



RESEARCH

Felt Needs in Folk-Islamic Societies: How This Affects Quality In Scripture Engagement Programmes and Activities

David Gray¹

¹ SIL International

<https://doi.org/10.64830/001c.144561>

Journal of Language, Culture, and Religion

Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2025

People in folk-Islamic societies are driven by many felt needs. These include the need to avoid the influence of the evil eye, the jinn, and the spirits of those who have recently passed. To achieve these goals, they often resort to the use of charms and amulets, visiting a fortune teller at a 'holy place' (where a 'saint' is buried), or seeing a folk healer or mullah. If the Bible translation world ignores these felt needs, we will find that those attending local communities of believers will tend to continue with their previous folk-Islamic practices. This paper will argue that the establishment of good-quality projects leading to the transformation of believers' lives will depend upon taking such felt needs into account. This will mean having translation embedded in a Scripture Engagement programme with its activities. The programme and activities will need to be developed with such felt needs in mind, which will make it and the practices developed by local communities of believers more contextualised than would be the case with more traditionally-run programmes. This will help the project meet conditions six and seven of Wayne Dye's 'Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement.' It will also help to ensure that the quality of believers' lives is high (Ephesians 4.7–16).

1. Introduction

When discussing Bible translation for Muslim audiences, most authors take orthodox Islam and compare it with the biblical worldview. The trouble is that most Muslims around the world are folk Muslims or mix in Sufism with their beliefs, either of which is a kind of syncretism. To reach ordinary Muslims, therefore, we need to start with their actual beliefs and practices, which mix in their traditional religion with Islamic teaching, and more often than not call this 'Islam.' i.e., they do not differentiate between orthodox Islam and folk Islam, also known as popular Islam,¹ because they consider themselves to be a Muslim, whatever that means in their context.

Once when visiting a Turkmen family in Bayram Ali (ancient Merv), I gave a Turkmen *Injil* (New Testament) to the family grandfather, who happened to be a mullah. He thanked me for it profusely, and later that evening

¹ Woodberry, *From Seed to Fruit*, 241.

started to use the book, not to read² – but touched it to his forehead, while kneeling and rocking to-and-fro, reciting some kind of prayer (that I couldn't, unfortunately, hear). To him this was a 'holy book,' but holy in the Folk-Islamic sense of 'magic.' For him the book contained powers that could be used for good. This story illustrates how different folk Islam is from orthodox Islam.

As the above story illustrates, folk Islam can be different from the orthodox Islam we learn about in seminaries! The aim of this paper is to study such folk-Islamic beliefs and practices from a Power-Fear perspective and attempt to draw out some Scripture Engagement ideas that flow out of this. I also want to analyse these beliefs from a felt needs perspective. How can folk Muslims be *delivered* from their fear of the evil eye, *jinn*, and so on? A programme focused only on communicating Biblical truth may not be enough in such circumstances.

So, what is folk Islam? Many of my examples will come from Central Asia, where I lived and worked for many years.

2. Folk Islam in Central Asia

Bill Musk's book 'The Unseen Face of Islam'³ will be familiar to many of you. Much of what he describes is found in Central Asia as well as the Middle East. Here are some beliefs I came across that are probably explained in more detail in Musk's book, albeit from a slightly different perspective:

The Evil Eye

The evil eye is seen as a malevolent power that can be harnessed by bad people to do harm to things that are precious to you such as your children, livestock, house, and car. When people hold *Huday yoly*⁴ or *sadaka*⁵ sacrificial meals, inviting their friends, families and neighbours, they are trying to prevent the evil eye from touching them. If someone is jealous of your cow, they can put the evil eye on it and the animal will die.

Amulets

These are coloured strands of camel wool of particular colours⁶ twisted together and wound round the neck of a child, or the steering column of a car, to prevent the evil eye touching it. Children, in particular, are very vulnerable to the evil eye. It is very bad luck to complement a child, as it

2 To be honest I don't even know if he could read, as literacy levels in villages are rather lower than stated in government statistics.

