areas of the Islamic world today, but the details in this book are vital to nuanced understandings of varying Islamic practice and beliefs from one region of the former Soviet Union to the next. For example, in Dagestan, Sufis have long instilled the importance of jihad in people, especially toward invaders from outside (373).

The book's final three chapters, by Minnulin, Sagitova, and Sattarov, offer some surprising and disturbing aspects of life in villages where Islam is used to try and correct social ills, where Soviet power and Islam have been perceived as bulwarks against uneducated and benighted Tatar culture (478–479), and where the minority Shiite Tats (who live near the Azerbaijani capital of Baku) have used their relative agricultural wealth to ally themselves with revolutionary Iran, thus entering into troublesome and fractious political relations with the government of their natal country.

Whereas the reader may wish for more grounded ethnographic research from some of these authors, the incredible wealth of locally mined archival research makes this a unique book on a topic all but hitherto ignored. While it clearly will serve the needs of specialists only, the editors have performed a great service in bringing this mainly Russophone collection to an Anglophone readership. The vastness of particular information about how Islam has been practiced and lived throughout the former USSR reinforces what makes Central Eurasia an Islamic entity *sui generis*. Lastly, it is especially important to highlight the different takes on the Soviet experience and how it affected lived Islam in this book. While some of the authors cogently argue that it was destructive to religion, others show just as convincingly that it actually enabled Islamic beliefs and practices to be strengthened via a combination of manipulative agents and by harsh Soviet economic policies that reinforced self- reliance and rugged, family individualism.

Islam in the Soviet Central Asian countryside: A Complicated Legacy

Jeff Sahadeo
Carleton University, Department of Political Science,
1125 Colonel By Drive, Ottawa, on, Canada, K1S 5B6
jeff.sahadeo@carleton.ca

This collection of research papers highlights the roots and complexity of the post-Soviet Islamic revival. Supported by a Volkswagen Foundation grant,

scholars performed micro-studies of villages associated with Soviet-era collective or state farms, which they argue provided a structure for religious life. Consistently, they find vibrant religiosity during the period after Stalin's death in 1953, existing in a complicated relationship with a state that promoted atheism. Continuities, complexities, and ambiguities displayed in these studies give readers an unparalleled understanding of late-Soviet era religious life, and its connection to current cultural, political, and economic trends.

The volume periodizes and explains the main dynamics that led to this increased religious ferment. Chapters note the emergence of Soviet state-created Spiritual Boards that allowed space, albeit woefully inadequate, for Islam to exist under official auspices in 1943, but they also highlight the importance of the return to villages of many spiritual leaders following Stalin's death and the loosening of Soviet repression in the early 1950s.

At the same time, forced migration of highland populations to work on agriculture altered the character of collective farms. The strong religious culture of new arrivals, especially from Tajikistan to Dagestan, had important consequences. Stéphane Duidognon and Sayyid Ahmad Qalandar note that these highland networks formed a basis to identify, albeit not completely accurately, followers of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan. Others note highland–lowland in addition to other markers, including clan, family, region, or ethnicity that sometimes, though not always, led to different forms of worship. Several authors note the importance of transregional or international net- works in the 1970s, ranging from itinerant spiritual teachers to travel opportunities and radio broadcasts. A generational gap appears in the glasnost era, with "young mullahs," often denounced as "Wahabbis," challenging the more local, quietist worship of their parents and seeking to instill a "pure" Islam. The book's demonstration of important linkages between the Soviet and post- Soviet periods include the newly independent states' use of similar tactics to control religious observance that had begun to accelerate decades earlier.

The chapters reveal a Soviet-era cat-and-mouse game between villagers who continued to practice and teach religion, sometimes in cemeteries or private houses, and the officially atheist state, which selectively punished unsanctioned observance but feared unleashing mass resistance. Emerging as key figures in this dynamic were collective and state farm leaders, who could shield local religious figures from republican authorities. Several of the articles also underline links between the observance of Islam and other behaviors that challenged state authority, including selling agricultural produce in the gray or black markets. The link between economics and the politicization of religion becomes clear in the post-Soviet era, when Islam becomes a rallying cry to op- pose states that preside over diminished living standards in the countryside.

