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Islam and State-Building in a Tribal Society Afghanistan: 1880–1901

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THE foundation of a State in Afghanistan by the Pashtun tribesmen in 1747 posed the question of a religious policy. The issue was not that of proselytism. Most of the Afghans did adhere to one or another form of Islam and the followers of other creeds did not even constitute one percent of the population. But the Islam adhered to by the tribesmen did not have *Shari'a* (Islamic Law) as its judicial basis and no religious tradition enforced allegiance to monarchs.

Indeed, the Pashtun code of honor, *Pashtunwali*,¹ set the social and legal norms of behavior among the Pashtun tribes. The precepts of the code emphasized mediation and adjustment of the claims rather than adjudication and meting out of the punishments.² Moreover, the arbitration committee(s) were appointed through the agreement of the two parties, and their decisions could be repealed in a larger committee.³ Special mechanisms for adjusting the conflicts between individuals, lineages, clans and tribes did exist but the overall tendency, at every level, was that characterized by mediation.

In regions inhabited by opposing lineages, clans or tribes, often a neutral group, usually with an accepted claim of descent from the Prophet Muhammad or reputation for religious learning, was given land at the juncture marking the boundaries of the two opponents.⁴ These holy men were in an excellent position to assume the function of third parties in the settlement of disputes, which they did by referring both to tribal and religious traditions. Their importance in this regard

¹ Muhammad Gul Mohmand, *Pashtu Sind* ('Pashtu Ocean') (Kabul: Government Press, 1316 S.H.), pp. 112ff; Leon B. Poullada, 'The Pashtun Role in the Afghan Political System', *The Afghanistan Council of the Asian Society*, Occasional Paper No. 1 (1970), pp. 10ff.

² The theoretical importance of this kind of behavior is demonstrated in the articles in Laura Nader (ed.), *Law in Culture and Society* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1972).

³ Hakim Aryoubi, 'Da Paktia Simy Tāmoli Huquq' (The 'Customary Law of the Paktia Province'), *Huquq*, VII (Mizan, 1336 S.H.), pp. 28–32.

⁴ Fredrik Barth, *Political Leadership among Swat Pathans* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), pp. 92–104. Personal fieldwork has also revealed many similar instances in Afghanistan.

varied inversely to the ability of the local tribal mechanisms in coping with the disputes.

The power enjoyed by the chiefs of the tribes and the nature of their relations with their followers also affected the position of the holy men. Where the link between the chief or chiefly lineage and the followers was strong there was not much room for the interference of the religious dignitaries. But even in such instances the followers and the chiefs themselves owed spiritual allegiance to some holy men, thereby giving the latter a point of leverage. Moreover, some of the most respected religious leaders, through their power of declaring *Jehad* (Holy War) at a time when regional powers were engaged in a fierce struggle over the domination of Afghanistan, could exert influence even on very powerful chiefs.

The same facts held in regard to the relation between religious dignitaries and chiefs of non-Pashtun ethnic groups although the latter enjoyed more power than their Pashtun counterparts.⁵

The foundation of the State in 1747 brought with it the establishment of *Shari'a* courts in the urban centers. But as the Afghan State rapidly expanded into a vast tribal empire, to decline as rapidly into many petty chieftaincies, and finally emerge into a unified monarchy in 1863, the importance of the judicial power of the State varied tremendously from region to region. The monarchs were involved in a conflict with alternative sources of power over the all-encompassing issue of centralization. The tribal aristocracy as well as the royal lineage(s) and family(ies), the religious establishment and foreign powers can be viewed as the main factors impeding the centralizing policies of the rulers between 1747 and 1880.⁶

Twice, it is to be emphasized, in 1839 and in 1879, the British Army in India invaded the country. Both times, the Afghan State had just become powerful enough to check internal centrifugal forces. Both times, however, the Afghan State simply melted under the attack. The dismantling of the central government gave the alternative sources of power the opportunity to take over the lead and wage a successful struggle against the invaders, hence emerging ever stronger. In both cases the tribal aristocracy and the religious establishment had led the national revolt, and whoever came to the throne thereafter had to take into account their accrued power. Hence the constancy of

⁵ For details on each ethnic group refer to Great Britain, *The Gazetteer of Afghanistan* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1908-14).