3 Musk, *The Unseen Face of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslims*.

4 Literally: Short for *Hudayyn joluna* – [a sacrifice given] for God's sake.

5 An offering, usually a sacrificed animal such as a goat, but in some cases it refers to sweets or money handed out to children. See 2.7 also.

6 Usually black and white, perhaps a remnant of Zoroastrianism.

may attract the eye. It is possible to say something nice as long as you spit three times over your left shoulder, where the angel who records bad deeds is said to reside. Sometimes, necklaces are made in the shape of an eye and put around a child's neck so that the evil eye is attracted to the necklace, not to the child. Amulets may also contain a piece of jewelry that helps distract the eye. In houses, a piece of carpet sewn into the shape of a triangle may be hung above the door or somewhere in the room to protect that part of the house. Other things used as amulets include certain herbs, chili peppers, and ram's horns.

Charms

Turkmen believe it is possible to influence another person with the use of a charm. These will often be made by a mullah or *tebip* (herbalist or holy man), who will take payment for the service. A mullah might write some words from the Qur'an in Arabic script on a piece of paper, and roll up that paper and put it inside the charm, or burn the paper, and the person using the charm will put it in a bowl of tea belonging to the person they want to influence. A *tebip* is more likely to use herbs. The herbs are tied into a piece of cloth and hung around the person's neck, if that is a possibility, or hidden somewhere amongst their possessions. A young man who can't get a girl to respond to him might take this route, for instance. Charms are also used to heal the sick. A child suffering from diarrhoea might be taken to a *tebip* who will tie a charm round their waist to help them recover.

Blessings and Curses

This is the belief that *bereket* (or *baraka*⁷) can be given to someone by use of well-chosen words such as, 'May the inside of your home be white!' White is seen as a positive colour in Central Asia, and black negative. These 'blessings' arrive in the form of material goods, livestock, success, and so on. A host will often invite guests in and feed them just because they are hospitable, but they might inwardly hope that the guest will pronounce some blessings on the family over the meal. The opposite of a blessing is a curse. These are pronounced on enemies and are believed to cause actual harm. From a linguistic point of view these are both classic kinds of speech acts, where a certain form of words spoken out loud can cause a change in reality.

Possible Barriers, Bridges, and Door-Openers

These are well known people called *pir*. They are often tribal ancestors, who have died and are buried in *mazar* (shrines) on what is considered to be holy ground,⁸ with a mosque nearby on the same plot of land. People who are

⁷ Defined by Bill Musk as '... some kind of positive, magic force available from holy people, places or objects.' p295.

⁸ Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*. p103. Four types of *mazar* are listed – places connected with mythical personages, the tombs of former rulers, the tombs of tribal ancestors, and the tombs of Sufi saints.

suffering from an illness or who are worried about something will visit their local shrine and pray at the tomb of the saint in order to gain *bereket*. They will walk around the tomb, touching their right hand to the tomb then to their forehead, which is believed to have their destiny written on it. They may also pray over a piece of cloth and tie it to a rope outside the tomb. As the wind blows the cloth, the prayers continue to go up.

Fortune tellers⁹ often operate near a shrine. They read salt, rather than tea, and can predict your future, or tell you what you must do in order to be happy or lucky or blessed. In some cases, they have told people to get closer to *Isa pygamber* (Jesus the prophet).

Some saints are known for their special protective powers. Dawut *pygamber* (prophet), for instance, is known as the (patron) saint of iron, and protects motorists from harm. An amulet around a steering wheel will have not only wool thread, but also a piece of iron that has been prayed over by a mullah or *tebip*.

Since saints are seen as intermediaries operating between God and humans, the belief in saints is often seen as a kind of Sufism. This is particularly true if the Sufism includes certain kinds of music, dancing, and political activity. Sufism is stronger in the Caucasus than in Central Asia, nevertheless, Central Asians will sometimes pray to a *pir* if they are in trouble.

