

# Islam In The Afghan Resistance

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The Afghan resistance sees its struggle more in terms of a “holy war” (*jihad*) than as a war of national liberation. In a country in which reference to the “nation” is a very recent phenomenon, where the State is perceived as exterior to society and where allegiance belongs to the local community, Islam remains the sole point of reference for all Afghans. It is only in the southern Pushtun tribal zones and among émigrés that ideologies of a secular nature (nationalism and liberalism) play a rôle. This is understandable in that these tribes are the originators of the Afghan State — which remains tribal and Pushtun; the tribal leaders (*khan* and *malek*) remain unattached to the religious institutions and their power derives from the tribal code (*Pushtunwali*) which is quite different from the Muslim law (*Sharia*). Moreover, the *molla* (Muslim priests) have little standing in the tribal zones — whereas, for the other ethnic groups (Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek) and for the more or less detribalised Pushtuns of the Kabul and Nangarhar regions, Islam provides the political ideology of the resistance.

However, great differences are apparent in the manner in which the religion is being reinterpreted in terms of political ideology, leadership and the organisation of society. These differences, combined with the ethnic patchwork which characterises Afghanistan, explain the multiplicity of political parties in the resistance. Let us briefly review the nine principal parties before examining in detail the evolution of the religious structures during the war period and the reference being made by the civil population to Islam as it organises itself to face the communist regime.

There are six large Sunni\* and three Shi'i\* parties (leaving aside small splinter groups). They can be divided into two tendencies: traditionalist and Islamist. (The latter are often described as “fundamentalist”, but, as we shall explain later, this term appears inadequate.) Within the Islamist tendency, a distinction must be made between moderates and radicals. The Sunni traditionalists are: Sayyed Ahmad Gailani's National Islamic Front (*Mahaz-e Melli-ye Islami*), a product of a branch of the sufi\*

\*See glossary on p. 61.

*Qadiriya* order; Sibghatullah Modjaddidi's National Liberation Front (*Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Nejad*), originating from a branch of the sufi *Naqshbandi* order; and Mohammed Nabi Mohammedi's Islamic Revolutionary Movement (*Harakat-e-Enqelab-e Islami*) which embodies, principally, the traditionalist clergy. These three parties are allied and are strongest in the Pushtun south.

The traditionalist Shi'i party is called the Revolutionary Council of the Union of Afghanistan (*Shura-ye Enqelabi-ye Ettefagh-e Afghanistan*); it represents the greater part of the Hazara Shi'i ethnic minority which is concentrated in east-central Afghanistan; the party's management is provided by the traditional clergy, in particular by the *sayyed* (descendants of the Prophet). The *Shura* is the most clerical of all the parties in the resistance.

The Islamist parties consist of the *Jamiat-e Islami*, led by Professor Borhannuddin Rabbani, the most powerful party in the resistance, essentially non-Pushtun, whose followers are found in the west and north of the country; and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's *Hezb-e-Islami*, well-organised and very sectarian, to be found in most regions but specially among the Pushtun minorities in the north-east. Another *Hezb-e-Islami*, resulting from a split in the party referred to above, is that of Yunus Khales, to be found in the Nangarhar and Paktya regions. The two Islamist Shi'i parties are Sheikh Assef Mohseni's *Harakat-e-Islami*, which recruits in the Shi'i towns and has active fronts in Kandahar, Kabul and particularly in Mazar-e-Sharif, and the extremist Hazara party *Nasr*, pro-Khomeinist and armed by Iran, drawing its recruits from the young Hazara working in Iran. Hekmatyar's *Hezb-e-Islami* and *Nasr* represent revolutionary Islamist radicalism and their fight is more against the other parties, whom they accuse of feudalism and pro-westernism, than against the Soviets.