⁶ Ashraf Ghani, 'State-Building and Centralization in a Tribal Society; Afghanistan: 1880-1901' (unpublished Dissertation, 1975), Chap. 1.

the conflict between the monarchs on the one hand and the religious establishment and tribal aristocracy on the other.⁷

Both groups enjoyed extensive economic and moral power. In 1879, usually one third of the revenue of each province was devoted to the upkeep of the religious establishment and another third consisted of the tax exemptions of the tribal aristocracy.⁸ The chiefs derived legitimacy from the place of their genealogies in the tribal lore and stood as the symbol of independence of the tribe from the central government. The claim of religious dignitaries to moral leadership was based on alleged descent from the Prophet or his companions, fame for learning and ability to perform wonders. Both groups shared the credit of having successfully guided their followers in the struggle against the enemy of the nation and religion. Both were unwilling to accept the imposition of any limitation on their powers by any external authority, be it a foreign power or an Afghan central government.

The man who came to the throne in 1880 and ruled until 1901 aimed at the consolidation of a strong State, where the authority of the central government would extend to every walk of life. This man, Amir Abdur Rahman, whose father had ruled the country in 1867-68, and who had lost the throne to his uncle who ruled between 1869 and 1879, had just returned from a long exile in the Asiatic domains of the Czarist Empire, impressed with their centralizing policies. During the twenty-one years of his reign, he was to be constantly engaged in large and small-scale wars, carrying the power of the State to the remotest corners of the country. At his death, he passed on to his heir a State that had never been so centralized. The tribal aristocracy and the religious establishment, though still having the potential of emerging as alternative sources of power if ever the central government were to be dismantled again, had been totally reshaped.

The Amir did not aim at the destruction of the aristocracy or the religious establishment. Actually, his policies were directed at reshaping both groups in such a way that their subordination to the central government and their allegiance to his person were ensured. In the pages that follow we shall see how he reshaped the religious establishment in such a manner that not only was it subordinate to the central government, but it also became an active instrument for propagating the belief in the legitimacy of the Amir and for convincing the people of the correctness of his centralizing policies.

⁷ Faiz Muhammad, *Seraj-ul-Tawarikh* ('The Lantern of History') (Kabul: Government Press, 1332 A.H.), Vols I and II.

⁸ *Gazetteer of Afghanistan*, II, 197-215.

These centralizing policies included the forceful conquest of all regions that hitherto enjoyed a degree of autonomy, the imposition of taxes on land-owners hitherto exempted or unwilling to pay, the enforcement of conscription on all tribal groups, and most important of all, the complete suppression of local mechanisms for the settlement of disputes and their replacement with *Shari'a* courts, whose rules of procedure were drawn by the Amir himself and whose functionaries he personally appointed.⁹

Before focusing on the details of the conflict between the Amir and the religious establishment, it might be appropriate to pause and briefly examine the nature of the conflict. It must have become clear by now that this was no simple conflict between Church and State. While the religious dignitaries could be sociologically isolated as a group with a distinctive style of life and potential access to power, ideologically they did not follow one uniform doctrine. Their interpretations differed widely from one another and there was no religious organization to impose a unity of belief on them. As the following pages will demonstrate, it was the government of the Amir which established a uniform formal doctrine and implemented its propagation all over the country.

Though the Amir deprived the *Ulema* (religious dignitaries) of direct access to their economic resources, the coveting of these resources as an end in itself was not his goal. Most of the money derived from the resources that previously belonged to religious dignitaries was re-channeled to them in the form of salaries. The receipt of such a privilege, however, was on a yearly basis and made dependent on the pursuit of the line of conduct set by the Amir and the propagation of the doctrine designed by him.

The basic reason for the conflict was the Amir's fear of the religious dignitaries' influence on the population. He was well aware that if they were left unchecked, they could pose tremendous difficulties in the implementation of his domestic and foreign policies, thereby impeding his basic goals of centralization and modernization. He, therefore, not only tried to subordinate them organizationally, but ingeniously planned to check their moral influence by having them propagate a form of belief which justified his program of centralization and made him the sole interpreter of religious doctrine. As the achievement was a unique one, we shall examine it hereafter in detail.

