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# Fethullah Gülen's Missionary Schools in Central Asia and their Role in the Spreading of Turkism and Islam<sup>1</sup>

BAYRAM BALCI

## Introduction: The Nurcu Movement from Said Nursi to Fethullah Gülen

### *The Legacy of Said Nursi*

A broad outline of Said Nursi's life and thought is crucial to an understanding of the Gülen phenomenon in Central Asia. Born in 1873 in the village of Nurs (south-eastern Turkey), Said Nursi was deeply influenced by the classical teaching in the *madrasah* and the traditional and conservative atmosphere of his region. His biographies and hagiographies highlight three essential periods in his career.<sup>2</sup>

Between 1873 and 1925 he first got involved in politics and religious matters, fighting for the rooting of Islam in the state institutions of the dying Ottoman Empire, dreaming of an Islamic university as prestigious as Al-Azhar, heroically leading a movement of popular resistance in the First World War against the Russian troops, who held him as a prisoner of war in Siberia until 1916, negotiating in vain the role he felt Islam must play in the emerging modern Turkey of the young Mustafa Kemal. Distrusted and disappointed by Turkey's new secular leaders, Nursi returned home to teach Islam. When in 1925 a separatist Kurdish revolt broke out in the south-east, he opposed it publicly, but he was still deported to the West by the young Kemalist regime, which was eager to pacify the region and eliminate all possible opposition.

From his deportation to approximately the beginning of 1950s Said Nursi remained far from politics, dedicating his time to writing and sharing his ideas with newly converted disciples and followers. Considered as dangerous for the stability of the state, he was arrested and imprisoned for 11 years (1935–46). Most of his essays were written in prison, where he converted his first followers and where his thought evolved from the goal of Islamisation of the state towards the even more essential Islamisation of the spirit and the reinforcement of faith by education.

Nursi's followers were known as *Nur Talebeleri*, 'the Followers of Nur', '*nur*' meaning 'light' in Turkish as well as recalling Nursi's name and village of origin. They constituted what became known as the Nurcu Movement.

As political pluralism in Turkey made progress between 1946 and 1950 and new political parties emerged, the hitherto unique Republican Party of the People (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) was now challenged by the Democratic Party (*Demokrat Partisi*, DP) of Adnan Menderes. This major political change brought a change for Said Nursi too. Although the leader of the Nur Talebeleri invited people to

support the DP because it tolerated religious activities in Turkey, Nursi, until his death in 1960 and the banning of his ideas and publications after the military coup, continued to denounce the 'politicisation' of religion, calling on his followers not to get involved with any party or political movement but to concentrate on Islam only.

### *Said Nursi's Thought*

Many books have been devoted to the religious ideas of Said Nursi and their impact in Turkey. Faith is at the very centre of Nursi's thought. He gives priority to the reinforcement of individual faith, and only after that to the revival of faith in society. In his view this great ideal can be accomplished only through education, and this comes to play a major role in his vision of the development of Islam in the context of modernity.

'Modernity' is indeed the other key concept in Nursi's understanding of Islamic revival. It has two different but complementary aspects. The first aspect is technology, and especially telecommunications and the media, as a tool for disseminating his ideas widely and attracting the younger generation. The second aspect is the introduction of science. Very early, Nursi advocated the modernisation of the classical spirit of the *madrassah* by the introduction of mathematics, physics and logic into the educational curriculum. The objective was to demonstrate that Islam belonged to the present and the future just as much as science and modernity did.

### *The Relationship of Fethullah Gülen to Said Nursi*

After the death of Said Nursi his followers divided. Various subcommunities emerged in the 1960s and 1970s for a variety of reasons: political (support for the army or a political party), religious (contacts with the religious political parties), ethnic (the Kurdish question and the interpretation of Nursi's message) and generational. Among these subgroups and among the Nurcu leaders claiming Nursi's legacy, Fethullah Gülen stands apart.

Although both men originated from eastern Turkey, Gülen, born in 1938 near Erzurum, never met Nursi; but he was deeply influenced by his ideas.

The major common points linking them are the importance given to education and the anchorage of Islam in modernity. Since the beginning of his religious career Gülen has been putting into practice Nursi's conception of education as a method of strengthening faith. Like Nursi's, Gülen's conception of education involves a scientific input and openness to modernity, making real Nursi's dream of a mix of *madrassah* (the classical Islamic school system) and *mektep* (the modern school system), simultaneously developing secular and religious subjects in the same curriculum. Last but not least, both thinkers place Islam in good harmony with modernity, enlarging the debate on Islam's compatibility with democracy and the western world (Gülen, 2001).

At the start of the 1970s Gülen was an employee of the state, working as a *vaiz* (preacher) in the mosque of Kestanepazari, near Izmir. Aware of the importance of education for the development of Islamic faith in the country, he gathered a small group of followers in *vakif* (private foundations) and organised 'religious summer schools', which could be compared to scout camps, and where hundreds of students received Islamic education.

During the 1970s new *vakif* were created throughout the country. The media network was developed in order to increase the community's influence. Conscious of

his fragile status in the secular republic, Gülen never attacked the state and its secular institutions, but he proved to have a strong nationalist dimension in his ideology.

The 1980s saw the fast development of the movement, eased by liberal measures introduced by the government in the 1980s that transformed the economy and society. Economic development was boosted and the various political, social and religious organisations strengthened their influence. The vakif belonging to Gülen's community invested in all economic sectors but especially in education with the creation of private schools, dormitories and *dershane* (special schools where students prepare for examinations for entry to university). Nurcu media like the magazine *Sızıntı*, the newspaper *Zaman* and the television station *Samanyolu* were developed. After the military coup of 1980 open religious activities increased. Because of the 'communist threat' and the feared influence of leftist organisations in Turkey the military regime tolerated the development of Islamic consciousness among young people and sometimes facilitated the development of Islamism. By the end of the 1980s the community of Fethullah Gülen became the most powerful Islamic organisation in Turkey, with the exception of the various political parties created by Necmettin Erbakan, the Islamism of which is more political than cultural. The collapse of the socialist bloc in the 1990s proved to be an even better opportunity for the development of the community in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

### The Nurcu Movement in Central Asia Today

The purpose of this article is not to study Gülen's community in Turkey; this has already been the subject of good research.<sup>3</sup> Since the beginning of the 1990s Central Asia has been the area where this movement has mainly been focusing its strategy of development as a transnational network. It is important therefore to analyse in detail the role of this community's presence in Central Asia in order to understand the nature of this neo-Nurcu movement. Because of its strong presence in Central Asia, Gülen's movement is an element in the development of Ankara's policies in the Turkic republics there. The neo-Nurcu presence in Central Asia is everywhere: in economic life, in the media and in the educational network. In this study I shall try to analyse the ideology of the Nurcu movement and its ambitions for this area. The first aim of Gülen's students (*shagird*) is of course to reintroduce Islam into an area that has for so long been dominated by atheism and communism. As I am going to demonstrate, however, this group – called *cemaat*, which means 'community' – faces difficulties in trying to propagate its ideas in the Central Asian republics. This is partly due to the Central Asian states' attitude and partly to the nature of the movement's ideas. Turkism is much more easily spread than Islam. High schools – *liseler* – are the most important of the community's establishments in Central Asia.