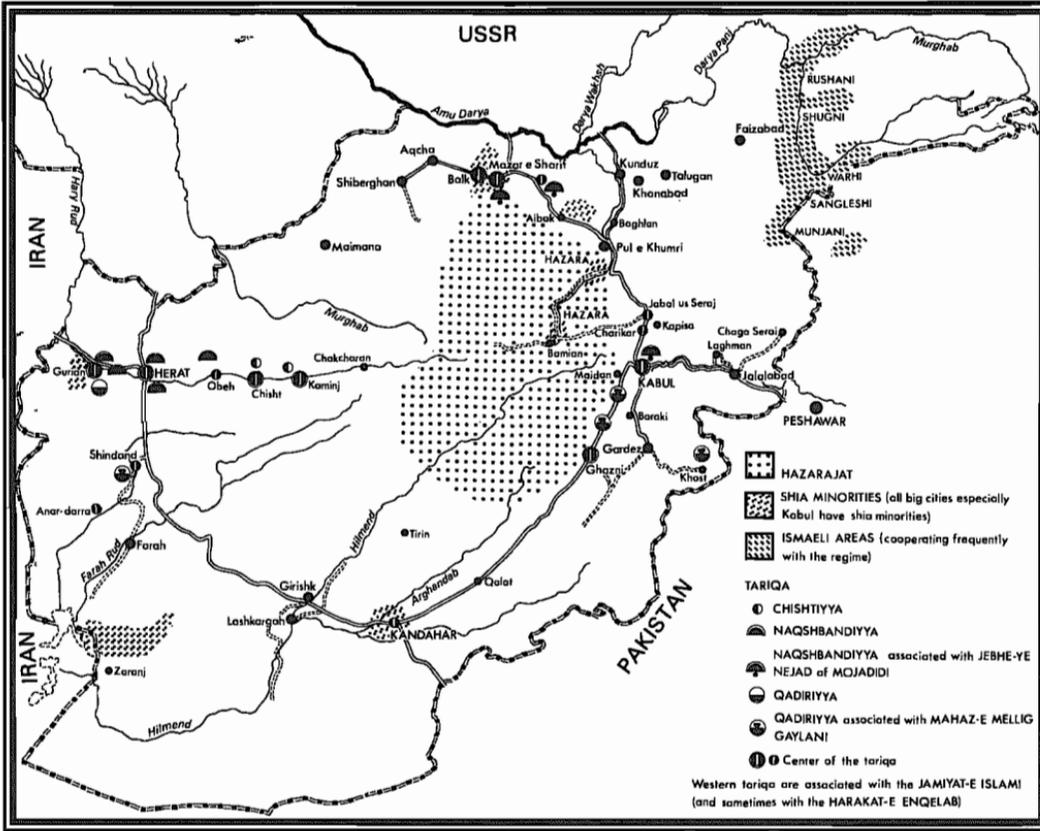
However, any classification such as that above remains very abstract unless a concrete study is made of the traditional religious figures of Afghan Islam and their evolution during the war of resistance. Such an analysis will make it much more easy to understand the complexities of the Afghan resistance.

### *The Religious Figures of Afghan Islam*

These are the village *molla* (priest), the *alim* (plural *ulama*) or law doctor (called *mawlawi* in Afghanistan), the charismatic religious leader (and in particular the *pir*, leader of a *tariqa* — which is a mystic Muslim sufi order) and finally the young Islamic intellectual, described in Europe as "fundamentalist" and whose appearance on the Afghan religious scene is very recent.

#### 1) The village *molla*

The *molla* belongs to the village and not to a clergy. He is not aware of



Map drawn by Olivier Roy

belonging to an organised body. He has little to do with the superior clergy (the *mawlawi*) from whom he receives neither payment nor his investiture. It is the consensus of the village which invests the *molla* with his office either because he has shown remarkable individual distinction through his piety (and, more rarely, through his knowledge) or because he comes from a particular family or indeed (in tribal areas) from a professional group which has traditionally specialised in the provision of the *molla*. (In the latter case the *molla* is often non-Pushtun.)

The social status of the *molla* varies considerably. It is low in tribal areas because of his exclusion from the tribal community and his assimilation into the despised professional groups; in other areas, his prestige grows in proportion to the extent of his personal knowledge and the importance of his family. The *molla* is seldom wealthy and frequently tills the soil. If the richer villagers contribute more than the others to the support of the *molla*, this does not mean that he is thereby linked organically to the group of landed property owners. Ill-informed about political life (which is centred in Kabul) and having little political consciousness, for there is no centralised and organised clergy in Afghanistan, the *molla* reacts to communist penetration only when it reaches his village.

## 2) The *ulama* or *mawlawi* (doctors of the law)

The clergy is no more organised in Afghanistan than it is in the other Sunni countries. The "senior clergy", *ulama* or *mawlawi*, may be defined as a body, more as a result of the way in which it has been trained than because of its position in the political structure.