Sacred Trees and Wells

If you want to know the answer to a question about the future, you can visit a sacred tree in a graveyard near your home town or village. You put your hand under the roots of the tree, or into the hollow trunk, and if it comes out white the answer to your question is in the affirmative. The question might be, 'Will I marry next year?' Or, 'Will my future husband be Murad?' Sometimes a barren woman will visit a shrine, offer a *sadaka*, and then look into a sacred well at the shrine asking, 'Will I have a child or won't I?'

Ancestors

When a relative dies, it's very important to hold *sadaka* 'sacrifice/gift' meals after three days, seven days, one month, forty days, two months, and so on until seven *sadaka* meals have been celebrated. The *sadaka* involves the sacrifice of a goat or sheep, and eating its meat in silence out of respect for the dead. If you don't do this the person's spirit may do you harm. After the seventh meal the person's spirit is satisfied, and will leave you in peace.

⁹ A fortune teller is called a *fälbin* or *palwan* or similar. They let you know your fate.

It's also very important to be buried with your ancestors, in the same graveyard. The burial usually takes place within twenty-four hours of the relative passing away. Once the body has been placed in the grave a stick is put into the ground at the head and the foot and all the relatives run from the graveyard, as they are afraid of meeting the two angels called *Munkar* and *Nakir*, who come to question the dead person's spirit to find out how many good and bad deeds the person has done during their life on earth.

Children may be named after recently deceased ancestors in order for the latter's 'name' to continue. Sometimes, this belief can be so strong that it is comparable with the belief in reincarnation found amongst the shamanists of Siberia (many Central Asian peoples originally came from the steppes of Mongolia and Southern Siberia). One of the translators on the Turkmen translation team returned home one university holiday to find a new baby in the house – her youngest brother. The uncle had recently passed away. The family introduced the baby by saying, 'Your uncle is in the next room – why don't you go and see him?'

This reverence for ancestral spirits, which can include fear of them, is similar to the more developed forms of ancestor worship found in many parts of the world.

The gods

The longer phrase for 'thank you' is a kind of blessing. *Tangry yalkasyn* means 'may *Tangry* bless [you]' and the reply is often, '*Bile yalkasyn*,' meaning 'and you too!' It's interesting to note that the word for God used in this phrase is taken from the old term *Göktangry*¹⁰ 'sky-god' who was the head of the pantheon of the gods of the *Oguz*¹¹ and other proto-Turkic groups. The Sky-god was over all the other gods (Moon, Harvest, and so on). Many of the names of the old gods are still used, albeit without their original associations.

Jinn

These are spirits that can cause good, but are more likely to cause harm. A belief in *jinn*s is included in orthodox Islam, but I include it here because within folk Islam they are something to fear.

Baxshi

In some parts of Central Asia *Baxshi* are not merely musicians and singers, they have the ability to listen to messages from the spirit world and pass them on, and also try to heal people. Here's a story of one *Baxshi*:

¹⁰ <http://gollanma.com/altyndepe-jemgyyeti.html> accessed 26–5–2016.

¹¹ The Seljuks and the Turkmen are descended from the Oguz, who came originally from the Altai mountain region, but settled in Transoxania (between the Syr and the Amu rivers).

We asked Turdijân how she had become a *Baxshi*. Her story was typical of other stories we'd heard: her calling had arisen in the aftermath of her own illness. "I was sick for a whole year. I lost a lot of blood. I went to the doctor and he gave me a shot in my hand, but my hand swelled up. My body didn't accept the shots. The doctor said that I should go and see a *Baxshi*. 'If a *Baxshi* can't cure you, I'll take you myself to Dushanbe,' he told me. I went to Mexri *Baxshi*. When she did a *fâl*¹² for me, she said that the *dâyra*¹³ that belonged to my husband's mother – she was a *Baxshi* – was broken, and that it was having a bad effect on my livestock and on the health of my children. I said, 'Yes, I did have some animals that died.' She told me that until I accepted the responsibility of being a *Baxshi*, this bad luck would continue. Then my husband went to buy a three-year-old yellow calf. There was a *Baxshi* named Haljan *Baxshi* – he's dead now – and Xaljan *Baxshi* did a *koch*, a cleansing. Haljan *Baxshi* ordered me to do a retreat [*chilla*] at home. I didn't see anyone; I'd go out only in the evening completely covered up. I didn't speak to anyone. After I did the *chilla*, I started to get better, and I started to live completely differently. It was the will of the *jinn*s. If they give a road [*yol*], we can do something; if they don't, there's nothing we can do for ourselves.¹⁴