This study is based on field research carried out between November 1996 and May 2002 in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, and on work in Turkey.<sup>4</sup> In the course of my research I had the opportunity to interview hundreds of people, most of them employed in these Turkish private schools or working with them.<sup>5</sup> I also had the opportunity to live with teachers in these schools. I interviewed people in the following categories:

- the manager of all the schools in each republic (*genel müdür*)
- the heads of each subject in the school (*zümre başkanları*)
- the teachers and tutors (*öğretmen* and *belletmen*)
- pupils' parents

- pupils
- undergraduate and graduate students
- employees of the Ministry of Education in each country
- religious authorities
- Turkish diplomats in each country
- Turkish Nurcu businessmen
- members of the community in Turkey

The conclusions drawn in this article are tentative. Members of the *cemaat* in Central Asia try to spread their ideas secretly because of the authorities' attitude to religious influences from abroad. Of course while carrying out my research I won the trust of some *fethullahcı* (as the disciples of Fethullah Gülen are known), but this confidence was not sufficient for me to obtain answers to some of my questions such as the nature of hierarchy in the movement, the salaries of the teachers or the expenses of the school.

### **The Establishing of Schools and their Various Categories**

The first schools appeared in the period 1992–93. The time was favourable, for two reasons. First, at that period the relations between Turkey and the Central Asian republics were excellent, probably because they were new. There was the question whether these countries would adopt a 'Turkish model of development' (Bal, 1997; Jalolov, 1994), the context being that of a 'reunion' of 'Turkic brothers'. Second, Turgut Özal, Turkey's leader at that time, helped the initial mission activity on the part of Gülen's schools. Each school displays a big picture of Turgut Özal.

In fact Gülen's pioneers did not wait for there to be a favourable context for beginning their activities in Central Asia. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian states, a good number of businessmen who were members of the movement came to the region. The missionary spirit of the movement helped to prepare its way. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union many Nurcu in various cities in Turkey had been preparing themselves to 'conquer' Central Asia (Can, 1996, pp. 53–61). They included businessmen, students, teachers and journalists. Just before the independence of the Central Asian republics, Gülen and his advisors urged these people to go into Central Asia.

They always use the same method: businessmen from a particular city in Turkey, for example Bursa, will decide to concentrate their efforts on a particular Central Asian city, for example Tashkent. Nurcu investment will then become important in Tashkent, and a kind of twinning (*kardeş şehir*) between the two cities results. Nurcu group members – whom we can consider as missionaries – are sent by the movement with the aim of making contact with important companies, bureaucrats and personalities in order to appraise local needs. They then invite some of these important personalities to Turkey. Some *vakıf* and other Nurcu organisations receive them and show them the private schools and foundations of the *cemaat*, without ever mentioning this word. Thanks to these contacts it then becomes easy to prepare the work in Central Asia.

The network of important personalities established in Central Asia has been crucial for the community. With their help, the *cemaat* has been able to overcome the bureaucratic obstacles encountered by every foreigner working to invest there. After their arrival in each country, thanks to their contacts, the representatives of the *cemaat* are given permission to take over an old school and to transform it. The new school will

remain under the control of the state, which helps to maintain it, paying for such things as gas, water and electricity. On the other hand all the other expenses, for books, tables, computers, laboratories and so on, are met by the Turkish companies.

The movement's strategy for establishing itself in Central Asia was quite successful. In just two years, 1991–93, hundreds of companies and dozens of schools were opened in Central Asia, as well as the *cemaat* newspaper *Zaman*, which was published in the capital of each republic.

Most of the Turkish companies in Central Asia belong to the Nurcu movement. Most of them, except *Ülker* and *Barakat* (import-export) are small-sized companies involved with a range of activities like baking, running restaurants, the construction industry and textile manufacture.<sup>6</sup> A company can be described as a 'Nurcu' company when its directors and other members subscribe to the ideas of Nursi and Gülen. The company will normally try to propagate these ideas in various ways. During the first years of independence these companies imported books and literature from Turkey about Said Nursi and his movement.<sup>7</sup> Bookshops belonging to the *cemaat* played an important role in the distribution of Nurcu literature. For example, the *Aydın* company in Almaty and its branch in Tashkent stocked books, reviews, tapes and newspapers from the *cemaat* in Turkish, English, Russian, Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen. In each country most of the Nurcu companies are members of businessmen's associations. For example, in Uzbekistan *Özbekistan ve Türkiye İşadamları Derneği* (The Association of Uzbek and Turkish Businessmen, UTID) tries to favour trade between Uzbekistan and Turkey.<sup>8</sup> In Kyrgyzstan the same service is provided by *Kırgızistan ve Türkiye İşadamları Derneği* (The Association of Kyrgyz and Turkish Businessmen (KITIAD)) located in central Bishkek. In Turkmenistan this sort of organisation is forbidden by law, but the Nurcu have other ways on improving their investments in that country. In Kazakhstan, *Kazakistan ve Türkiye Eğitim Vakfı* (The Kazakhstan and Turkey Education Foundation (KATEV)) is entirely Nurcu, although *Kazakistan ve Türkiye İşadamları Derneği* (The Association of Kazakh and Turkish Businessmen, KATIAD) is not controlled by Gülen's businessmen. Some non-Nurcu are allowed into all these organisations, but they are a minority.

It is impossible to study the *cemaat* presence in Central Asia without mentioning the role of *Zaman*,<sup>9</sup> the famous Nurcu newspaper which is at present distributed in three of the Central Asian capital cities, Bishkek, Ashgabat and Almaty. Efforts to establish *Zaman* in Central Asia began just after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This proved to be easy except in Tashkent where after two years of publication it was closed by the Uzbek government, which was hostile to Turkey and Turkish schools. In each country, *Zaman* has been supplementing the mission of schools in Central Asia. Some teachers, for example, work both in schools and for *Zaman*, and the paper sometimes recruits pupils from these schools where Turkish is taught. Like that of other Nurcu companies, the purpose of *Zaman* is to help the schools to fulfil the mission of the Nurcu movement.

In 1998–99 there were about 75 Nurcu educational establishments in Central Asia.<sup>10</sup> However, we should bear in mind that schools inspired by Fethullah Gülen's ideas are to be found throughout Eurasia (see Table 1).

The worldwide extent of Fethullah Gülen's educational network testifies to the internationalist, even imperialist, nature of the movement. It is densest in the former socialist bloc, especially in the former Soviet Union. We know that Gülen often expresses his admiration and nostalgia for the imperial Ottoman past (Gülen, 1994, pp. 1–5). As former Ottoman provinces the Balkan states are very important for the movement. The movement's schools are also present in Western Europe, especially

**Table 1.** Worldwide distribution of schools of Fethullah Gülen's movement

Country	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of teachers from Turkey
Kazakhstan	29	5684	580
Azerbaijan	12	3023	338
Uzbekistan	18	3334	210
Turkmenistan	13	3294	353
Kyrgyzstan	12	3100	323
Tajikistan	5	694	107
Tatarstan	6	1802	217
Russia	5	323	63
Chuvashia	2	311	79
Bashkiria	3	462	88
Karachai	1	93	13
Crimea	2	218	47
Siberia	4	438	101
Dagestan	5	938	123
Georgia	3	244	48
Mongolia	4	442	85
Bulgaria	4	523	123
Moldavia	2	225	40
Romania	4	415	78
Albania	2	966	74
Bosnia	2	109	22
Macedonia	1	102	16
Iraq	4	184	26
Australia	5	718	37
Indonesia	1	41	18
<b>Total</b>	149	27,683	3209

Source: *Yurtdışında Açılan Özel Eğitim Kurumları Temsilcileri: İkinci Toplantısı (Second Assembly of Representatives of Turkish Private Educational Companies Abroad)* (Ankara, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yurtdışı Genel Müdürlüğü, 1997). I have updated some of the statistics given in this book as a result of conversations during the course of my research with the managers of the schools in the Central Asian republics.

among the Turkish communities in France, Germany and The Netherlands.<sup>11</sup> We should note that the movement is very weakly represented in the Arab world. In Iraq, its schools are attended mainly by ethnic Turkmen children. In the whole Turco-Islamic area the strongest presence of these schools is in Central Asia (see Table 2).