Until the 1950s the *ulama* were trained in a non-governmental network of theological schools (*madrassa*) constituted around local religious personalities. After several years of study, the *talib* (student of religion) either obtained his master's authorisation (*idjaza*) to become a *molla* — and even to open his own *madrassa* — or else continued his theological studies abroad (in India until 1947, then either in Pakistan or, for the most gifted, at al-Azhar in Cairo). It was only from 1951 that the Afghan State showed enough concern to open a network of state *madrassa* in the provincial capitals with a curriculum leading to entry to the theological faculty of Kabul, which is an integral part of the state university. Those who graduate from this state network are more open to modern ideas and resemble the Islamist intellectuals of whom we shall speak later. They are generally very politically aware. However, the Afghan *mawlawi* come essentially from the non-governmental network — and this is always the case in the resistance. Having been trained in conformity with the millennial curriculum, common to the whole Muslim world (classical Arabic, *kalam* or theology, *tafsir* or interpretation of the Koran, *hadith* or tradition of the Prophet, *fikh* or civil religious law), the *ulama* feel that they belong to the universal Muslim community (the *umma*) rather than to a

particular nation. Theirs is certainly an exegetic culture and one of repetition, but also a universalist culture. It nevertheless scarcely manages to provide an ideology capable of thinking in modern terms. As in all Muslim countries, the *ulama* as a whole have not known how to adapt to the modern world. They became relegated to the fringe of society both economically (the Afghan *ulama* have never been great property owners) and politically (the modern State depended from its foundation on the tribal élite and, since the sixties, has relied on a technocratic class that has been either liberal in character or Marxist-orientated).

We must however note the presence, from the sixties onwards, of a small minority of teachers at the theological faculty of Kabul who have been trained as traditional *ulama* at the University of al-Azhar in Cairo and yet possess a much more modern culture. Examples are Gholam Niazi, dean of the faculty of theology, imprisoned under Prince-president Daoud and assassinated under the communist regime, and Rabbani, current president of the *Jamiat-e-Islami*. These two were to play a great part in the politicisation of the student youth during the sixties and in the forging of a link between the traditionalist *ulama* and the young Islamist revolutionaries.

### 3) The charismatic leaders and sufi orders (Muslim mystics)

There is one figure who played a considerable political rôle in the tribal areas in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century. This is the charismatic *molla*, a particular type of *pir* (elder) or spiritual guide. In the midst of the turbulence and segmentation of the tribe, at times of great crisis, the unifying figure could come only from outside — from the *sayyed*, from the sufi orders or in the person of the charismatic *molla* (the “mad mullah” as he is called by the English). There is, in fact, always a correlation to be found in tribal situations where the State or imperialism is being confronted (for example the Sanusi in Libya). The call to *jihād* transcends clannish or tribal conflicts and brings (very provisional) unity to the tribes. This was true for the Pushtuns on both sides of the border and in the cases of the *Akhund* of Swat, of *Molla-i Lang* at Khost, in 1924, and of the *Shami Pir* of Paktya and the *Faqir* of Ipi at the same period. It is significant that no phenomenon of this type has appeared in the present resistance movement. Is this one of the signs of the crisis in tribal institutions? Certainly. In any case, the kind of war waged by leaders of this kind would be quite inappropriate for modern guerrillas.

The question of the place of sufism in the resistance remains. Sufism has always played a big rôle in anti-colonialist movements (Abd al-Qadir, Messali Hadj, Hasan al-Banna all originated in sufi milieux, as did the Sanusi). We have seen that in Soviet Turkestan the opposition to com-

munism came from the sufi orders rather than from the “official” clergy. Moreover, two of the Afghan resistance parties (of so-called “moderate” or “secular” tendency) are directed by the leaders of the two most fully represented sufi orders in Afghanistan: Sibghatullah Modjaddidi (of the *Naqshbandi* order) leads the National Liberation Front and Sayyed Ahmad Gailani (of the *Qadiriya* order) the Islamic Front.

However, sufism has become established in Afghanistan in two quite distinct practical religious forms:

a) The brotherhood or *tariqa* which assumes individual adherence, an intellectual initiation and the personal allegiance of the *murid* (disciple) to the master.