The micro-study approach of all of these chapters offers significant advantages. We can understand the important roles played by particular individuals; in many cases, one figure endowed with a certain background—or, more often, a certain skill set or charisma—can alter the character of a village by leading a congregation or challenging existing practices. What this approach misses, at least in this volume, are broader reflections that allow for comparisons and conceptualization. What does the importance of these individual religious leaders, some of whom suddenly appear as if from nowhere, tell us about observance and the link between leadership and spirituality? Do the family, other units that serve as critical incubators, or religion play unique roles in the Soviet/post-Soviet case, or can they tell us more about Islam or the broader region?

There is little engagement with outside literature, which would have been welcome. I can infer how this volume not only contributes to our knowledge of the region but also engages and challenges the existing historiography, but the authors do not make concerted attempts to do so. How do their findings align with the arguments of the main scholars of the field, including Adeeb Khaild and Sergei Abashin, or junior scholars who have written intensively on this topic, such as Eren Tasar or Artemy Kalinovsky? How does their periodization engage with what is going on in villages in neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan and Iran?

Overall, the chapters are structured more as research reports than academic articles, with standard formats that discuss, in separate sections, the village's or farm's historical background; the sources used for the study; the social and economic context; and the place of Islam. This rigid structure creates a certain choppiness; in particular, the dynamic between economic activity and religion, parsed into separate sections, never became clear to me. In some cases, it appeared that these economic activities supported a religious infrastructure; in others, that economics and religion reinforced a certain ability to resist the preaching, if not the practice, of the state. I would have liked to see the authors engage more with each other, as they could think through some of the similarities and differences in the investigations. How much was due to the difference of region—Central Asia versus central Russia—to local specificities, or even to the authors' own scholarly backgrounds—whether they were writing in a Western or Russian idiom, for example? Also, many of the authors note that they selected certain villages or farms because they were already well known for religious observance. I would have liked to have seen a study of more secularized farms. I thought this volume offered a real opportunity to understand "Wahabbism," as many authors see its roots in a generational conflict brewing even before the end of the Soviet Union. The volume as a whole rightly

discusses the mixture of political, social, and spiritual pressures that bubbled up in the 1990s and 2000s, but I found some authors treating "Wahabbism" as a label given to certain practitioners of Islam, while others examined it as a phenomenon in itself. Again, here, common understandings or mutual engagement between the authors would have been helpful, as well as a common, clearly stated understanding of this loaded term.

I was also curious about how the editors, as well as the authors, understood the idea of nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Several note the strong sense of nostalgia they encountered in their interviews and field research. And the volume as a whole paints a picture of villages and farms that, in the post-Stalin era, in many ways benefitted from the state spending on infrastructure and were able to adapt to features of rule that might threaten their cultural life. The Soviet state largely appears as benign, if not generous, with the exception of periodic forced migration. How much of this view reflects the scholars' own conclusions based on their fieldwork or the views of the inhabitants themselves? Bakhtyar Babadjanov and others credit the Soviet limits on religious observance as facilitating community cohesion, counter to the disunity that came afterwards. The broader and well-established literature on post-communist nostalgia is left untapped. I wanted to read more about the impact of diminished state investment and involvement in Central Asia in the 1970s, as Dudoignon and Qalandar mention (70), and its broader implications discussed, especially alongside the demographic boom in the region. We also see across pieces an effort in the mid-1980s to crack down on observance, though its origins remain unclear. In these local micro-studies, where we are so often at the mercy of our informants, how do we establish a strategy to address memory, when clearly life has indeed become less certain and more challenging?

Women and gender were remarkably minimized in this study, which was a lost opportunity, considering the substantial changes as well as continuities in relationships from the 1930s to the present. In the one discussion of unveiling, Babadjanov credits primarily Soviet and Bollywood films (232), and claims that the religious revival was "the affair of men" (260). We know from Svetlana Peshkova that this is not true, but do not gain an understanding of how the social, political, and spiritual ferment of the late twentieth century touched—and was touched by—gender relations.