Schools are not present to the same degree in each country of Central Asia. The most populous republic is Uzbekistan, but it is no longer the one with the most schools. For various reasons Tashkent has always tried to limit their presence, and they have been forbidden since September 2000. The Uzbek government in fact wants to place limits on any kind of Turkish presence in the country. Crises are chronic between Tashkent and Ankara. The first crisis arose because Uzbek opposition leaders Muhammad Salih, chairman of *Erk*, and Abdurrahman Polat, chairman of *Birlik*, fled as refugees to Turkey when they were threatened by the Uzbek government. Karimov demanded that the Turkish authorities expel them, fearing that they would influence Uzbek students in Turkey, but met with a refusal. Karimov is also

**Table 2.** The schools of Fethullah Gülen's movement in Central Asia (1997-98)\*

Country	Population (Millions)	Number of Nurcu schools	Number of pupils	Number of teachers from Turkey	Name of the company in Turkey and its location
Uzbekistan	24	18	3334	210	Silm, Bursa
Kazakhstan	17	29	5644	580	Feza et Şelale, Istanbul
Kyrgyzstan	5	12	3100	323	Sebat, Adapazari
Turkmenistan	4	15	3294	353	Başkent, Ankara
<b>Total</b>	50	74	15,372	1466	

\*For Said Nursi's conception of education see his *Risale-i-Nur*. In Central Asian schools teachers used Soylemez, 1997.

hostile to a strong Turkish foreign policy in Uzbekistan (and indeed in Central Asia as a whole). His aim is to deal not exclusively with Turkey but also with other countries, including Russia. There is a third reason for Karimov's hostility to the Nurcu movement. When they first settled in Uzbekistan Fethullah Gülen's disciples openly tried to proselytise their students. They taught them the *namaz* and recommended young girls to wear headscarves.

The largest number of schools is at the moment in Kazakhstan where the *cemaat* now runs 28 high schools and the Süleyman Demirel University. One factor favouring the growth in the number of schools is that Kazakhstan is administratively less centralised than the other states. In Kazakhstan the administrator of a region (*oblast'*) has the prerogative of reaching educational agreements with foreign companies. In 1991 and 1992 representatives of Gülen signed their agreements with regional governors. Meanwhile the Kazakh government has favoured this cooperation as it has helped it to speed up the 'kazakhisation' of the country and to reduce the extensive Russian influence.

Turkish schools are quite numerous in Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, despite their relatively low population. The *cemaat* is very active in Turkmenistan because two of its members are advisors of President Niyazov (the minister of Textiles and minister of Education). One of the two universities in Ashgabat belongs to the *cemaat*.<sup>12</sup>

### Modern and Successful Schools thanks to Foreign Languages and Science Lessons

The management of these schools in each republic is in the hands of a 'General Directorate' (*Genel Müdürlük*) located in the capital city and affiliated to a big education company in Turkey. In Uzbekistan the schools are run by *Silm Anonim Şirketi*, located in Bursa in Turkey. In Kazakhstan *Feza* and *Şelale* (both in Istanbul) run the Turko-Kazakh schools. In Kyrgyzstan the schools were founded by *Sebat* (Adapazari) and in Turkmenistan by *Başkent* (Ankara). Each company is in permanent contact with its directors in Turkey and has a representative in Istanbul. They also maintain good relations with *Türkiye Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı* (The Foundation of Journalists and Writers of Turkey), a prestigious Nurcu foundation.<sup>13</sup> Advisors from this Foundation help high schools to keep up good contacts with the Central Asian republics. It usually happens that the general director (*genel müdür*) of

schools in each republic is member of this Foundation. *Asya Finans*, a *cemaat* bank in Turkey, helps Nurcu businessmen with their investments in Central Asia and plays an important role in the transfer of money from Nurcu companies in Turkey to schools in Central Asia.<sup>14</sup> In each republic continuous dialogue and cooperation between the big Nurcu companies and the directors of the schools promotes good working conditions for the latter. Very often the directors of groups of schools in these republics go to Turkey to coordinate their activities in Central Asia.

In each republic the schools are run by directors, teachers and tutors. There is a clear sense of hierarchy in the schools. At the top of the hierarchy is the general director who is in charge of all the schools in the republic. At the next level, each school is managed by its own director. These directors have to meet once a month in the capital city (Tashkent, Bishkek, Almaty or Ashgabat) and the general manager explains their mission to them. In the General Directorate there is an individual in charge of each discipline (biology, mathematics, etc.) called *zümre başkanları* in the jargon of the community. Each *zümre başkanı* is responsible for the preparation of an annual syllabus for his subject. The General Directorate of all schools is responsible for the foreign policy of its company in the given country. For example, it has to maintain good relations with the government of this country, with the Ministry of Education, with universities and with all-important organisations in the country. It is also the intermediary between the schools in its republic and the Nurcu movement in Turkey. Last but not least, the heads of Nurcu businesses or trading companies in Central Asia or in Turkey negotiate with the general director about the assistance they provide to schools.

The teachers (*öğretmenler*) are carefully selected. They are usually recruited within *cemaat* circles; at the very least they will have been known to the *cemaat* for a long time. It is relevant here to consider how an individual becomes a member of the *cemaat*. It is not like joining a sports club or a political party. There is no membership card, and no special ceremony when somebody becomes a *fethullahcı*. Each member offers his or her services – *hizmet* – to help in the diffusion of the ideas of Nursi and Gülen. He or she has to accept the mission given by the community. There are a number of degrees of membership of the community: an individual can be an active member, a simple member or a sympathiser. Most of the *fethullahcı* I met in Central Asia became members of the community thanks to their family or their friends at work or at school. They were educated in the community's private schools, staying in students' residences or the famous *ışık evleri* ('houses of light'): flats belonging to the *cemaat* or rented by *cemaat* businessmen where young students – usually from poor families – are allowed to stay during their studies. Each 'house of light' is under the direction of an *abi* (big brother) who helps to educate the residents. The selection of teachers is done by the representative in Turkey of each of the companies (*Şelale, Başkent, Silm* and *Sebat*). The selected teachers and tutors (*belletmen*) therefore have the same characteristics.<sup>15</sup> As well as being competent in their particular subject they are of course ready to serve the community. Obviously, each candidate will be well known before his or her recruitment. He or she will usually have been introduced to the company by friends who are already members of the community.

*Cemaat* spokesmen claim that their teachers in Central Asia come from the best universities in Turkey like Boğaziçi, Bilkent, Marmara or ODTÜ. The Turkish media also tend to spread the same information.<sup>16</sup> My research in Central Asia has shown that the reality is quite different, however. Of course some teachers obtained their diplomas at Boğaziçi, Bilkent or other prestigious universities, but they are a minority and they are always sent by their administration to the most popular and prestigious

schools. In Turkmenistan, for example, Turgut Özal High School attracts the best *cemaat* teachers. The situation is however completely different in other schools in the provinces, in places like Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk), Tashauz or Nebit-Dag. In these schools most teachers come from less prestigious universities like Erzurum, Samsun or Yozgat. The situation is the same in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The high schools in each capital city are the best because they have the best teachers, but why is there such a difference between the capital cities and the provinces? During their visits to Turkic Central Asian countries Turkish officials – president, prime minister, deputies or military delegations – visit one of the *cemaat* schools because of their importance in cultural relations between Turkey and these countries. The visitors are always taken to the same school: the best one.