The brotherhood is essentially a spiritual exercise club which does not cut the practising member off from his life in society (and which indeed sometimes underpins professional solidarity with religious solidarity). It offers the believer the opportunity to supplement his spirituality whilst adhering to perfectly orthodox theology. This form of sufism, which was incarnated above all by the Modjaddidi family, is thus in no way opposed to the Islam of the *ulama* for whom the Modjaddidi family acted as spokesmen at times (e.g. in the struggle against Amanullah’s reforms in 1928). This category of sufism finds its recruits mainly among the cultivated and traditionalist urban lower middle classes, particularly in Kabul and in the north and west of Afghanistan. In the resistance, it has provided valuable officers and some good combat groups, those concerned having been broken in to group discretion and solidarity. But there have been no mass movements, for this conception of sufism has always been élitist. That is why, of the two fronts in the non-tribal areas, only that of the Modjaddidi has attracted some partisans. It does not exercise control over the civilian population but is well-organised on the outskirts of urban districts. Gailani is not represented in the non-tribal areas.

b) *Maraboutism* which assumes the collective allegiance of a clan or tribe to a family of “saints”, supposedly endowed with a hereditary *baraka* (divine beneficent force), and which sanctifies, by proxy, a community — whose customary religious practices are in no way modified by this allegiance.

Here, contrary to the case of the true *tariqa*, adherence implies no specific religious practice (e.g. meditation, initiation). The only mark of adherence is the annual visit to the *pir* and the offering to him of a “gift”.

So we can see the double-face of Afghan sufism: the first corresponds to what is generally understood by *tariqa*; the second is merely an institutionalised form of the *pir* phenomenon which is perpetuated hereditarily in the form of a sufi order. It is indeed the essential nature of the *Qadiriya* in Afghanistan, but the *Naqshbandi* have implanted themselves in like manner in tribal country. The difference between the first two types stems not from the nature of the order but from the circumstances

## GLOSSARY

*Alim* (pl. *ulama*) law doctor (mawlawi in Afghanistan)

*Baraka* divine beneficent force

*Basmachi* The Basmachi guerilla movement in Central Asia (in the Fergana valley, Bukhara-Samarkand region, Lokay and Turkmenistan) was a popular rebellion which lasted more than ten years, from 1918 to 1928; in some areas until 1936. The Bolsheviks had to concentrate two armies, the 4th Army under the command of Frunze and the 1st Army under Tukhachevsky and Zinoviev to defeat the Basmachis eventually.

*Cheshtiyya* a brotherhood of the sufi order in Herat province

*'Dawato-o tanzim'* propoganda section (of a political party)

*Fikh* civil religious law

*Hadith* tradition of the Prophet

*Idjaza* Until the nineteen-fifties this was the authorisation of a master which had to be obtained by a *talib* (student of religion) in order to become a *molla*.

*Jihad* Holy War

*Jirgah* tribal assembly

*Kalam* theology

*Khan* a tribal leader

*Madrasa* theological school

*Malek* a tribal leader

*Maraboutism* Maraboutism assumes the collective allegiance of a clan or tribe to a family of 'saints', supposedly endowed with a hereditary *baraka*, and which sanctifies, by proxy, a community whose customary religious practices are in no way modified by this allegiance.

*Molla* priest

*Murid* disciple

*Naqshbandi* a sufi order

*Pir* leader of a *tariqa*

*Pushunwali* tribal code

*Qadiriya* a sufi order

*Qazi* religious judges

*Roshanfekar* intellectual

*Sayyed* traditional clergy who are 'descendants of the Prophet'

*Sazman-e Jawanan-e* organisation of Islamic youth

*Sharia* Muslim law

*Shi'as* Shi'as are members of the second most important branch of Islam which is the official religion of Iran and flourishes in important communities in India, Pakistan and Iraq. The movement first developed amongst followers of Mohammed's cousin, Ali, and is much

concerned with leadership. Shi'as look to an *imam*, or leader, who is sinless and possessed of a divine light and who will return at the end of the age. They also differ from the Sunnis over certain matters of doctrine, tradition and ritual.

*Sobh-e Danesh* dawn of knowledge

*Sufism* Sufism is also called Parallel Islam in the Soviet Union. The Sufi brotherhoods are closed but not secret societies. The adept (*murid*) is accepted into a brotherhood after a period of initiation and remains all his life under the spiritual control of a master (*murshid*, *ishan*, *sheikh*). His life is regulated by a complicated ritual of practically constant prayers. The *zikr* ("remembrance" of God: *zikr djali*, vocal, sometimes accompanied by musical instruments or *zikr khafi*, silent depending on the *tariqa*) is the focal point of Sufi ritual. The Sufi orders expect total loyalty and discipline from their adepts and according to Soviet sources Parallel Islam is much more dynamic than Official Islam (as represented by the Official Religious Boards). Since the times of the Mongol invasions, Sufi brotherhoods have traditionally taken up the defence of Islam in times of danger when Islam was threatened. It can be said that it is thanks to the Sufi *tariqa's* that Islam has survived in the Soviet Union. (For a description of the Sufi brotherhoods, see Alexandre Bennigsen and Chantal Lemerrier-Quellejaye, "Muslim Religious Conservatism and Dissent in the USSR", *RCL* Vol. 6, No. 3, esp. pp. 155-7 — Ed.).

