

Murtaza Zhunisuhli Bulutai
Musilman Kazak Elimiz [Our Muslim Kazak Nation]
(Almaty, Kazakstan: Aris, 2001)
Reviewed by R. Charles Weller

This work follows Bulutai's earlier release of *Ata-baba dini: turkiler nege musulman boldi?* [The Religion of the Fathers: Why Did the Turks Become Muslims?], (2000). It is actually a compilation of essays, all but three of which the author wrote between 2000 and early 2001, to be published in honor of the 10th anniversary of the independence of Kazakstan (in 2001). The articles address various issues and aspects of Kazak national life from an Islamic perspective, quoting the Qur'an liberally in application. There are 20 essays in all covering issues of law, economics, 'scientific scholarship' and education, sociology, politics, culture, language, history and religion.

Bulutai, in his first essay (bearing the title of the book itself), reviews the historical grounds upon which he refers to Kazakstan as 'our Muslim Kazak nation'. He argues with passionate scholarship that the Kazaks and Kazakstan have been thoroughly Muslim for 1000 years, citing landmark events and personages prominent in the history Central Asian Islam. He goes on to describe the importance of Islam (from a sociology of religion standpoint) for the all-encompassing health (i.e. 'shalom') of society and individual. Relatedly, he elsewhere gives attention to Islamic morality in its communal concern for orphans and condemnation of 'slandorous gossip'. And, suggestions are (later) offered for achieving a healthy balance of society and state through the 'four primary social institutions' of 'scientific scholarship, economics, government and religion', with related essays addressing 'the new central role of scientific scholars' in society and their long, illustrious history in Islamic tradition. He treats 'Johan Wolfgang von Gute' as a late 18th century Western scholar who sanctions the divine glory of the Islamic East, comparing him with Muslim Kazak scholars. He addresses the socio-political problem of 'citizenship' for the 'Kazak Diaspora', in whose lot he shares, calling Kazaks back to the Fatherland with full native rights. He encourages a historic restoration of the 'Kazak' language, calling for a move 'back' toward a more heavily Arabized pan-Turkic tongue.

Historic aspects of Islam in relation to Koreans is overviewed (in Russian). The fame and significance in Islamic Turkic history of the city of Turkistan (in southern Kazakstan) and its saint with his masoleum, Ahmet Yasawi, are extolled. A series of essays also covers basic Islamic observances of Ramazan, the Hajj and 'the rite of sacrifice'. A final essay addresses 'religious extremism and terrorism', denying its place in 'true' Islam coupled with a strong dose of distaste for Western society and its 'backward' Christian ways in response to the West's 'intentional aim at degrading Islam' by associating it continuously and almost exclusively with 'fundamentalism' and 'terrorism'. He ends with reflections on his earlier book, 'The Religion of the Fathers', and his joy in serving his Kazakh homeland as a Muslim scholar.