The tutors (*belletmen*) are the other important pillar of the community in Central Asia. They are usually students and members of the *cemaat* in Turkey. They come to Central Asia for various reasons: some because they have not passed their university examinations, some because they want to travel and see new places. Recruited by the representatives of the active company in the various Turkic republics, these students are assisted by the *cemaat*. Their company pays for their studies in Central Asian universities (history, economics, English, Russian, Uzbek or Kazakh literature are typical subjects) and arranges for them to stay in schools. They sleep in the dormitory, like the pupils for whom they become responsible. Their mission is simple: to act as elder brothers to the young pupils, who call them *abi* (elder brother). They have to help them to do their homework and prepare them for their lessons. They give them an elementary education in everything from table manners to resolving conflicts with family or friends. When the pupils are at their lessons the tutor is free to attend the university. The arrangement is a good one for the tutor: his studies, food and accommodation are free. The education company stands in the same relationship to him as he does to his pupils. His most important mission is to transmit the message of the community to these children. Around 90 per cent of the tutors are male (the same percentage as for the teachers). (It is not impossible to find female *cemaat* members in Central Asia, but they are rare.) In the first crisis between the *cemaat* and the government in Uzbekistan most of the *cemaat* members the government expelled were tutors.

The way pupils are selected for *cemaat* high schools is quite eloquent as regards *cemaat* ideology. In Turkey the community's method of selection is elitist. The concept of *Altın Nesil* (the Gold Generation) is an important one for Gülen and his followers: the aim is to provide 'a perfect education for a perfect generation in order to obtain a perfect society'. 'Altın Nesil' also requires the young people of the community to show a great respect for religious and national values. This generation has to be modern and disciplined. The community therefore offers its members the best schools and the best teachers. In Central Asia the *cemaat* follows the same principles: it tries to select the best pupils. Every year representatives of the Turkish school directorate in each republic organise examinations with the help of the local teachers in order to select the best pupils for the community's high schools.

At the beginning these schools were free everywhere, but nowadays the parents have to pay charges, which vary amongst the republics, depending on the number and the wealth of the Turkish companies which support the schools. In every republic, however, the schools managements told us that in future every school would require contributions from the parents. In Kazakhstan in 1998–99 parents were paying a charge for the canteen and for the books, some of which were expensive because they were imported (like English handbooks imported directly from Great Britain),<sup>17</sup> while

the remaining expenses were covered by Turkish companies. In Turkmenistan the schooling was free at the beginning, but now each pupil has to pay US \$1000 a year.<sup>18</sup> In Uzbekistan the schooling was free except at the Ulugbek International School (a combined high school and university) where in 1999 one year cost US \$5000 dollars. The economic crisis in Russia in summer 1998 affected the Central Asia economies and also the situation for parents with children at the Turkish schools. When Turkish businessmen and educators originally arrived in the Central Asian republics they were sure that oil and other resources would soon boost the local economies, but in 2000 they were still waiting for the economic growth to begin.<sup>19</sup>

After they have been admitted to a Turkish (Nurcu) school, the pupils embark on a life that is completely different from that in other schools. All the pupils have to board and sleep in a dormitory even if their family lives locally. Pupils are allowed to spend their weekends at home; but sometimes they will stay at school for a month or even longer without visiting their families. This boarding school system allows the educators to exert a strict control over their students in order to teach them the message of the community. The *fethullahcı* method is similar to that of the Jesuits in that the pupils are permanently being educated regardless of whether they are in the classroom or the dormitory. In most schools in Central Asia pupils wear what they want, but in the Turkish schools pupils wear a special uniform. The school managers argue that this allows them to erase any class differences amongst the children.

The prestigious Anadolu Fen Liseleri schools in Turkey are a model for Turkish schools in Central Asia. Like the Anadolu Liseleri, Nurcu high schools prepare their pupils very well for university entrance examinations.

Books and programmes in these schools are often the same, and the *cemaat* even has its own publisher, *Sürat Yayınları*. Pupils enter Turkish schools after what would have been the fifth or the sixth class in the old Soviet system, after having passed difficult exams. During the first year pupils learn English and Turkish. They attend English classes for about 15–20 hours a week. This is very important because after this first year the lessons are taught in English and Turkish. After the first (preparatory) class, the pupils study for four years preparing for university entrance examinations. Scientific subjects such as biology, mathematics, physics and computer science are a priority throughout. This is a Nurcu principle: Said Nursi attached much importance to the teaching of scientific subjects in schools (Yavuz, 1999c). One of his main projects (a couple of decades ago) was to introduce the teaching of sciences in religious schools and of religion in scientific schools. In each country one or two of these schools specialise in economics or theology. Called Oriental High Schools, they are a perfect copy of Turkey's Imam Hatip Liseleri.

In these schools pupils learn the Arabic language, the Quran and Islamic history. These schools constitute a small minority: there are only two in Kazakhstan, one in Turkmenistan and one in Kyrgyzstan. In Uzbekistan oriental studies are under state control. Foreign languages and scientific teaching in these schools are appreciated by parents who do all they can to send their children there. Foreign languages allow their children to obtain good jobs in foreign companies and to study at famous universities. The authorities are also quite interested in these schools. Large numbers of bureaucrats and administrators send their children there, and they speak out in their defence. For the government, these schools are interesting partners in helping them to form a new elite. Each school has Turkish as well as local (Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen) teachers. The scientific subjects are in the hands of the Turks and the rest (local history, literature) are taught by local teachers, although the Turkish teachers may also teach the Turkish language and Turkish history and geography. In all the

republics each school usually has one director, a Turk, except for Uzbekistan, where since the crisis of 1993 each school has two directors, one a Turk and one an Uzbek (see Table 3).

### **The *Raison d'être* of these Schools: Fethullah Gülen's Myth and Dream for Central Asia**

Fethullah Gülen has very often been interrogated by the Turkish media about his intentions in Central Asia. Before giving his answers, Gülen has usually recalled that the schools do not belong to him, and has repeated that all companies in Turkey and Central Asia, which are supposed to belong to him, are in fact independent. He is indeed correct: officially these schools and companies such as *Asya Finans*, *Zaman* and *Samanyolu TV* are not his own property. However, he has a great influence on them. There are businessmen and intellectuals who accept him as their moral leader – they call him *hocaefendi*, respected lord – and have undertaken to fulfill his dream for Central Asia. What is this dream?

Nostalgic for the Ottoman Empire and its greatness, Gülen also worships Central Asia. According to him, Anatolia is indebted to Asia for its high degree of civilisation; without Asia, Islam and Turkish culture would never have established themselves there. We know that in the distant past Islam and Turkish culture arrived in Anatolia from Asia as a result of the missionary activities of dervishes and of mystics called *alperen* (Köprülü, 1993). Gülen frequently refers to these *alperen* and compares his followers to them.<sup>20</sup> He exaggerates their influence, however. He mystifies it, forgetting that there were important civilisations in Anatolia before Islam and the Turks. He sees the activities of his followers in Central Asia today as a sort of repayment of a moral debt (Gülen, 1997). In his interviews he frequently uses the term *medyun* (Arabic for 'indebted').

When we ask the followers of Gülen about their motivation in coming to Central Asia, they give the same answer as their chief: 'we are here to pay our debt, our moral debt, *vefa borcu*'. They repeat that their ancestors went from here to Anatolia. There is no nationalist or panturkist aspect to their veneration of their ancestors (and indeed, for example, there are many Kurds teaching in the schools in Central Asia and Kurds are important in the movement in Turkey). In this respect they are completely different from the representatives of *Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı* (The Foundation for Turkic World Research (TDAV)) who are also present in some schools in Central Asia teaching Turkish, economics and other subjects.<sup>21</sup> Like their chief, the *fethullahcı* are moderates and never express strong nationalistic or Islamic ideas. They repeat that their mission in Central Asia consists in building a cultural bridge between Turkey and its Turkic sister republics. In fact all the members of Turkish community in Central Asia justify its presence in the same way.