*Sunnis* are members of the main branch of Islam to which the majority of Muslims belong. They hold the Koran to be infallible as the eternal word of God, but also place reliance for practical guidance on Tradition, a collection of canonical works originally transmitted orally and stemming from Mohammed and his companions. Sunnis subordinate the prophetic role of Mohammed to the content of the revelation.

*Tafsir* interpretation of the Koran

*Talib* student of religion

*Tariqa* a mystic Muslim Sufi order

*Tariqat-e shanati* brotherhoods conforming to the religious law

*Ulama* see *alim*

*Umma* universal Muslim community

surrounding its establishment, the second type being characteristic of an implantation in tribal country. In Afghanistan, this second type of implantation is particularly strong in Ghalzay Pushtun areas (in the south-east quarter of the country).

#### 4) The Islamist intellectuals

Islamism is a recent phenomenon in the Muslim world. Very unlike traditionalism, which opposes everything coming from the West with blanket refusal, whether on an intellectual or a technical plane, it is equally distinct from fundamentalism which is content to demand the recognition of the *Sharia* without being too concerned about forms of political power. Islamism attempts to think of Islam in terms of a political ideology which is fit to compete with the great ideologies of the West (liberalism, Marxism, nationalism). It borrows the conceptual framework of western political philosophy (the sense of history, the State, the search for a definition of politics) and endeavours to fill it with the traditional concepts of Muslim thought. The most influential thinker among both Shi'as and Sunnis is the Iranian Ali Shariati. The young Islamist intellectuals — who are mainly under thirty-five — are the products of modernist enclaves within the traditional society. The word *roshanfekr* (intellectual) is applicable to any young man who has passed through the modern educational system, whether he claims to be liberal, Marxist or Islamist. In this sense, all these young men share very much the same background and face the same problems. The Islamists are products of the network of state institutions: high schools, faculties (mainly scientific) — but also state *madrassa* and the Kabul theological faculty. Their links with the main body of *ulama* who come from the non-governmental *madrassa* are therefore, by definition, very ambiguous. Although they may have the same points of reference (Koran, Sunna, Sharia) their position with respect to politics is quite different. By quoting the times of the divine Revelation, they circumvent the tradition which generates the main body of *ulama*. It is this reference to origins which allows them to think along “modern” lines (as in the case of the renaissance Protestants).

These young Islamists became actively militant on the university campus from 1968, against the royalist (and subsequently presidential) regime of Daoud, against the communist penetration of the army and the university and against the Soviet infiltration of the state apparatus. They went out into the country, preaching political sermons, and attempted, in vain, an armed uprising in 1975. Their relationship with the *ulama* remained very distant until 1970 when the traditionalist clergy also began to be concerned about communist penetration. Violently repressed from 1975, they suffered imprisonment (and execution at the hands of the communists in 1979) or went into exile in Pakistan until 1980.

Their movement, *Sazman-e Jawanan-e Musalman* (Organisation of Islamic Youth) gave birth to the three Sunni Islamist parties (the *Jamiat*

and the two *Hezb-e-Islami*) which constitute the backbone of the resistance.

The Shi'i youth also became caught up in political movements. They were particularly subject to Maoist and Hazara nationalist influences (which disappeared in the resistance). It seems that a movement comparable to the *Sazman* existed among the Shi'as, incarnated by Sheikh Assef Mohseni. Entitled *Sobh-e Danesh* (dawn of knowledge), this movement appears to have been cultural rather than political. Its members later became very active in the resistance, in support of the *Harakat-e-Islami* (not to be confused with the *Harakat-e-Enqelab*) led by the same Sheikh.