This volume is an extremely important contribution to our knowledge of life in late Soviet and post-Soviet Muslim villages. The depth of research and the findings offer an unparalleled look at how individuals and families adapted to outside political and economic pressures. The authors treat their subjects with sensitivity, highlight their agency, and allow us to understand the important place of spirituality, religion, and morality in their daily lives. The work forces

us to rethink major processes and break points in Caucasus and Central Asian history using the viewpoints of the average rural inhabitant. We can hope that this work becomes an important resource for subsequent scholars, who can place these reports in wider historiographical and transnational contexts, if not fill in some of the missing pieces.

Rural Islam in the Former ussr as a Cradle for Post-Soviet Counter-Elites: A Reassessment

Response by Stéphane Dudoignon
CNRS, Paris, 35, rue BellocierF-89100 Sens, Paris, France
dudoignon@aol.com

and Christian Noack
Amsterdam University, Spuistraat 134, 1012 VB Amsterdam
C.U.Noack@uva.nl

We first would like to thank the editors of *Central Asian Affairs* for selecting our book for this issue's roundtable, and we express our gratitude to the reviewers for raising a number of important questions.

First, we are glad to see that all three reviewers share some of the most important underlying assumptions of the book project with the editors and authors. Starting the project, we were indeed convinced that, on the one hand, a focus on rural developments in general, and rural Islam in particular, deserved attention, due to the specific Soviet and post-Soviet conditions that mitigated the effects of rural-urban migration and it impacts on suburban and urban Islam as observed in other Muslim societies. On the other hand, we were interested in providing a historical perspective on the evolution of Islamic religious thought and practice before and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. These have often been simplified at the expense of a thorough exploration of "continuities, complexities, and ambiguities," which we hoped to provide. Our project also intended to investigate the place of peripheral areas, rural and suburban, and the Soviet south in the evolution of power relations in the USSR since the mid-twentieth century.

These preferences, i.e., the focus on rural areas, on the status devoted to former imperial borderlands and on the Soviet–post-Soviet continuum, created some of the consequences that individual reviewers deplored, such as the lack

of a comparative perspective with developments outside the Soviet Union. Our interest was clearly on the impact of specifically Soviet factors on the development of rural Islam in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. That said, we contend that developments outside the (post-) Soviet realm were taken into consideration, both in the shape of the renunciation of alternative models of explanation for the emergence of radical Islam elsewhere and in the form of transnational influences. As to the latter, one of the reviewers summarized the findings of the project quite aptly: Far from denying external in- fluences, we found the grounds for them often had been prepared by specific Soviet conditions, notably the development of strong transnational reformist trends within the Soviet Muslim religious establishment, which eventually facilitated and shaped the ways of rejection or critical appropriation.

This brings us to some other methodological remarks recurring in the reviews. First, the focus on micro-studies and the selection of cases. Micro-studies indeed enable us to establish the role of individuals, as well as to analyze the various mutations of local communities since collectivization. By reconstructing these individuals' activities, mobility, and integration into local congregations and networks, we can trace the emergence of alternative Islamic institutions shaped by the socioeconomic transformations of the Soviet peri- od. For example, several contributions of the volume highlight the post-World War ii transformation of the "brigade" production units into communities of believers, in different regions of the Soviet south. Have we, with the focus on the micro-level, possibly neglected contextualization and comparison? We are not sure whether we should agree here, as within the project we explicitly re- searched and compared the demographic and economic macro-developments in the various regions of the USSR, as well as the legal and institutional frame- work for Islamic activities. With two of the reviewers, we would argue that in various degrees this comes back in the case studies.

As to the selection of cases, the project, a first version of which was written in 2004 (i.e., five years before its selection by the Volkswagen Foundation), had started out with a significantly larger participant roster, including some of the colleagues whose expertise Jeff Sahadeo found missing in the book. For a variety of reasons, the composition of the project's team changed over time; moreover, some of the planned case studies were never finished, to our sincere regret. Indeed, as Russell Zanca rightly remarked, projects such as ours depend to a large degree on the expertise, the "ideas, thoughts and opinions of our Central Eurasian colleagues." This is hardly an overstatement, particularly when taking into account the increasingly difficult conditions for research on Islam, let alone alternative Islamic institutions, across the post-Soviet space. Many of the contributions thus rely not only on the disciplinary training of the

authors (who may or may not be sufficiently versed in ethnography or Islamic studies), but even more on fieldwork undertaken long before our project was conceived and launched more than a decade ago. At the same time, the editors insisted that colleagues involved in the project accept common standards and include approaches (demographic, in particular) that had often been absent from their prior individual research.