Detailed research into the real project of the *cemaat* shows that the Nurcu movement in Central Asia is a real missionary movement. The mission of the *fethullahcı* is to reestablish Islam in an area that was dominated for 70 years by an atheist power. Their methods recall those of the Jesuits (Giacomelli, 1991; Faguer, 1991). We can also compare them with the American Peace Corps, which is present in Central Asia (Schwarz, 1991). The feature all three movements have in common is the use of the school as a means to propagate an ideology. All three missionary movements try to maintain excellent relations with the local people in order to 'convert' them. They even submit themselves to their influence in order to influence them more easily.<sup>22</sup> Gülen, for instance, recommends that his followers respect the habits and traditions of

**Table 3.** Subjects taught in the Turkish schools in Turkmenistan, 1997–98

<i>Subjects</i>	<i>6th Class, 1st Semester</i>	<i>6th Class, 2nd Semester</i>	<i>7th Class</i>	<i>8th Class</i>	<i>9th Class</i>	<i>10th Class</i>	<i>Language of Instruction</i>
Turkmen language and literature	4	3	5	3	3	3	Turkmen
Turkish language	7	7	3	3	3	3	Turkish
English	20	15	6	4	4	4	English
Russian	1	1	2	1	2	1	Russian
Mathematics		2	7	7	6	7	English
Physics			3	5	5	5	English
Chemistry			2	4	4	4	English
Biology			2	4	4	4	English
Science		3					English
Computer skills				2	3		Turkish
History of Turkmenistan			2	1	1	1	Turkmen
General history			1	2	1	1	Turkish
General geography				2	1	1	Turkish
Geography of Turkmenistan					1	1	Turkmen
The President's Policies						1	Turkmen
Morality ( <i>Edep</i> )	1	1					Turkish
History of religions			1	1	1	1	Turkish
Philosophy						2	Turkish
Sport	2	2	2	2	2	2	Turkmen
Music	1	1	1				Turkmen
Drawing	1	1	1				Turkmen
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>41</b>	

*Source:* The General Directorate of the Turkish-Turkmen Schools in Turkmenistan.

the people who receive them, and marry local girls.

The method of the Nurcu missionaries has distinctive characteristics. Despite the allegations of the Turkish media – especially the kemalist media – the Nurcu schools are not directly an instrument of proselytism. Ironically, the Nurcu would in fact prefer to practise their Islamic proselytism openly. It seems to have been their aim to do so when they arrived in Central Asia at the beginning of the 1990s, and it was probably because of their open activities in schools that the Uzbek government expelled some missionaries in 1993–94.<sup>23</sup> In Central Asia today, where the legislation and institutions are secular, part of the Soviet legacy, Gülen thinks that it is dangerous and unrealistic to try to spread Islam without being cautious. He recommends less conspicuous ways of Islamising the younger generation, and his followers seem to have been following his guidelines.

Gülen explains to his disciples the difference between *tebliğ* and *temsil*. *Tebliğ* means open proselytism, and Gülen asks his followers not to practice this. He argues that today's societies are subjected to so much political, religious and philosophical propaganda that people are weary of proselytism. In his view *tebliğ* creates a

gap between the man who knows and the other who does not know, a complex of superiority and inferiority between the preacher and those he is preaching to, and complicates the mission of Muslims. He strongly advises them to practise *temsil*, which he considers the best way of preaching. A preacher practising *temsil* will live an Islamic way of life at all times wherever he is, but will never utter the word 'Islam' or other 'dangerous words'. *Temsil* missionaries set a good example, embodying their ideals in their way of life rather than preaching about them.

Before analysing the methods employed by Gülen's disciples to realise his programme we should look more closely at what they are trying to achieve. 'Introducing Islam into Central Asia' is not an appropriate description of what the *fethullahcı* are doing. All these countries are already Muslim. This Islam is not now what it was in the past, however. After long Soviet domination it has been weakened and often perverted (Gross, 1998; Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1986). The Nurcu movement aims to help the people of this huge area to rediscover Islam. All *fethullahcı* hope for a real rebirth of Islam in the region. Schools are to help them in this mission: here we observe a point in common between the Nurcu and the historical *jadid* movement at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the aim of which was to promote the modernisation of Central Asian societies, changing society by means of education (Dudoignon, 1996). The nature of Nurcu Islam in Central Asia is the same as it is in Turkey: modern and moderate; not at all hostile to secular power; elitist. *Cemaat* Islam has no difficulty in adapting itself to Central Asian Islam because they share a common feature, namely respect for mysticism. The *cemaat* is not a brotherhood like the Naqshbandiyya or the Yeseviyya, very important movements in Central Asia, but it respects them and shares some of their characteristics. For example, like all the Muslims of Central Asia, the Turkish missionaries often visit the tombs of Bahauddin Naqshbandi and Ahmed Yesevi. Their practice of Islam is the same too: the Muslims of Turkey and the Muslims of Central Asia pray in the same way. Compared to the Wahhabis, whose Islamic views and practices are somewhat different from those traditional in Central Asia – they are for example opposed to the 'brotherhoods' – the followers of Fethullah Gülen have no difficulties in adapting to this region.

Appropriate practices are faithfully followed in Central Asia. The directors of a Nurcu high school will for example never impose books by Said Nursi or Fethullah Gülen on the children, nor will Turkish teachers in these schools ever recommend such books to local teachers (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, etc.). Religious discussions and the readings of *Risale-i-Nur (Epistle of the Light)* (Nursi, 1999) are usually limited to people from Turkey. Teachers, businessmen and Nurcu students will organise discussions (*çay sohbetleri*) once a week or so in order to improve their Islamic and Nurcu knowledge. (I was allowed to attend such discussions in Uzbekistan, but the organisers stopped the meetings in May 1999 after Turkish-Uzbek relations deteriorated.) Although it is not much in evidence in the schools, Nurcu literature is easy to find in Central Asian cities, in bookshops or near mosques. Nursi has been translated into every Central Asian language (as well as Russian). Some short chapters of *Risale-i-Nur* have been translated into Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen. *Namaz* and *oruç* (prayer and fasting) are officially forbidden in schools. After the crisis with the Uzbek government in 1993 the General Directorate of the schools and the director of each high school decided to forbid Islamic practice in the schools as dangerous for the future of the movement in Central Asia. The movement has developed a special strategy, however. Officially, the director and teachers in a school will tell the pupils that prayer and fasting are forbidden. At parents' meetings

the director will explain to them that the schools are not religious schools. At the same time, however, the same director will be telling the tutors to select a minority of pupils, teach them how to pray and give them an elementary Islamic education; the tutors must tell the pupils that this must remain a secret between him and them. The tutor's strategy must consist in appearing to be his pupils' confidential friend (*abi*), and not the teacher's representative whose job is to keep an eye on the pupils. Only small groups are selected for this religious education, but in the pupils' last year at school, a couple of months before they leave, the tutors give them more Islamic lessons. Of course there are numerous differences amongst the countries. In Uzbekistan, for example, because it is really too dangerous, the Nurcu have engaged in no proselytising since the very beginning, in 1992–93. President Karimov's anger at the activities of Islamists in the Fergana Valley means that he no longer tolerates any Islamic proselytism on the territory of Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan it is easier for the *cemaat* to teach Islam to pupils. In Kyrgyzstan everything is possible; in Turkmenistan the situation is the same as in Uzbekistan.