### *The Evolution of the Religious Figures in the Afghan Resistance*

#### 1. Village *molla* and traditionalist *mawlawi*

Lacking political awareness and ill-informed about events in the capital, most of these did not react immediately to the communist coup d'état in April 1978. It was not until there was direct interference by the communists at village level that their call for a holy war was launched (without their having received any directives from the Peshawar organisations — of which they were completely ignorant). Three elements provided them with an impetus: the agrarian reform, which called into question the notion of private property, guaranteed by the Koran; the enforced adoption of the alphabet, considered to be closer to political indoctrination than to education (and, in particular, the directive that girls had to attend lessons conducted by men); and finally the massive, indiscriminate arrest of local *mawlawi* in 1979. The uprisings began in the autumn of 1978, culminating in spring 1979. The general pattern was always the same: in the course of the Friday sermon, at the local mosque, the *molla* and the *mawlawi* called on the population, already in ferment against the regime, to translate their feelings into actions. The people then attacked and seized the local government post, suffering heavy losses because of their lack of arms. Once the district had been liberated, the leaders of the uprising sent emissaries to Peshawar to obtain arms from the bureaux that had been set up there. In cases where Islamist intellectuals (of whom we shall speak again later) were present, the local *molla* and *mawlawi* adhered to the Islamist parties (in Herat, Ghor and the north-east). However, in most cases, they adhered to the *Harakat-e-Enqelab* which was seen, from the outset, as the rallying point of the traditionalist clergy. This party had a clear majority during the first year of the war against the Soviets (1980) but its influence has steadily declined, specially in the non-Pushtun areas, in favour of the *Jamiat-e-Islami*. This loss of influence is due to the difficulty encountered by the traditional clergy in assuming the rôle of military and political leaders, for which they were scarcely prepared. The *Harakat-e-Enqelab* appears more as a club or flexible association of local fronts, generally animated by traditionalist religious, more

rarely by tribal leaders and, exceptionally, by former Maoist leftists (in the Farah area) who had infiltrated this party as a result of the extreme depoliticisation (and sometimes naïveté) of its leaders. At present, one can see a spreading of the *mawlawi* (whatever their party may be) in the eastern tribal leaders who tend to belong to the Gailani and Modjaddidi parties.

## 2. Charismatic leaders and sufi orders

As we have seen, the tribal areas (thus the Pushtuns in the south-east) provide favourable terrain for the production of charismatic leaders and sufi orders of the *marabout* type. However, not only has no religious charismatic leader figure emerged during this war, but the two parties founded by *pir* in these regions (Modjaddidi, but especially Gailani with his national Islamic Front) are essentially tribal and secular; they constitute, in the resistance, the royalist, pro-western, “moderate” pole, speak on behalf of the old regime establishment and are in opposition to the other “secular” parties.

All these epithets may be seen to have a common link:

These two parties are “tribal” because their social basis is constituted essentially by the tribes — for whom they perform the function of “mediation”, previously devolving upon the charismatic *pir*.

There is a link with the “royalist” milieu because the monarchy in Afghanistan is tribal in origin, and with the “establishment” parties, at least in the case of that of Gailani. This great family, enriched by the annual gifts of the faithful — but swiftly divested of all real spiritual pre-occupation — became integrated into the upper middle class of Kabul by investing its money there. (Gailani was the Peugeot representative for Afghanistan.)

These two parties may also be called “secular”, less because of sufism (we have seen that the Modjaddidi family spoke on behalf of the *ulama* in 1928) than on account of tribalism, based on the tribal code (*Pushtunwali*) and on the power of traditional dignitaries who have had no connection with the religious institutions. (A tribal leader, contrary to the practice of the mediaeval European aristocracy, will never send his child to study theology; the status of the *molla* is inferior to that of a warrior in the tribal areas.) Thus, tribalism would have everything to lose through the return of the *ulama* — not to mention the Islamists.

The only problem is that the two parties suffer all the defects of the tribal system without providing an organisation or an ideology capable of overcoming them. The defects are those of patronage, the inability to wage modern guerrilla warfare (tribal war is always based on raid and plunder), segmentation (each class or tribe attends first to its own particular interests) and pashtounism (the secular parties claim to be fighting a war of national liberation but their only definition of the nation is that of a tribal confederation united in a *jirgah* or tribal assembly).