⁹ On changes in the structure of laws and courts during the reign of Abdur Rahman, see Ashraf Ghani, 'Reflection of State-Building in Law; Afghanistan: 1880-1901' (unpublished manuscript).

Control of the Religious Establishment

From the first months of his reign, Amir Abdur Rahman found himself in conflict with the religious establishment. Indeed, some of the most learned and respected *Ulema* of Kandahar issued a *fetwa* (binding religious declaration) urging the population to rise against Abdur Rahman 'nominee of the British' and to devote themselves to the cause of Ayub 'a true religious fighter'.¹⁰ After defeating Ayub in battle, the Amir promptly executed the two most prominent dignitaries who had signed the *fetwa*.¹¹

In his autobiography, Abdur Rahman succinctly expressed his opinion on religious dignitaries. Commenting on the situation in Islamic countries, in connection with his stay in Samarkand, he writes: 'Muslims have become very ignorant, and it seems that the Islamic *Umma* is declining day by day. The learned men of religion, preferring gold to faith, are selling the creed.'¹² Putting the blame on the social background of these men, he claims that

Out of every thousand *Ulema*, only twenty might come from good families. All the rest have acquired learning through begging and that is why evil is committed by them. Attention should have been paid at first to the recruitment of men of good families so that knowledge may have been honored. With every riff-raff becoming knowledgeable, decay in religion has ensued.¹³

Once on the throne, Abdur Rahman initiated measures for controlling and re-organizing the religious establishment. Because of the considerable economic power they acquired from the State in the form of salaries, grants of land, and exemption from taxation, as well as because of the respect people owed them, religious dignitaries usually played a very active political role, often to the detriment of the central State. Most of the tribal risings, including the great Ghilzai rebellion of 1886 to 1888, occurred under the combined leadership of religious and tribal aristocracies.¹⁴

Abdur Rahman first undertook to limit their economic privileges. In 1885, he declared that most of those in receipt of grants for alleged descent from the Prophet or reputation for learning, had in truth no knowledge. Therefore an examination of each one's credentials was necessary to determine who actually deserved such grants. In addition,

¹⁰ Faiz Muhammad, *Seraj-ul-Tawarikh*, III, 381-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, III, 382.

¹² Amir Abdur Rahman, *Pand Nama Dunia Wa Din* ('Counsels on World and Religion') (Kabul: Government Press, 1303 A.H.), p. 107.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For details, see Faiz Muhammad, *Seraj-ul-Tawarikh*, vols I-III.

all *Awqaf* (religious endowments) were to be nationalized by the State and their proceeds allotted to the upkeep of the mosques.¹⁵

The re-allocation of these privileges gave the Amir the necessary leverage for reshaping the religious establishment. A special committee appointed by him was entrusted with the task of examining all the dignitaries. Those who fulfilled the necessary requirements were given documents allowing them to receive pay or grants from the State. Available evidence indicates that even the most influential and respected of the *Ulema* were made to come to Kabul and sit for these examinations.¹⁶

In cases involving grants of land, beneficiaries were forbidden to sell such land and the State asserted its claim to re-occupy it whenever it deemed fit. Besides, exemption from taxation on private land-holdings of the dignitaries was cancelled and their lands were subjected to assessment.¹⁷

The Amir justified these measures on religious grounds. Answering one dignitary's demand for exemption, Abdur Rahman replied that exemption from paying taxes was equivalent to disobedience to God's commands, and that since the country was threatened by the infidels it was the duty of every Muslim to contribute to the strengthening of the Islamic State.¹⁸

Reinstatement of privileges was made dependent on complete adherence to the official religious policy, non-participation in mystic orders, and non-recruitment of followers. In official correspondence, examples like the following abound. Writing to the governor of the Eastern Province, the Amir informs him that:

Abdul Latif Sahibzada, a dignitary of the Khost region and a partisan of the State, came to us. We advised him never to participate in mystic orders or try to gather adherents, because all these acts give rise to evil. He confessed to the truth of the statement and gave a written guarantee signed and sealed in the court of the *Shari'a* to this effect . . . Therefore, we allowed him to leave, and write that his salary in cash and kind as registered in the books is to be reinstated to him. You should pay attention that he does not act in violation of his pledge as the condition for his stay in that region is the observance of the said items.¹⁹

The Amir also broke the long-honored custom according to which

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 475.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 516 where the names of the members of the Examining Committee are given, as well as pp. 475 and 516.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*,

¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 1207 and 787.