### ***Cemaat* Strategy to Win Over Turkish Diplomats and Local Authorities**

The current conditions in Central Asia make it too difficult for the *cemaat* to diffuse Islam. It was easier to do so in the early years of independence. In all these countries Islam obtained the support of the postcommunist powers. Everywhere new mosques were built and those transformed into factories during the Soviet period were reopened. In order to indicate a break with the past the leaders of the newly independent states accepted some Islamic practices and integrated them into the new national identities. This situation gave the *cemaat* the illusion that it was possible to preach openly, but its members soon understood that the real situation was different. In Uzbekistan, for example, the authorities saw Islam becoming powerful in the Fergana valley and feared that it would threaten the new state. They decided to limit the Islamisation of society.<sup>24</sup> The president closed some mosques in Fergana and a couple of Turkish *fethullahcı* schools.

Forced to adjust their strategy to these new conditions, Gülen's followers changed their method and developed their cooperation with Central Asian governments and with Turkish embassies. If the priority of the *cemaat* is to reintroduce Islam into Central Asia after its eclipse under Soviet atheist domination, it is also indirectly contributing to the propagation of Turkism (Turkish consciousness) and Turkish influence in the Turkic Republics. In spite of its missionary character the *cemaat* quickly becomes a sort of private company that offers its services. The community has developed a special strategy to win the trust of many social actors (embassies, ministries, governments, universities and parents, for example). At first, the *cemaat* won the trust of parents and educators thanks to its high level of success in preparing pupils for university exams. A majority of pupils coming from Turkish schools entered prestigious universities in their country or abroad. (According to *cemaat* statistics nearly 90 per cent of students pass their university entrance examinations.) In Tashkent the famous university of diplomacy has several students from Turkish colleges. In Ashgabat, Almaty and Bishkek pupils from *cemaat* schools study at the best universities. In the former Soviet Union there was a tradition of 'Olympiad' examinations. Every year a series of examinations would select the best pupils in the school, the village, the town, the region and finally the republic. After their arrival in Central Asia, Turkish missionaries adopted this tradition. They developed it by organising 'International Olympiads' in Central Asia or abroad. Students from

Turkish schools would frequently do very well in these examinations, and this of course would make the *cemaat* more popular in the eyes of parents and authorities alike.<sup>25</sup>

The methods used by the *cemaat* to recruit its pupils mean that its schools include a large number of children of the elite of the nation. Leading businessmen and bureaucrats send their children to these schools because of the high probability that they will pass their university entrance examinations. There is usually therefore a real harmony between parents and the teachers, whom they much appreciate. This is very important because it helps the *cemaat* to defend its schools, if it proves necessary to do so, against threats by the authorities. The parents will usually lobby on behalf of the *cemaat*. After the first crisis in Uzbekistan the intervention of some important parents dissuaded the authorities from expelling the *cemaat* from the country altogether. Of course these groups are not strong enough ultimately to save the *cemaat*, as it was shown in Uzbekistan in September 2000.

A strategy of seduction is employed by the *cemaat* not only towards parents but towards local governments too. In order to guarantee its presence in each country, the *cemaat* offers its support for the government's policy and postsoviet ideology. In the schools Gülen's followers teach the students to love the new independent state, the president, the flag, the new institutions, the new heroes who have been chosen by the new regimes and so on. For the same purpose, the General Directorate of the high schools will have some of the president's books translated into Turkish and distributed in Turkey. The schools thus become ambassadors to Turkey for these Central Asian regimes, promoting their culture and history and also,<sup>26</sup> of course, as mentioned above, contributing to the formation of new local elites.

We should pay special attention to the relations between the *cemaat* and Turkish embassies in Central Asia. These relationships have often been supposed to be bad, based on suspicion and characterised by conflict. It is true that in the early 1990s a conflictual relationship developed between the Turkish embassy in Tashkent and the Directorate of the *cemaat* schools there. The crisis between the *cemaat* and the Uzbek government was provoked by a report produced by the Turkish embassy about the nature of the Nurcu movement. The report warned the Uzbek government about the danger of this movement, which according to the embassy's research had proved to be fundamentalist and Islamist. This instance was an exception in Turkey's attitude to *cemaat* activities in Central Asia, however. The attitude of the Turkish government has usually been to support the movement (although Turgut Özal was more actively supportive than his successors Ciller, Demirel, Ecevit and Sezer have been).<sup>27</sup> In Uzbekistan, as in the other countries of Central Asia, a school may be opened only if the Turkish government (represented by its embassy) gives its agreement. In Uzbekistan the charter on educational cooperation is signed by three people representing respectively Tashkent, Ankara and the *Silm* educational and publishing company. The Directorate of schools in each Central Asian country is in permanent contact with the cultural and linguistic attaché (Eğitim Müşaviri ve Kültür Ataşesi) of the Turkish embassy. These two institutions cooperate actively. The embassy will help the *cemaat* by supplying books, for example. Sometimes the two institutions make joint preparations for national Turkish festivals (23 April and 29 October).

There are harmonious relations between the embassies and the *cemaat* because they have similar missions and projects in Central Asia. Ankara's ambition is to create strong relations with these republics, which requires the development of cultural and economic relations between Turkey and Central Asia; this in turn requires knowledge of the Turkish language (which differs sufficiently from Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and

Turkmen). The development of Turkish language teaching, and of Turkish studies in general, is one of Ankara's priorities in the region. For this purpose the Turkish state has opened two universities (Ahmed Yesevi (Balcı, 1999) in Kazakhstan and Manas in Kyrgyzstan) and a couple of state schools in the area. Turkish diplomats observe, however, that the Turkish government's cultural and educational efforts in Central Asia are nothing compared with the educational network of the *cemaat*. The state has to pay each teacher between US \$600 and US \$1000 a month, but *cemaat* members agree to work for US \$500 or as little as US \$200 a month everywhere in Asia: as missionaries they have more motivation than state employees. The dormitory system in *cemaat* schools allows the pupils to learn the Turkish language much more easily and quickly than in the state schools. The *cemaat* schools are generally more prestigious than state schools and are very important for Turkish policy in Central Asia. For all these reasons the Turkish government supports these schools in the Turkic republics.

We may observe a sharp contrast between the attitude of the Turkish authorities towards the *cemaat* in Turkey and their attitude to the *cemaat* abroad. Some elements of the state authorities in Turkey (though not all) consider the movement to be dangerous in Turkey, but the same authorities support it in Central Asia, where the Nurcu are helping the state to create a Turkish world. There was a similar situation in France during the Third Republic. All the governments of the Third Republic were very hostile to religion. Anticlericalism was the dogma of the state. This did not however prevent it from giving active support to French missionary movements in the Middle East and Africa. The reason is the same in both cases: *Realpolitik*.

There is another reason too. The presence of Turkish schools is favourable for the development of Turkism (Turkish consciousness). Turkish diplomacy has difficulties in exporting its own definition of a Turkish identity. The Turkish vision of Turkism is that Turks (of Turkey), Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen and others are different branches of a same larger Turkish ethnic family. For the new independent states, however, the most important thing is not Turkism but 'Uzbekism', 'Kazakhism' and so on. While Ankara wants to develop the existing common points the authorities in the other Turkic states prefer strengthening Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Turkmen identity. In every state school in these Central Asian countries children learn the new grammar of nationalism. In the *cemaat* schools, however, pupils learn not only the notion of Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Turkmen identity but also the important concept of 'Turkism'. As I sat in on lessons in some of these schools I was able to observe how their identity was simultaneously Uzbek and Turk, Kazakh and Turk, Kyrgyz and Turk, Turkmen and Turk. Without resorting to irredentism or panturkism, the *cemaat* schools thus help the formation of a common Turkish identity linking Turkey and the Turkic republics of Central Asia.