## PARTIES IN THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE

<i>Party</i>	<i>Leader</i>		
National Islamic Front ( <i>Mahaz-e Melli-ye Islami</i> )	Sayyed Ahmad Gailani	Sunni	Traditionalist
National Liberation Front ( <i>Jebhe-ye Melli-ye Nejad</i> )	Sibghatullah Modjaddidi	Sunni	Traditionalist
Islamic Revolutionary Movement ( <i>Harakat-e-Enqelab-e Islami</i> )	Mohammed Nabi Mohammedi	Sunni	Traditionalist
Revolutionary Council of the Union of Afghanistan ( <i>Shura-ye Enqelabi-ye Ettefagh-e Afghanistan</i> )	Led by traditional clergy	Shi'i	Traditionalist
<i>Jamiat-e Islami</i>	Professor Borhannuddin Rabbani	Sunni	Islamist
<i>Hezb-e Islami</i>	Gulbuddin Hekmatyar	Sunni	Islamist
<i>Hezb-e-Islami</i> (split from the above party)	Yunus Khales	Sunni	Islamist
<i>Harakat-e-Islami</i>	Sheikh Assef Mohseni	Shi'i	Islamist
<i>Nasr</i> (extremist Hazara party, pro-Khomeinist and armed by Iran)		Shi'i	Islamist

The political figure of the *pir*, the charismatic religious leader, has thus disappeared from Afghan history. The *marabout* sufi orders have evolved in the direction of western-type secular parties, thus losing their capacity to organise a resistance whose basic motivation is largely religious.

On the other hand, in the west and north of Afghanistan, the "spiritualist" types of *sufi* brotherhood (especially the *Naqshbandi*) have not attempted to form their own political organisation although they have continued to play a fundamental — and unrecognised — part in local resistance. These brotherhoods can be sub-divided into two groups: the west (from Herat to Maymana) and the east (from Maymana to Kabul). My investigations are mainly concerned with the west.

The brotherhoods train small, very homogeneous local groups whose members know one another and are accustomed to a certain discipline through respect for the *pir*. These are easily transformed into commandos or combat groups. United, stout-hearted and difficult for informers to penetrate, these groups are militarily effective specially in the Herat region (Karokh, Ghor, Injil, Hauz-e Kerbas, etc.), where they constitute the most solid local bastions. Most of the *pir* have emigrated, delegating their power to the most experienced *murid* (disciples). We should mention, as an exception, the *Cheshdiyya* brotherhood which amounts to a veritable sufi republic in Chesht-e-sharif (in Herat province) where one of the two *pir* belongs to the *Jamiat* and the other to the *Harakat-e-Enqelab*. Similarly, around Maymana and among the Aymak, a few *pir* have

remained but they play no part in political guidance. The *murid* are to be found directly integrated into the political structure of the resistance parties. In the west, the brotherhoods have joined the Islamist parties, mainly the *Jamiat* but also, occasionally, Hekmatyar's *Hezb-e-Islami*, as in the case of the *Naqshbandi* of Hashtomin in Faryab province. This particular occurrence is very paradoxical for those who know how hostile the radical Islamists are to sufism. (In fact, a few kilometres away, at Gorziwan, Hekmatyar's *Hezb-e-Islami* undertook a military offensive against the local *Naqshbandi*.) The adherence of the brotherhoods to the *Jamiat* is more logical when we consider that the northern brotherhoods provide the local *ulama* and see themselves as bastions of religious orthodoxy. (They describe themselves as *tariqat-e shariati* or "brotherhoods conforming to the religious law" in order to be distinct from the *marabout* categories.)

If the brotherhoods in the west, who are essentially *Naqshbandi*, supply the *Jamiat-e-Islami* with a good many of their local officers, those in the east seem to be more traditionalist and adhere, without discrimination, to either the *Harakat-e-Enqelab*, the *Jamiat-e-Islami* or to Modjadidi's Liberation Front; however, their influence seems less strong than that of those in the west. However that may be, the existence of the brotherhoods is a guarantee of horizontal links between the members of the different parties and helps to consolidate the people's resistance.

### 3. The return of the Islamist intellectuals

Exiled to Pakistan from 1975, well before the communist coup d'état, the young Islamists had maintained a political structure in the form of two well-organised parties. The more important of these until 1981 was Hekmatyar's *Hezb-e-Islami* (from which the *Khales mawlawi* broke away in 1979); then came Rabbani's *Jamiat-e-Islami* which is now dominant. Both of these, organised like modern political parties, with a propaganda section ("*dawat-o tanzim*"), a military section, a cultural committee, etc., maintained a slender clandestine network within the country.