Finally, one of the main aims of the project was the collection and presentation of comparable data across the regional divides. Given the diverging disciplinary backgrounds of the researchers involved, and the different bodies of sources tapped, we also made a conscious editorial decision—to the risk of having our chapters look like reports, as suggested by a reviewer—to ask the authors to include certain types of questions and data, on which they repeatedly exchanged opinions during regular workshops. These common rubrics include migration, kinship, sacred lineages and territories, religious and secular networks, economic and confessional solidarities, plus generational and gen- der relations.

Still, two out of our three reviewers found emphasis on gender relations lacking. Noting in passing that the selection of reviewers also reflects some gender bias, we would like to point out the fact that the chapters by Zevaco, Babajanov, and Sagitova, for example, offer considerable discussion of gender issues and identified female protagonists of the transmission and reinvention of Islamic learning. If, as the reviewers noted, some of our authors emphasize male agency over female, this is a view that can be debated rather than evidence of a thematic absence. Moreover, the almost complete absence of female protagonists and figureheads of the Central Asian and Caucasian modern-day Islamic religious field from oral traditions (hagiography, for instance) on which the authors have partly relied, and the reluctance of a number of witnesses to publicly expose activities confined in family circles, complicate the task of contemporary historians. In Central Asia notably, the very existence of distinct female assemblies (*majlises*) in the transmission of religious learning (for example, among circles of Ferghana-born scholars in former collective farms of the Hisar area in central Tajikistan) exposes them to the scrutiny of local police. From this viewpoint, with the exception of the research work by Annette Krämer in the mid-1990s among *otins* (female religious teachers) of Samarqand, anthropological observation does not necessarily prove to be very helpful, since it is typically limited to milieus deprived of the distinct religious or gnostic pedigrees in which the project was specifically interested.

Consequently, we were happy to have 11 case studies for the book. They may not represent the many collective farms where "nothing much" happened.

Indeed, an essential postulate of the project, which has been inspired by the social sciences of political Islam in the Middle East, was precisely to propose a genealogy of Islamist and neo-fundamentalist trends as they appeared within specific Soviet villages and rural suburbs. Our main regret, from this viewpoint, is that several of these places of sometimes extreme historical significance (the "Islamic communities" of the 1990s in Southern Dagestan, for example, a direct ancestor of the present-day Islamic State or Caliphate), could not, for obvious security reasons, be included although they are evoked in the volume's general introduction. (Some are dealt with in other projects developed by various contributors and by one of the editors.) At the same time, the cases ultimately selected represent a variety of regional, and sometimes local, development paths in which, as the reviewers rightly remark, Soviet influences, namely "harsh restrictions or lax control," affected the development of alternative Islamic communities and institutions. If this book is, as all three reviewers seem to concede, a pioneering work, then ongoing and future research will broaden the exploratory basis and establish whether and why, under comparable political, social or economic conditions, Islamic communities developeddifferently—or not at all.

Another recurring theme in the reviews is the question of (Soviet) nostalgia. Although important contributions to this book rely on oral history, the project never aimed to address the growing body of memory studies, a category that includes the likewise expanding literature on Soviet nostalgia. There is no question as to the possibility of reading and interpreting some of the sources un- earthed or generated through interviews during the project in this vein. Several authors, besides, have evoked the role of sacred lineages in the hagiographic reconstruction of the "Soviet century" as a continuum for the history of Islam, against the background of a present-day competition between religious staffs endowed with local pedigrees and genealogies, on the one hand, and those educated abroad since the fall of the Wall, on the other. Not content with the recording of nostalgia as a fact, our project questions the role of nostalgia in the construction of discourses on the Soviet Islamic past, adding significant Muslim, peripheral, and rural dimensions to memory studies.

In sum, we fully agree that we did not treat all possible aspects of the topic. At the same time, we are highly appreciative of the recognition for the basic contributions of the project, and we sincerely thank the reviewers for indicating avenues for future research.