3. The Power-Fear Factor

Much of the above beliefs are an attempt to have power over the spirits. It is important to realise that people believe everything has a spiritual cause. If someone gets sick, or a woman is barren, there must have been a charm that caused it, or the evil eye, or a *jinn*, or an ancestral spirit. Even a car breaking down is no accident. As well as the mechanical fault there must be a spiritual cause.

Muller calls such dynamics 'Fear-based.'¹⁵ Much of his chapter on fear-based dynamics is relevant to the Turkmen people:

- Fear of the supernatural; the need to appease these spirits
- The power holders are mullahs and *tebip* who apparently have power to appease and/or control these spirits

¹² This is a ritual that foretells the future, or lets a person know their fate. A fortune teller is called a *fâlbin* or *palwan* or similar.

¹³ A flat kind of drum, like a large tambourine.

¹⁴ Levin, *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia (And Queens, New York)*, 249.

¹⁵ Muller, *Honor & Shame: Unlocking the Door*, 42. It is probably better to refer to power and fear as dynamics that are put of the cultural context.

Power, Truth and Cultural Encounters

Richard Love argues that, when working with folk Muslims, it is important to use a ‘three-dimensional approach’ which includes power encounters, truth encounters, and cultural encounters.¹⁶ Power encounters are to do with showing that the Lord Jesus Christ has power over all, including the evil eye, the *jinn*, and so on. Truth encounters are to do with communication of the truth found in the Scriptures. Cultural encounters are to do with setting up new rituals to replace the old ones. In some cases the old rituals can be modified, but it is important for the community to think through what the Bible teaches and how this critiques their worldview and cultural practices. No practice should be labelled as ‘Christian’ without going through careful analysis. For instance, it is not possible to ‘redeem’ (make Christian) charms and amulets simply by saying a prayer over them. The associations in the minds of local believers will not disappear quite as easily as that.

In the next three sections I will go into some detail on all three of these, starting with truth encounters.

4. Truth Encounters

Biblical Worldviews

We have to be careful to study biblical worldviews, not our own Western worldview, which has ‘the flaw of the excluded middle.’¹⁷ Both folk-Islamic worldviews and biblical worldviews acknowledge the existence of a middle realm inhabited by angels, demons (or ‘*jinn*’ in folk Islam), and so on. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches that God is in control of the universe (Gen 1), so we have no need to fear the so-called ‘gods’ named after the sun, moon, stars, and so on, nor any earthly or heavenly powers (often called ‘the powers and authorities’ in the Bible¹⁸). In Psalms, we are encouraged to worship God from within a pluralistic context, where the existence of other ‘gods’ is not denied, rather they are shown to be ‘worthless’:

96 Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!
2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!
4 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;

¹⁶ Love, ‘Church Planting Among Folk Muslims’.

¹⁷ Hiebert, ‘The Flaw of the Excluded Middle’.

¹⁸ Eph 6.12, for instance.

*he is to be feared above all gods.*¹⁹

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are *worthless idols*,²⁰
but the LORD made the heavens.

⁶ Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.²¹

This is helpful for believers from a folk-Islamic background and for others of us too. We are encouraged to ‘fear’ God in a new way in that we cannot control him; we can only hear his voice and obey. Ultimately believers need to be taught that it is Isa Mesih (Jesus the Messiah) who is above all other powers in this realm (Heb 1–2) and brings all believers, whatever their backgrounds, complete security (Eph 1).

Possible Barriers, Bridges, and Door-Openers

One approach is to begin with a worldview comparison between folk Islam and the biblical worldview (see Appendix 2), then look for possible barriers, bridges, and door-openers.

