



IN UZBEKISTAN, RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORMS BASED ON THE LESSONS OF HISTORICAL MEMORY ARE TAKING PLACE ON A LARGE SCALE

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Abstract

This article examines the historical foundations and contemporary significance of religious and educational reforms in Uzbekistan, drawing on the lessons of historical memory. It highlights the views of Sheikh Hasan ibn Abdullah, who emphasized studying history as a bridge between past and present generations. The article analyzes the Soviet regime’s restrictive policy toward Islam, including the persecution of religious scholars, closure of religious institutions, and strict control over religious practices. Special attention is given to the establishment of the Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in 1943, the roles of its key figures Eshon Babakhan Abdulmajidkhan and Ismail Makhdum Sattiev and the mechanisms of religious supervision during the Soviet era. The study further explores the significant reforms carried out in independent Uzbekistan, including the restoration and construction of mosques, institutional improvements, and the expansion of religious and educational opportunities. These reforms underscore Uzbekistan’s efforts to revive national and religious values, strengthen spiritual heritage, and promote a harmonious and enlightened society.

Keywords: Historical memory, Islam in Uzbekistan, Soviet religious policy, Religious Administration of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Sheikh Hasan ibn Abdullah, Eshon Babakhan Abdulmajidkhan, Ismail Makhdum Sattiev, religious reforms, independence of Uzbekistan, mosques, religious organizations, spiritual heritage.



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After the Republic of Uzbekistan gained its independence, it was able to shed light on the social, economic, spiritual, cultural, values, and traditions that occupied an important place in the history of our homeland, relying on rare written and handwritten sources and archival information.

Sheikh Hasan ibn Abdullah, may God have mercy on him, advocating the study of history, says: “History is the school of life of all past generations. Through history, the living learn what is beneficial for them and act on it. They also become aware of what is harmful to them and stay away from it. History is a bridge through which a nation reaches its past and stands between its present and its past.”

At the same time, history is also an incomparable and heavy treasure. It is the duty of every society and its educated members to know the events that have taken place and convey them to future generations. The present and future generations, by studying that history, will live longer and gain experience. They will learn from the useful deeds of their predecessors and try not to repeat their mistakes. This has always been the case in human history.

Every patriot studies the history of this country as a symbol of his love and loyalty to his country. Those who can, however, think about leaving what they have learned to future generations, and they will do everything they can to do this.[1] It is known from the history of the 20th century that the ideology of the authoritarian Soviet regime, which treated Islam with coldness, deprived people of national and universal human values, and tried to instill foreign cultural customs and traditions with its atheistic policy. As a result of atheistic policies, religious people and religious scholars were persecuted, religious organizations and cemeteries were closed, religious ceremonies and traditions were destroyed. However, the Second World War forced Soviet policy to make some concessions to religion. The reason was that the number of people who lost their loved ones and children due to the war was increasing day by day. The relatives of those who died on the battlefields and behind the front lines, in memory of them, performed religious rituals and prayed for them. Therefore, on October 20, 1943, the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan established the Religious Supervision [2].



The first congress of religious figures and Muslim believers of the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was held in Tashkent on October 20, 1943[3]. The minutes, resolutions and other documents of the first congress of religious figures and Muslim believers of the republics of Central Asia and Kazakhstan are stored in the National Archives of Uzbekistan. These documents indicate that the Religious Supervision of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan was established, and Eshon Babakhan Abdulmajidkhan (1860-1957) was appointed as the chairman and mufti of the Religious Supervision[4]. As the head of the religious administration, Eshon Babakhan ibn Abdulmajidkhan, taking into account the demands and needs of believers, directed the activities of the administration to provide all-round assistance to the front to defeat fascism and protect international peace.

Another such historical figure is Ismail Makhdum Sattiev (1909-1976), who was appointed a member of the organizational board of religious supervision in 1943[4]. From 1946, he worked at the Mir Arab madrasah in Bukhara, where he was responsible for organizing educational work, developing curricula, selecting teachers, and resolving organizational issues[7].