¹⁹ Afghanistan, National Archives, *Correspondence between Amir Abdur Rahman and the Governor of Paktia* (Shawal 15, 1305 A.H.), item 53.

certain shrines were considered as sanctuaries where political activists and criminals took refuge from prosecution by the State. Again, he justified his action by recourse to Islamic ideology. His order enjoining government officials to apprehend all criminals who had taken refuge in the sanctuary of Kandahar reads: 'If I neglect my duties in attending to the just rights of Muslims, I would be disobeying the prescriptions of God and the Prophet, and shall be responsible for it in the Day of Judgement. Therefore, I shall never allow any delay in performing justice, which would make me answerable in that day.'²⁰

Unlike his predecessors who were very pleased to bestow privileges on men coming from Arabia claiming descent from the Prophet, the Amir took measures for preventing such people from entering Afghanistan. He wrote to his governors that all they desired was money, or that they were agents of European powers. In answer to the petition sent from India by one of them asking for a teaching position, the Amir wrote: 'Coming from Mecca to India is in itself a sign of infidelity and a sure test of truth and falsehood.'²¹

Attempts at control also included the form of religious worship. The Shi'a population was ordered to attend daily prayers at Sunni mosques, under the supervision of Sunni dignitaries. Some of the Shi'a of Herat fled from the country fearing persecution. They showed willingness to return if given protection, but the Amir's reaction was to issue orders for the exile of their relatives as well. After the conquest of the Hazarajat, a predominantly Shi'a area, the same policy was put into practice there. A number of trusted *Ulema* were made to travel all around the country, at the expense of the State, and show the people the correct forms of religious behavior.²²

The crowning victory of Amir Abdur Rahman in this role of champion of Islam came with the conquest of Kafirstan and the forceful conversion of its inhabitants in 1895-96. It was in the wake of this accomplishment that the Amir accepted the title of *Zia ul-Milat-wa-Din* (Light of the Nation and the Religion) from the religious establishment and the aristocracy.²³

But the most remarkable achievement of the Amir remains his success in making use of the *Ulema* for shaping and propagating a certain form of religious knowledge which served to justify the centralizing policies of the State and gave the institution of the monarchy a

²⁰ Quoted in Faiz Muhammad, *Seraj-ul-Tawarikh*, III, 1088-9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 956, 1119-20, and 797 where the Amir's answer is quoted.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 848, 829, and 858.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1112.

sacred blessing. This can be easily traced throughout the religious literature published during that period.

A special committee, directly appointed by the Amir,²⁴ was entrusted with drafting the general handbooks of religion as well as pamphlets on various aspects of the faith. The Amir himself carefully scrutinized the content of each handbook or pamphlet, and sometimes even chose the appropriate verses from the Koran. Only then did he issue orders for publication.²⁵ The most important of these works and a pamphlet on the achievements of the Ottoman Empire, written by the Amir himself, were published both in Pashtu and Persian. However, most of the works were only printed in Persian.

The number of copies circulated, considering the resources at the disposal of the ruler, was quite impressive. The second edition of *Taqwim Din*, one of the most important handbooks of the period, was, for instance, printed in 3,000 copies and is still a popular book with the *Ulema*.

Muhtasibs (overseers of morals) had as a duty to report to the governors and the Amir on any deviation of the *Ulema* from the set policy.²⁶ As special attention was paid to such reports,²⁷ it is more than probable that the contents of the Friday preachings were derived from these official publications.

Moreover, only those people who had acquired a certificate of learning from the Examining Committee were entitled to preach, and such a distinction was granted only to those who were familiar with the official handbooks.