- Barriers - differences or conflicts with the Biblical worldview. While these barriers remain, they will obstruct the full acceptance of the Bible’s message.
- Bridges - things which are very similar or parallel to the Biblical worldview, views held in common. They are like bridges over which the Bible’s message can pass.
- Door-openers - aspects of the Biblical worldview which are attractive to people even though they are different from their own worldview.²²

Obviously, a study of the worldview as a whole is necessary for this, not just a narrow focus on Folk-Islamic issues. The barriers are the fear of powers and their mediators, and the whole veneration of ancestors and relatives. Possible bridges are their belief in God (though distant), their love of stories of the prophets, proverbs, and their belief in an afterlife, albeit paradise with one’s ancestors.

Proverbs are a key part of Central Asian cultures, so including a selection of Suleyman’s Proverbs is a good idea. It may not be the best place to start, as some teaching from Genesis, Exodus and Psalms will provide a useful

¹⁹ גִּדְרָא, ה' וְהָאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים

²⁰ Insignificant, vain, worthless - אֱלִילִים

²¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2001). (Ps 96.1–6). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

²² Brown, ‘Muslim Worldviews and the Bible: Bridges and Barriers (Part I: God and Mankind)’.

backdrop for Proverbs. The other approach is to begin with an audio series called Lives of the Prophets. This can be very popular, as the names at least are familiar. Some stories may need adapting e.g., Genesis 22, Abraham's test. His son is called Isaac in Genesis, but just 'son' in the Qur'an. To avoid complications, it may be best to leave Isaac's name out of the story for the moment, in the audio version at least. It is better not to just borrow the set of stories used in the Middle East, but rather adapt them for a Central Asian context by thinking through which story helps the listeners gain release from fear. Job is also a useful story to tell, as it shows how Satan is under God's control.

Door-openers would be stories that show God is in control, and also stories of Jesus such as the calming the storm, feeding the five thousand, and the many stories of him healing the sick and casting out demons. Parables will also be of interest, as they teach truth indirectly, which appeals to Central Asians.

Stories are the most powerful way of getting truth across in any culture, but this is especially true in oral cultures, where analytical arguments are not so well known. Groups of believers gather together and study God's word – when one person reads it out loud to the group – or when it is played on an MP3 player. Then they can talk about what impacted them, and what they are going to change in their lives. This brings in the social dimension to their life as a believer. This also fits in with cultural encounters, as it is part of their life as a believer *in community*.

5. Power Encounters

Spiritual Hunger

Wayne Dye's eight conditions of Scripture Engagement have a sixth condition; Spiritual Hunger. As part of this condition Dye discusses the issue of felt needs:

Many Muslims are interested in hearing parts of the Bible. This is usually related to their hunger to know God and the high respect which Islam teaches for most of the Bible. Any renewed interest in traditional or organized religion is a strong indicator of unmet felt needs and spiritual hunger (S. Dye 2003), but it is not a strong predictor of Scripture Engagement unless Christians are showing them that God can meet those needs. ... A key component in spiritual hunger is the perceived relevance of Christianity and the Bible to felt needs of whatever sort (S. Dye 2003). ... *Identifying the legitimate needs of the community and demonstrating how the Word of God addresses*

their important life issues is one of the most important tasks that local pastors, missionaries, and Bible translators can undertake (Loewen 1967; T. W. Dye 1985; S. Dye 2003; Hill 2006).²³

If those needs are not being met, new believers from a Muslim background will go back to their folk-Islamic practices, such as visiting shrines and their associated fortune tellers. They remain believers in Jesus in their heads, but folk Muslims in their hearts. It is therefore important that new believers have their emotional and spiritual needs met, not just their rational understanding changed. This means that running inductive Bible studies is not enough. We need to think about prayer times, including prayer for healing and release from fear, shame, and guilt, especially the former. Prayer ministry should be a part of Christian meetings, not just Bible study, preaching, and praise prayers or worship through music.²⁴ Another way of gaining confidence in God is through memorisation of scripture. Verses on God's strength, faithfulness, love and care can be read in context then memorised and repeated day after day. These then work their way into a believer's heart, and fit in well with an oral culture where memorisation and repetition are both valued highly. Dreams can also be a powerful way for God to speak to Central Asian believers. The example of mission workers can be key. I heard a story of a mullah sending people to the mission worker when they run out of ideas of how to help someone with a daughter possessed by *jinn*, saying, 'Go to the missionaries, their prayers are more powerful than ours.' This can be a challenge for those of us who don't have experience of exorcism, but we know the one who has conquered all evil (1Jn 3:8) and should not be afraid to get involved, albeit with humble dependence on the one who has all authority to send us out (Mat 28:18–20; Luk 10).