Last but not least, the role of these schools, with the Nurcu companies and businessmen's associations (UTID, KITIAD), is important in the development of economic relations between Turkey and these republics. More than half the Turkish companies in Central Asia are Nurcu companies.

## Conclusion

The first ambition of the *fethullahcı* is of course to work for the re-Islamisation of the Central Asian republics. Indirectly and sometimes directly, however, because of the patriotic element in the ideology of the Nurcu movement, the *cemaat* are in fact spreading the Turkish model rather than Islamic thought. Because of the deep-rooted

distrust of Islamism of these Central Asian countries the *cemaat* cannot appear with its authentic identity. Of course, a minority of people know that this organisation is a religious one. But usually, when you arrive in a particular city, the inhabitants will tell you that a good Turkish school has been opened, by Turks. None of the local people in Central Asia talks about 'Nurcu' or '*fethullahcı*' schools, but always about the '*türestky litsey*' or the '*türk maktabi*'.

The *cemaat* is interested in trying to maintain contact with pupils after they have left its schools. It organises reunions for its alumni in Tashkent, Almaty, Ashgabat, Bishkek and other cities. The purpose of these meetings is to help maintain the students' sympathy for the Nurcu movement. It is not clear how far they are successful in this. The students, who include future members of the elites in their countries, will certainly tend to develop relations with Turkey; but there is no guarantee that they will retain all the ideology of the *cemaat*. When they go on to university they come under other influences, as they do from their friends or family.

Because they offer a good modern education the Nurcu schools have become a model in Central Asia. They therefore play a real part in social change in the area (Balci, Akkok and Demir Engin, 2000). One open question is how far the *cemaat* has diversified in Central Asia. Does the movement already have enough local representatives to allow us to talk about an Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz or Turkmen '*fethullahcı* branch'? My own estimate is that the movement in Central Asia is still probably 95 to 100 per cent Turk. An important factor here is the attitude of the local secular authorities to proselytism: 'conversions' to Nurcu ideas are rare, and kept secret. Recruitment was easy in the first years of independence but is now difficult. Of course in each country we find a small number of 'converts'; but new local members of the movement tend to be in the schools rather than in other sectors of society. After they have finished their studies they tend to be recruited as teachers or tutors. Is this enough to show that the Nurcu movement has put down strong roots in Central Asia? We shall know the answer to this question only after the liberalisation of the countries concerned.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I would like to thank the Institut Français d'Études sur l'Asie Centrale of Tashkent where I was able to spend three years doing the research for this article.
- <sup>2</sup> On the life and ideas of Said Nursi, see two main references: Mürsel, 1991 and Mardin, 1989.
- <sup>3</sup> For more detailed analyses of Gülen's movement in Turkey see: Yavuz, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Can, 1996; Erdoğan, 1997.
- <sup>4</sup> Some high schools have been set up in Tajikistan too: in Dushanbe, Khojand, Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube. When I visited Tajikistan in July 1998 they totalled five. My research is however limited to the Turkic republics of Central Asia; I do not include Persian-language Tajikistan.
- <sup>5</sup> It is difficult to separate the two fields (Turkey and Central Asia). I chose to limit my research to Central Asia, but sometimes I had to go to Turkey to make important contacts. For information on the activity, importance and strength of the *cemaat* in Turkey see Yavuz, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c and Aras, 1998.
- <sup>6</sup> For example, *cemaat* firms in Uzbekistan in May 2000 included *Nur-Efşan* (chocolate), *Efendim* (restaurant), *Nil JV* (napkins), *Ikbal* (clothes). Prominent *cemaat* companies in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 included *Herkül* (biscuits), *Gök-Nur* (cleaning products), *Pak-Maya* (bakery and cakes). These lists of companies were compiled by UTID and KITIAD.
- <sup>7</sup> The *Sözler Yayınevi* publishing company in Çağaloğlu-Istanbul has translated some

chapters of *Risale-i-Nur* into various Turkic languages (as well as Russian and Serbo-Croat). They are usually the shortest and easiest chapters of this large religious work. For example, *Küçük Sözer* (*Short Words*), *Tabiat Risalesi* (*Epistle on Nature*) and *Yirmüçüncü Söz* (*The Twenty-Third Word*) have been on sale in several Central Asian cities. None of Gülen's books have been translated into Central Asian languages, however.

<sup>8</sup> The aim of UTID is to make Turkish investment in Uzbekistan easier. Every Uzbek or Turkish company can become member of this association if it pays US \$1000 for membership and thereafter US \$100 a month. UTID offers its members investment advice and can translate Uzbek and Russian documents for them. In 2000 UTID was in bad relations with the Uzbek government because of a political crisis between Tashkent and Ankara. The UTID leader was declared *persona non grata* in Uzbekistan in April 2000. At the same time, President Karimov received President Putin of Russia.

<sup>9</sup> See the website [www.zaman.com.tr](http://www.zaman.com.tr). This site provides some good links to *Zaman* in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

<sup>10</sup> The number has since fallen because the Uzbek government closed all the schools on its territory in 1999 and 2000.

<sup>11</sup> The *cemaat* has been active in Germany since the beginning of the 1980s, and in 2001 it set up two associations in Paris and Strasbourg providing weekend lessons for the children of the Turkish community. On the activities of the *cemaat* in Germany and the Balkans, see the research of Bekim Agai at the University of Bochum.

<sup>12</sup> See the table on Turkmenistan in Appendix 1. The most important university in Ashgabat is Mahmudkuli State University. There are some *cemaat* teachers in this university too. After the *cemaat* founded the Uluslararası Türk-Türkmen Üniversitesi (International Turkish-Turkmen University), however, all *cemaat* teachers have been going to the new university.

<sup>13</sup> See the website [www.yazarlarvakfi.com.tr](http://www.yazarlarvakfi.com.tr).

<sup>14</sup> Questioned by journalists about the management of schools, Gülen said that the mission of the *Asya Finans* bank was to help with their administration. See Sevindi, 1997.

<sup>15</sup> Author's interviews with teachers in Nebit-Dag, Turkmenistan.

<sup>16</sup> Ali Bayramoğlu and Şahin Alpay are two writers well known for their laudatory reporting about the Gülen community in Central Asia. See for example *Yeni Yüzyıl*, 30 October 1996 and *Milliyet*, 2 November 1996.

<sup>17</sup> English-language handbooks are imported directly from Oxford, but some popular Turkish stories in English (like *Keloğlan* and *Yunus Emre*) are printed in Turkey by the *cemaat* publisher, *Sürat Yayınları*.

<sup>18</sup> If the parents of a particular pupil are too poor to pay, the school management will meet the costs. Sometimes a group of businessmen will become tutors of a group of children and pay for their education.

<sup>19</sup> Author's interview with the assistant director of Turkish-Turkmen schools in Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, November 1998.

<sup>20</sup> This idea was probably inspired by Barkan, 1954.

<sup>21</sup> The TDAV sends teachers to Central Asia, but far fewer than the *cemaat* because of its shortage of economic resources. The TDAV has a stronger presence in Azerbaijan, where it is easier to defend panturkist ideas. In Central Asia it is present in Kentau, Kzyl-Orda and Atirau (Kazakhstan), Osh and Jalal-Abad (Kyrgyzstan). The TDAF is forbidden to send teachers to Uzbekistan. Under the direction of Turan Yazgan, a famous panturkist intellectual living in Turkey, the TDAF developed good relations with the Uzbek opposition exiled in Turkey, and this made it difficult for it to work with the Uzbek authorities. For more information about the TDAV, see [www.tdav.com.tr](http://www.tdav.com.tr).