Members of the Examining Committee were mostly drawn from prominent religious and tribal families who had attached themselves to the Amir early in his reign. They based themselves on the authority of the Koran, the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet) and the traditions of the famous Muslim scholars. But the choice of the relevant topics bears a direct relationship with the centralizing policies of the Amir and

²⁴ Most of the members of this committee were also members of the Examination Committee referred to earlier.

²⁵ Abu Bakr, *et al.*, *Taqwim Din* ('The Essence of Religion') (Kabul: Government Press, 1306 A.H.), p. 205.

²⁶ *Ehtesab ul-Din* ('On Duties of Overseers of Morals') (Kabul: Government Press, 1306 A.H.), pp. 28-30.

²⁷ Many examples are to be found in the National Archives of Afghanistan.

²⁸ It has to be noted that in the decades following the reign of the Amir, Afghan intellectuals who favored more liberal internal policies, basing themselves on the same sources, emphasized the egalitarian and liberal spirit of the early Islam. See, for instance, Mahmud Tarzi, *Aya Che Bayed Kard* ('What is to Be Done') (Kabul: Government Press, 1330 A.H.), as well as his other works.

served to legitimate them.²⁸ As such, these ideals deserve detailed examination.

Islamic Ideals

As any system of belief is a composite of many elements, not always in harmony, it is not enough merely to state that a people are believers in a religion or followers of an ideology. Rather, it is essential to understand why certain ideals are stressed at one time and others are emphasized at another. We submit that, at this juncture of Afghan history, a form of Islam came into being that had very little in common with what passed as Islam before it, and that it served as justification for the centralizing policies of the Amir. Being basically concerned with the political impact of religious thought, we have confined our analysis to the published material of the period which enjoyed a wide circulation.

The first duty of a Muslim is defined as that of seeking the knowledge of religion and knowing the commands of *Shari'a*. It is an absolute duty to comprehend the reasons for practices which are enjoined as absolute duties by God. Without knowledge, practice and distinction between the permitted and the forbidden can not be made.²⁹

The possession of learning will allow one to believe in the Oneness of God, observe Islamic injunctions, and be certain that the occurrence 'of good and evil is according to the will of God'. Hence, those who know are not equal to those who do not know.³⁰

Knowledge of religion is to be translated into acts, and not merely to remain in the realm of talking and listening.³¹ Action means observance of religious injunctions and worldly work. 'Among the most important and essential obligations of a Muslim is the absolute duty of working for gaining a livelihood from lawful employment in order that he may not live on unlawful means.'³²

Observance of covenants and trustworthiness in functions and wealth entrusted to one's care are stressed as Islamic virtues. Actions such as following correct religious precepts, obedience to kings, paying

²⁹ *Resala Mawaza* ('Book of Preaching') (Kabul: Government Press, 1311 A.H.), p. 27.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 29 and 26.

³¹ [Abdul Rauf], *Kalimat Amir ul-Bilad Fi Targhib al-Jihad* ('Message of the Country's Rulers on the Encouragement of Holy War') (Kabul: Government Press, 1304 A.H.), p. 37.

³² *Resala Mawaza*, p. 56.

of taxes, steadiness in battle, and contracts on worldly goods, all fall under the rubric of the covenant. Thirty-eight verses of the Koran urging this duty are quoted, and the reader is assured that there are thirty-five more verses to this effect. It is asserted that while those holding to their agreements possess godly virtues, those breaking them share the attributes of the devil. Keeping of the accords, even with the infidels, is considered a duty.³³

It is claimed that without honest dealings all the prosperity and order in the world would come to a standstill, especially in matters involving the interest of the whole population. Therefore, subjects not paying their taxes and officials guilty of corruption are, indeed, betraying the religion.³⁴

Devotion to the Muslims and hatred of the infidels are listed amongst the most important obligations of the faithful. The former implies that Muslims should encourage each other in doing good works, and prevent one another from doing evil. In connection with the latter, it is asserted that 'communication and friendship with the infidels or their friends, and encouragement of mischief against and ruin of the people of Islam, is clear blasphemy.' Thence, any form of communication with Muslims living in territories under the protection of infidels is to be shunned as an impious act.³⁵

The reward for living up to these ideals is success in this world and attainment of Paradise in the next. Whereas their violation brings about the eternal damnation of the violator and his confinement to Hell.³⁶

In relation to the specific situation of Afghanistan, the most significant of Islamic virtues are declared to be the giving of *Zakat* (taxes), taking part in *Jihad*, service at the borders of the Islamic State, and obedience to the ruler.