Other Felt Needs

It might well be that the community has other, more material, felt needs. There is usually a connection between the two, however (consider drug addiction as an example), so an integrated approach where both material and spiritual needs are being considered is the best way forward. This is known as *integral mission*.

²³ Dye, 'The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement - Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect', 94–95. Emphasis mine.

²⁴ Music is a moot point in any case with Islamic audiences. As we said above, Sufi believers emphasise music, whereas orthodox Muslims often ban it. Folk Muslims are often somewhere in-between, and have music at weddings and perhaps during festivals. The best advice is to ask an ethno-arts expert to help with this area.

6. Cultural Encounters

Freedom to Commit

Not only do believers need their felt needs met, they will need a new community to belong to, in fact this is also a felt need. Wayne Dye's eight conditions of Scripture Engagement have a seventh condition; Freedom to Commit. When filling out the eight conditions questionnaire, this seventh condition often ranks lowest and is one of the ones to address first in terms of Scripture Engagement activities when working with a folk-Islamic audience.

Freedom to commit means exercising spiritual freedom to choose to follow Christ wholeheartedly, including turning from ancestor worship, traditional magic, fetish worship, and any other belief or practice that conflicts with the teaching of the Bible. The Bible makes demands on people, demands to accept God's solutions to life problems and to give one's life over to obeying its teaching. If there is no freedom to do so, then people will not continue to read or hear the Scriptures.²⁵

New believers are much more likely to continue in their faith if they have a community they belong to, where they can be accepted as believers from a Muslim background (BMBs²⁶). Often such gatherings of believers are mainly formed by BMBs getting together. It is rare for them to be accepted into traditional Christian denominations, where believers might be Orthodox or Coptic Christians. In some cases Protestant groups have been able to loosely associated with the new gatherings of BMBs, and encourage them, mainly from the outside, but sometimes from within. It is within these groups that new practices can be established, either by redeeming old practices, or by creating new ones based on the Bible.

Culture Meets Scripture

It is possible to take a course called 'Culture Meets Scripture,' which helps students answer the following questions:

How do we live in a way that honours God while still being culturally meaningful?

How do we use Scripture to both evaluate cultural practices and discern what to do?

When cultural practices and values clash with obedience to God, what do we do?

²⁵ Dye, 'IJFM'.

²⁶ Often known as MBBs – Muslim background believers. I am indebted to Colin Edwards for his adaptation of this acronym.

When pressures from family/community require us to behave in an ungodly way or participate in certain ceremonies, what choices do we make?

How can we make choices that align with Scripture—especially when the costs are great and when cultural beliefs are powerfully ingrained? Can we do this while still being culturally relevant?²⁷

Working through such issues with a community of BMBs (from a folk-Islamic background) would be well worthwhile.

7. Conclusion

We have seen that felt needs are an important factor to consider when working with folk Muslims. Various Scripture Engagement tools, such as Dye's eight conditions and the worldview, bridges, and barriers study can help us decide what to prioritise in terms of activities and products to lead believers into all truth and deliver them from evil. Love's three-dimensional mission paradigm for use amongst folk Muslims helped us here. It is vital that their heart needs (not just their head needs) are met. These are called 'felt needs' in the Scripture Engagement world. The main issue in a folk-Islamic context, as we have seen, is fear of spiritual powers. These are mediated by various human mediums, who are respected by the local community. Coming to a trust in Jesus the Messiah and a heart knowledge of the truth found in the Bible, as well as an experience of the living God, can set people free from such fears, though it is important that they are quickly integrated into a gathering of BMBs so that their cultural needs are met, and they no longer need to use folk-Islamic mediums. Ultimately, we would like to see BMBs flourishing in a like-minded community (Eph 4.7–16). This is the goal of our work: as important as Bible translation is, to neglect the felt needs of the community is to make our work peripheral, as far as they are concerned.