<sup>22</sup> There were good relations between Turkish teachers and American Peace Corps workers in Naryn (Kyrgyzstan). These Turks and Americans were the only foreigners in this small city.

<sup>23</sup> Author's interviews with Uzbek journalists who worked at *Zaman Ozbekiston* when it was being published in Uzbekistan.

<sup>24</sup> The independence of the Central Asian States allowed the rebirth of some brotherhoods in this region, especially in Uzbekistan. See Babadjanov, 1998.

- <sup>25</sup> These schools are called Turkish Schools; the names *cemaat* or Fethullah Gülen are never mentioned. The Central Asian media have a good opinion of them. For Uzbekistan, see for example *Halk So'zi* (11 February 1998), *Ma'rifat* (19 November 1997 and 1 August 1998), *Tafakkur* (no. 3, 1998) et *Halk Ta'limi* (no. 1, 1998, pp. 36–37). For Turkmenistan, see for example *Nesil* (13 June 1998), *Turkmenistan* (3 February 1998) and *Mugallimlar Gazeti* (24 June 1998). All the media are controlled by the authorities in these countries, so if a newspaper expresses satisfaction with something it can be assumed that the authorities are satisfied too.
- <sup>26</sup> In order to prove its loyalty the educational and publishing company *Silm Anonim Şirketi* (for example) translated some books by President Karimov and Abdullah Aripov, national hero and poet, into the Turkish language. The best-known of these books are the president's *Reformlar va Istikrar (Reforms and Stability)* and *Barkamal Avlod Arzusi (For a Perfect Generation)*. This latter was translated into Turkish under the title *İdeal Nesil Arzusu (For the Best Generation)*.
- <sup>27</sup> For a complete list of Turkish politicians who have confidence in Fethullah Gülen, see Kozadan, 1999, pp. 154–77. See also Armağan and Ünal, 1999, cited in the Bibliography below, Section E(2)(a).

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### Appendix 1. List of Nurcu high schools in each Central Asian State

These statistics were obtained from the General Directorate (*Genel Müdürlük*) of the high schools in each republic. They relate to the 1996–97 academic year. The number of schools and students is liable to change every year, depending on levels of recruitment and on internal reorganisation by the schools' directors. There are three Nurcu universities in Central Asia (Ashgabat, Almaty and Bishkek).

**Table 1.** Kyrgyzstan

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Name of company</i>	<i>Main subjects</i>	<i>Opened in</i>	<i>Number of pupils</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>
Bishkek	Male	Sebat	General	1992/93	249	35
Aichurok	Female	Sebat	General	1993/94	168	26
Issyk-Kul	Male	Sebat	General	1992/93	262	28
Naryn	Male	Sebat	General	1993/94	181	24
Osh-Sema	Male	Sebat	General	1992/93	302	32
Osh	Male	Sebat	Technology	1993/94	174	27
Tokmak	Male	Sebat	Business	1993/94	130	22
Kademjai	Male	Sebat	Oriental Studies	1993/94	187	25
Kizil-Kiya	Male	Sebat	Business	1994/95	129	23
Jalal-Abad	Female	Sebat	General	1995/96	78	18
Jalal-Abad	Male	Sebat	General	1993/94	233	31
Bishkek	Mixed	Université Ala Taou	General	1996/97	?	32
<b>Total</b>					2093	323

**Table 2.** Kazakhstan

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Name of company</i>	<i>Main subjects</i>	<i>Opened in</i>	<i>Number of pupils</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>
Almaty–Tolgar	Male	Feza	General	1993/94	157	18
Almaty	Female	Feza	General	1993/94	246	25
Aksai	Male	Feza	General	1994/95	290	30
Almaty	Male	Feza	Oriental Studies	1994/95	230	26
Jambul	Female	Feza	General	1994/95	100	11

Turkestan-Kentau	Male	Feza	General	1992/93	194	15
Almaty	Male	Şelale	Physics	1992/93	120	13
Kzyl-Orda	Male	Feza	Physics	1993/94	256	24
Kzyl-Orda	Female	Feza	General	1994/95	143	16
Akmola (Astana)	Male	Feza	Physics	1994/95	134	15
Aktobe	Male	Feza	General	1993/94	263	26
Arkalyk	Male	Feza	Physics	1993/94	166	15
Atyrau	Male	Şelale	Physics	1993/94	206	22
Chimkent	Male	Şelale	Physics	1993/94	333	29
Chimkent	Male	Şelale	Oriental Studies	1993/94	122	13
Chimkent	Female	Şelale	General	1993/94	150	16
Kokchetav	Male	Şelale	General	1992/93	235	26
Jambul	Male	Şelale	General	1993/94	263	28
Jezkazgan	Male	Şelale	General	1993/94	230	22
Karaganda	Male	Şelale	General	1993/94	250	24
Kustanai	Male	Şelale	General	1994/95	133	15
Ust-Kamenogorsk	Male	Şelale	General	1993/94	189	21
Pavlodar	Male	Şelale	General	1994/95	169	19
Semei	Male	Şelale	General	1994/95	190	21
Taldy-Kurgan	Male	Şelale	General	1993/94	243	23
Jambul	Male	Şelale	Economics	1993/94	210	23
Taldy-Kurgan	Male	Eflak	Technology	1993/94	312	30
Almaty	Mixed	Eflak	University	1996/97	150	14
<b>Total</b>					5684	580

**Table 3.** Turkmenistan

<i>Locality</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Name of company</i>	<i>Main subjects</i>	<i>Opened in</i>	<i>Number of pupils</i>	<i>Number of teachers</i>
Ashgabat	Mixed	Başkent	University, general	1994/95	419	43
Ashgabat	Male	Başkent	General	1992/93	378	40
Tashauz	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	192	21
Kerki	Male	Başkent	General	1994/95	147	17
Charjou	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	226	27
Buzmein	Male	Başkent	General	1994/95	138	19
Tejen	Male	Başkent	General	1994/95	149	18
Mary	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	248	28
Bairam-Ali	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	231	23
Kunya-Urgench	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	187	20
Nebit-Dag	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	181	26
Turkmenbashi	Male	Başkent	General	1993/94	134	20
Ashgabat	Female	Başkent	General	1994/95	187	19
Ashgabat	Male	Başkent	Technology	1994/95	150	25
Ashgabat	Mixed	Başkent	Foreign Languages and Computing	1994/95	327	7
<b>Total</b>					3294	353

Table 4. Uzbekistan

Locality	Gender	Name of company	Main subjects	Opened in	Number of pupils	Number of teachers
Tashkent	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	243	15
Kibraï-Tashkent	Male	Silm	General	1993/94	185	11
Tashkent	Female	Silm	General	1993/94	148	9
Tashkent	Male	Silm	Economics	1993/94	214	14
Tashkent	Male	Silm	Computing	1993/94	154	14
Nukus	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	180	12
Fergana	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	203	12
Andijan	Male	Silm	General	1993/94	166	11
Angren	Male	Silm	General	1993/94	155	11
Samarkand	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	198	12
Namangan	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	232	14
Bukhara	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	225	12
Urgench (Khorezm)	Male	Silm	General	1992/93	205	12
Kokand	Male	Silm	General	1993/94	215	16
Jizak	Male	Silm	General	1993/94	187	11
Termez	Male	Silm	General	1993/94	144	10
Tashkent Ulugbek International School	Mixed	Silm	Business and Management	1995/96	120	12
Tashkent	Mixed	Silm	Languages	1993/94	160	2
<b>Total</b>					<b>3334</b>	<b>210</b>

## Appendix 2. Coordination of the Nurcu schools in Central Asia in 1996–97