The situation of the Islamic world is described as that of the 'general call'. According to Islamic theory, whenever a city of Islam is attacked by the infidels, the general call is given, which means that

All the Muslims are needed. It becomes the absolute duty of every woman to respond to the call without the permission of her husband; of every slave without the permission of his master; of every indebted man without the permission of his creditors.³⁷

Afghanistan having been twice invaded by the British Empire, an analogy is drawn with ancient Israel, and the faithful are asked to

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-96, and more particularly pp. 79, 81 and 91.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 92 and 95.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 96-9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

³⁷ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, pp. 8 and 77.

prepare themselves and back the Amir against a third Christian attack on the country.³⁸

Since 'material worship is easy to some natures, and very hard to others', it is considered essential that the Afghans be reminded of this most fundamental duty. Every single prophet, every single religion, it is claimed, has stressed the compulsory nature of *Zakat* and prayer. Thirty-four verses of the Koran, enjoining the Muslims, either through promises or threats, to the payment of *Zakat*, are quoted, and it is held that God urges it in thirty other places as well.³⁹

Only through the performance of prayer and the payment of *Zakat*, the argument goes, can a human being be distinguished from the beast, and their observance saves those suspected of impiety from persecution. The pious are asked to consider *Zakat* a loan to God, the payment of which places them in the category of His special 'slaves' and qualifies them for His infinite blessings. Those who fail to pay *Zakat*, or pay it unwillingly, are destined for special punishment in Hell.⁴⁰

The religious obligation which is most emphatically put forth is that of *Jihad*. It is the absolute duty of every Muslim to volunteer for *Jihad*; denial of the principle is to be interpreted as a sure sign of infidelity.⁴¹ The Prophet was enjoined to carry the war against the enemies of the true faith with swords and words, and his followers must continue the battle until there is not a single heathen left.⁴² The performance of *Jihad* must take the form of both personal and material participation.⁴³

In exchange for the life and wealth of the faithful, God promises Paradise. To fulfill his part of the transaction, the Muslim must share in the effort to equip and supply the army of Islam. He must also join in person the ranks of the army, one day of service with which is equivalent to sixty years of prayer.⁴⁴ The Prophet's command makes it obligatory for one of every two men of a tribe to join the army, but, it is pointed out, because of the leniency of the Amir, only one out of twenty Afghans has to report for service.⁴⁵

The time of each one's death is determined by God. Therefore, Muslim warriors should not lose courage or patience when faced by a

³⁸ Abdul Rauf, *Amir ul-Bilad*, pp.7-8. ³⁹ *Resala Mawaza*, pp. 31, 33-40 and 52.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 43, 49, 41 and 53-5 consecutively.

⁴¹ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 7.

⁴² Qadi Abdur Rahman, *Resala Nadjia* ('Book of Righteousness') (Kabul: Government Press, 1307 A.H.), p. 34.

⁴³ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 29 and 14 consecutively. ⁴⁵ Abdul Rauf, *Amir ul-Bilad*, pp. 30-1.

larger number of infidels:⁴⁶ twenty faithful would defeat a hundred of them, and a hundred a thousand.⁴⁷ Unless the number of the enemy is three times as many as that of the Muslims, they should not withdraw from the battlefield.⁴⁸

The successful warrior is promised health and booty in this world, and absolution of his sins and admittance to Paradise in the next.⁴⁹ Those falling in battle acquire the status of saints and the bounty of God for them shall be boundless.⁵⁰ It is claimed that these martyrs are not dead, but 'the understanding of their being alive is above the range of human comprehension.' The most fantastic of all imaginable human wishes, in the form of accommodations and sexual gratifications, are promised to those admitted to Paradise. One hundred status groups are distinguished, members of the lowest having each eighty-two thousand servants.⁵¹ Every martyr would be able to intercede in favor of seventy members of his household.⁵²