After the spontaneous uprisings of 1979, they returned from exile to organise the resistance. They were very unevenly distributed: plentifully in the north-east quarter (Panjshir, Baghlan, Kunduz, Mazar) and in Herat (in other words in the more educationally advanced, Persian-speaking areas and close to towns) but sparsely in the tribal areas and the more remote regions. The acceptance of these young intellectuals depends on their relations with the local *ulama*. With the *Jamiat* and the *Khales* party, this partnership has been successful whilst in Hekmatyar's party, the young radicals have often shown themselves to be hostile towards the traditionalists (particularly towards the brotherhoods). The partnership is closest where the *ulama* have been educated in the state *madrassa*, which are strongly influenced by the *Jamiat-e-Islami*.

In most cases, these young men, who have a more political and more modern vision of Islam, have proved to be better military commanders and better organisers than the *ulama* (and better still than the tribal chiefs). An example is the Panjshir Commander, Masud. Thirty years old, a Muslim youth militant since 1972, having had a scientific (poly-technic school) training, he is indisputably the best military leader in the Afghan resistance. He is one of the few to understand the necessity of setting in motion a modern guerrilla warfare apparatus (mobile groups, trained commandos) unlike the traditional Afghan method of waging war (mass rising, followed by a long period of inactivity, static concentration at central points, non-specialised troops). Other examples are Zabi-ulla of Mazar (trained at the governmental *madrassa*) and Ismael Khan (a former officer) — both of the same age and seasoned *Jamiat* militants, like Masud.

### *The maintenance of a society based on law*

The great originality of the Afghan resistance is that, in the areas administered by the resistance, a military power (the members of the resistance) co-exists with a civil power (the *qazi* or religious judges, who are either *molla* or *mawlawi*).

Certainly, as is always the case in wartime, the abuse of power by those possessing arms is always possible; but where the resistance is well-ordered or where the civilian society has remained dominant, the organisation of civil justice is in the hands of the clergy who, even if they generally belong to the dominant party in the area, constitute an entity which is independent of the military leaders.

We are witnessing an "Islamicisation" of civilian society. Indeed, under the old regime, justice tended to be administered by government functionaries in the well-controlled regions and by local dignitaries in the more remote areas. Now, however, the state functionaries, who applied state (and therefore secular) law, have disappeared and the traditional dignitaries have widely lost prestige. It is the *qazi*, who are normally products of non-state *madrassa*, who administer justice according to Muslim law (*Sharia*). The peasants clearly favour this development. The *qazi* of the resistance are less corrupt than were those of the old regime and the system of norms that they apply is familiar to the peasantry and corresponds largely to their aspirations (unlike the reforms instituted by the communist regime). Let us take the status of land as an example. The Afghan tenant farmer was demanding not a share of the land, but the abolition of usury; and this the new *qazi* are striving to secure. Similarly, Islamic law guarantees the maintenance of collective rights (water, pasture and fallow land) and the end of state monopolies (the mines). Finally, the procedures of Islamic law (appearance before the *qazi*,

friends acting as lawyers, negotiation by word of mouth, swiftness of operation) make justice more transparent to the peasant than do the slow and bureaucratic processes of a state justice which he associates with the town and with corruption.

Thus we see that the Afghan resistance, very far from representing the mere shake-up of a traditional, obdurate society, is producing profound modifications in the religious sociology of Afghanistan. The evolution is certainly very uneven, since certain regions, like the tribal areas, are less affected by this "Islamicisation" of society. (Nevertheless, an increase in the influence of the *mawlawi* among the Ghalzay tribes in the south-east can be observed; on the other hand, the Durrani confederation around Kandahar, the cradle of the royal dynasty, remains dominated by royalist and secular dignitaries.) The Islamist intellectuals are few in number; the closure of the state *madrassa* is making the training of good *ulama* difficult. However, in many places, and particularly among the northern *tariqa*, the non-state *madrassa* have re-opened. There are rare instances of young Islamists attempting to re-open modern-curriculum schools (Panjshir, Herat). But the Afghan resistance does possess a political, military and even cultural dynamism which is making its mark in the contemporary process of Islamic revival — sufficient to distinguish it from the *basmachis* movements of Central Asia which, faced with the triumphant bolshevism of the twenties, could only be seen as representing the last strand of an ossified society. But, whatever its destiny may be, the Afghan resistance, confronted with a communism which no longer convinces even its own troops, is taking the shape of an avant-garde movement.\*

*Translated from French by R. G. Hoare*

\*Some of the ideas in this article are drawn from the author's works "Intellectuels et *uléma* dans la Résistance Afghane" in *Peuples Méditerranéens* No. 27; and the dossier on "L'islame en Afghanistan" published by AFRAME in *Les Nouvelles d'Afghanistan*.