However, according to the instructions of the Soviet Empire, the religious administration was required to carry out its activities in consultation with a representative of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of People's Commissars of Uzbekistan (CRC).

There were not enough mosques for Muslims of Uzbekistan to perform their prayers on time. In order to open mosques, they had to apply to the leadership of the religious administration[8]. Mosques were opened in accordance with the conclusions of the CRC of the Uzbek SSR, on the recommendation of the Council for Religious Affairs, and by decision of the USSR government.

The resolution of the USSR Supreme Soviet of November 19, 1944 "On the Procedure for Opening Religious Places of Worship" stated that a place of worship registered by a representative of the Council for Religious Affairs was considered open[9]. Mosques operating without the permission of the Council or opened secretly were declared illegal and closed, a historical fact confirmed by the cited sources and archival documents.



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You and I are witnessing the moments that our people have been waiting for for centuries, and it is clear that such bright days have also been destined for Muslim believers, and in recent years, on the initiative of our Head of State, reforms have been taking place in all spheres, including the religious and educational sphere. It is no exaggeration to say that the coming years will be years of improving mosques. Because hundreds of mosques are being renovated, comfortable conditions are being created for worshippers, and we are all witnesses to the fact that spacious and comfortable mosques in national and modern architectural styles are being built in place of those whose buildings are outdated, and they are being equipped with the latest technologies.

Last year, 385 mosques and 633 ablution facilities were completely rebuilt in our country, and 487 mosques and 517 ablution facilities were renovated.

If we look at the figures alone, in 2022, 13 of the new mosques were registered with the state and put into service. Also, 50 mosques were rebuilt, and 38 were completely renovated.

In 2023, it was planned to put 49 mosques into operation, reconstruct 161 mosques, and completely repair 23 of them, and these plans were implemented with great success. Of course, the generosity and support of our hardworking people is a major factor in such successes[10].

In 2024, significant work was also carried out in the religious and educational sphere. In particular, the tasks set by the Committee for Religious Affairs in the State Program, as well as the annual plans and programs developed in the field, were fully implemented.

Today, 2,145 mosques operate in the republic, 14 new mosques were registered in 2024, major reconstruction works were completed in 64 mosques and renovation works in 17 mosques were completed.

Currently, 198 non-Islamic religious organizations operate in our republic. In 2024, 1 new religious organization - the Evangelical Christian Church - was registered in the Jizzakh region.

The participation of representatives of the Committee for Religious Affairs and system organizations, Uzbek Islamic scholars and researchers in 486 international events in the religious and educational sphere was ensured.



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In general, it is not for nothing that the interpretation of the history of these two periods is based on the evidence of the sources. Today, peace and tranquility reign in our country, and if our citizens draw the right conclusions and approach our national and religious traditions and values with their own knowledge and thinking, our ancestors and future generations will be more pleased with us.

In the current historical conditions, in the upbringing of the growing younger generation as a mature and well-rounded person, historical memory, culture, enlightenment, religious values, and the rich scientific and literary heritage of our ancestors undoubtedly play a decisive role. Therefore, it is commendable that during the period of independence, great work is being done to study the lives and invaluable heritage of our great ancestors, to improve and preserve the places where their souls have found eternal rest.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the religious and educational reforms implemented in Uzbekistan are deeply connected to the lessons of historical memory and the nation's rich spiritual heritage. During the Soviet era, Islam endured severe restrictions, yet religious figures such as Eshon Babakhan Abdulmajidkhan and Ismail Makhdom Sattiev played crucial roles in preserving Islamic knowledge and institutional continuity under challenging circumstances. With independence, Uzbekistan embarked on a comprehensive revival of religious life: mosques were rebuilt and newly constructed, religious organizations expanded, and conditions for free worship were fully restored. Current reforms reflect the government's commitment to strengthening national and religious values, ensuring stability and enlightenment, and fostering a spiritually mature younger generation. By preserving historical memory and honoring ancestral traditions, Uzbekistan continues to reinforce its identity and cultural resilience in the modern era.

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