Those dying while serving on the borders of the Islamic State are also given the status of martyrs. In fact, 'every contribution to the cause of Islam, every defeat imposed on the infidels, is a form of *Jehad*.'⁵³ Willing acceptance of orders issued by commanders on the borders marks one for special favor of God. All Muslims should master all warfare techniques and be eventually ready for battle. Even in times of peace, God's commands bind the Muslims to strengthen their armies in order that infidels should take fright from their might. Therefore, service at the borders, even in time of peace, is considered as *Jehad* and is rewarded by God. One prayer of a man guarding the borders of Islam is equivalent to five hundred prayers of a man in his home, and the money he spends shall be returned to him seven hundred-fold.⁵⁴

Only wholehearted practice of such ideals, without desire for any selfish return, is to be rewarded.⁵⁵ Moreover, performance of these virtues is only possible in an orderly Islamic polity. As stated in one of the tracts, 'the King is like a shield under whose protection *Jehad* takes place.' He who tries to perform *Jehad* without the permission of the ruler not only would derive no benefit from it but would be committing a grave sin.⁵⁶

⁴⁶ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 20. ⁴⁷ Qadi Abdur Rahman, *Resala Nadjia*, p. 36.

⁴⁸ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 82. ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ Abdul Rauf, *Amir ul-Bilad*, p. 15.

⁵¹ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, pp. 19, 87-8 and 31. Also see Abdul Rauf, *Amir ul-Bilad*, pp. 15ff; and Qadi Abdur Rahman, *Resala Nadjia*, p. 33.

⁵² Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 35.

⁵³ *Resala Mawaza*, pp. 59-60.

⁵⁴ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, pp. 71, 49, 47, 72, and 40 consecutively.

⁵⁵ In each of its sections *Resala Mawaza* stresses this aspect of practice.

⁵⁶ Abdul Rauf, *Amir ul-Bilad*, pp. 10 and 32-4.

Place of the Ruler and Duties of the Subjects

Survival of the Islamic community, protection of the religion, and safeguarding the honor of the people are correlated to the orderly functioning of the institution of kingship. 'Without monarchy, there would be encroachment of everyone on everyone, and this would bring about certain chaos.' It is due to this fact that the Prophet prescribed obedience to the king next to prayer, fasting and paying the *Zakat*.⁵⁷

It is affirmed that Muhammad was both prophet and king,⁵⁸ and that indeed, after the death of the Prophet, the Muslims first chose Abu Bakr and then buried the Prophet.⁵⁹ God has entrusted to the kings the affairs of His slaves; disobedience to them is tantamount to contravening God's and the Prophet's command.⁶⁰

Even if a king becomes tyrannical towards his subjects, they are not to rise against him but show patience in bearing his excesses.⁶¹ The oppression and injustice of the rulers is 'a result of our sins and not of faults on the part of kings.'⁶² Since all Islamic activities would come to a standstill without him, even the rule of an evil king is better than perpetual mischief.⁶³

Kingly virtues are the possession of wisdom, courage and justice. His duties are the annihilation of all heretics and rebels, the protection of Islamic lands from infidels, thieves and robbers, the overseeing of the affairs of his flock, the collection of *Zakat*, and the preparation of the armies of the faithful for *Jihad* against infidels and rebels.⁶⁴

Actions which are related to kingship do not come about accidentally and unless the nature of the monarch is endowed with the following attributes: intelligence and knowledge of every one's capacity that he may not make mistakes in his appointments; ability for preparing the country for the happening of an event; and wisdom for not failing at making distinctions.⁶⁵

The subjects are enjoined to willingly acknowledge such rights of the kings as the collection of taxes, etc., and to sacrifice their persons and property in defence of the king's cause. Their allegiance and respect for the monarch must come from the depth of their heart. God shall bless those respecting the ruler, and shall cause misery to those harboring open or secret contempt for him.⁶⁶

⁵⁷ *Resala Mawaza*, p. 61.

⁵⁹ *Resala Mawaza*, p. 62.

⁶¹ *Resala Mawaza*, p. 63.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138. It should be mentioned that Abdur Rahman had used these attributes as justification for his rule.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 159-60 and 113-14.

⁵⁸ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, pp. 111-12.

⁶² Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 116.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 124 and 141ff.

Whether just or despotic, the king must be obeyed, provided his command does not violate the *Shari'a*. Governors appointed by the king are entitled to the same obedience. The subjects must help their king in strengthening the Islamic community, and must oppose all those fomenting dissension or rising in rebellion against the authority of the monarch. The category of rebel includes those in actual revolt, as well as those disturbing the public order such as thieves and robbers. Any of these acts shows lack of faith and is, therefore, punishable by death. It is the duty of the true Muslims to punish those guilty of these hideous crimes wherever they find them.⁶⁷

Disintegration of Islam is claimed to result only from the action of four groups:

First, those who do not act according to what they know; second, those who worship and act without knowing; third, those who do not try to learn; and fourth, those who prevent other people from learning.⁶⁸

Indeed, according to the first item of this classification, every learned person holding views other than those of the official religious establishment, is considered suspicious.

There is reason to believe that Abdur Rahman regarded the doctrine of Wahabism as a threat to his ideological use of Islam, and directed the *Ulema* to wage war against it.

Wahabis held that asking for help from anybody but God is blasphemy; prophets and saints are incapable of causing either benefit or harm to anyone; the dead are incapable of hearing; Prophet Muhammad is not the best of all people nor the last of the prophets; no person can intercede for another person; Ulema must base their decisions on reason and not on imitation; laymen should follow the learned in religious behavior, and it is permissible for them to follow one interpretation or several at a time; and finally, most of the decisions of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence are based on erroneous opinions.⁶⁹

To each of these statements, as well as to some others, an answer is provided. Mostly, it is argued that words have more than one meaning, and that the Wahabis have attached the wrong meaning or interpretation to the quoted concepts and verses. It is also claimed that the alleged sayings of the Prophet reported by the Wahabis are not reliable. Verses of the Koran and sayings of the Prophet are quoted to prove to the faithful that the Wahabi beliefs are un-Islamic, and that Abdul Wahab, originally a Jew, had set himself the task of causing disunity in the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 144, 147, 161, 149, 153ff, 152, 159 and 160 consecutively.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 187-204.

ranks of Islam. Therefore, *Jehad* must be waged against those heretics.⁷⁰

Afghan rulers' fear of Wahabism was not new. Ever since the reign of Timur Shah (1772-93), a special office for combating the propagation of Wahabi doctrines had been kept in the court.⁷¹ The predecessor of Amir Abdur Rahman had also ordered the publication of a special pamphlet in which Wahabis were accused of blasphemy.⁷²

As a matter of fact, the acceptance of any of the Wahabi doctrines, emphasizing individual action and discrediting the bases of traditional interpretation, would have had disastrous political consequences for the ideological policies of the Amir which stressed predestination and unconditional obedience.

As the religious literature of the period was designed for the common people and widely circulated, great care was taken that the 'correct' doctrines be propagated.⁷³ A detailed list of Abdur Rahman's achievements for the promotion of religion and the welfare of his subjects is also to be found in most of these books,⁷⁴ as well as the interpretation of one of his dreams predicting that nine generations of his progeny will rule the country after him.⁷⁵

Thus, Abdur Rahman's first achievement was to have some of the *Ulema* put together an interpretation of Islam which justified his centralizing policies. But even more important and far-reaching was his use of the religious establishment itself, through the control of its economic resources, for the propagation of a doctrine according to which he was the commander of the faithful and the sole judge of the correctness of policies.

His systematic use of Islam as an ideology of State-building in a country inhabited by diverse etho-linguistic groups reveals insights into the process of centralization in traditional States, a study which still remains to be done.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 176, and 187-204.

⁷¹ Aziz ul-Din Wakili Fofalzai, *Timur Shah* (Kabul: publication of the Afghan Historical Society, 1346 S.H.), p. 326.

⁷² Qadi Abdur Rahman, *Resala Hujat Kawiya Dar Rad Abtal Akayed Wahabia* ('A Collection of Strong Arguments Rejecting the False Wahabi Doctrine') (Kabul: Mustufawi Printing House, 1288 A.H.).

⁷³ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 204.

⁷⁴ *Resala Mawaza*, pp. 1-23.

⁷⁵ Abu Bakr, *Taqwim Din*, p. 208.

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