Published: October 17, 2025 CDT.



This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CCBY-4.0). View this license's legal deed at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0> and legal code at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode> for more information.

²⁷ Emdc.online (accessed 8th August 2023).

REFERENCES

- Bennigsen, Alexandre, and S. Enders Wimbush. 1985. *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide*. London: C. Hurst & Company.
- Brown, Rick. 2006. "Muslim Worldviews and the Bible: Bridges and Barriers (Part I: God and Mankind)." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23 (1): 5–12.
- . 2015. "Major Biblical Themes Compared with Viewpoints from Worldviews Held by Muslims Today." October 11, 2015.
- Dye, T. Wayne. 2009. "The Eight Conditions of Scripture Engagement - Social and Cultural Factors Necessary for Vernacular Bible Translation to Achieve Maximum Effect." *International Journal for Frontier Missions* 26 (2): 89–98.
- Hiebert, Paul. 1982. "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle." *Missiology* 10 (1): 35–47.
- Levin, Theodore. 1996. *The Hundred Thousand Fools of God: Musical Travels in Central Asia (And Queens, New York)*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Love, Richard D. 1994. "Church Planting Among Folk Muslims." *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 11 (2): 87–91.
- Muller, Roland. 2000. *Honor & Shame: Unlocking the Door*. USA: Xlibris.
- Musk, Bill. 1989. *The Unseen Face of Islam: Sharing the Gospel with Ordinary Muslims*. Eastbourne, E Sussex, UK: MARC (Monarch).
- Woodberry, John Dudley, ed. 2011. *From Seed to Fruit: Global Trends, Fruitful Practices, and Emerging Issues Among Muslims*. 2nd ed., rev. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Key Terms Issues in Translation

One factor in a folk-Islamic context is that certain key terms may have a more restricted usage than in orthodox Islamic areas. We cannot assume that those terms will work for biblical concepts, even if they are known and used terms. For example, *bereket* (blessing) refers only to material blessings, so can be used for Abraham's 'possessions' of flocks and herds, but might not include the blessings we have in the Messiah, for instance. In that case, since there were several terms for blessing, we used other terms for more general or spiritual blessings. The term *mukaddes* (holy), though adapted from the Arabic and Cognate with the Hebrew term is used for places like shrines, sacred trees, bread and so on. It is really closer to 'sacred' than to 'holy.' It isn't usually used of people, or even God.¹ In that case we decided to use the term in any case, because there weren't any other terms available (apart from *keramatly* 'magic'). We are hoping that the term will be broadened in its biblical context, and that those engaging with the scriptures learn that people and God can be referred to as being *mukaddes*.

One danger in translation is to use the local term for the kind of spirit that can possess people, without realising that this term refers to *arwah* 'ancestral spirits' or *jinn*. The former is particularly problematic, in that historically speaking, Jesus did not cast out ancestral spirits, but demons. In the Bible demons are thought to be fallen angels, not spirits of deceased ancestors.

Appendix 2: Worldview Study

<i>Biblical</i>	<i>Folk-Islamic</i>
The Cosmos <i>What is reality?</i> - Understand the universe in accordance with nature & character of God, who is beyond comprehension - Created order includes material & unseen (spiritual)	The Cosmos God made the world, but he is very far off. Those actually in control of people's lives are powers such as the evil eye, jinn, etc. mediated by the family mullah, ² <i>tebip</i> , and fortune tellers, associated with <i>pir</i> at the local shrine.
The Self <i>What is human?</i> - Made in image of God - Soul & body - Moral beings - Death is not the end	The Self One's identity is in community – mainly the clan, which is part of a larger tribe – rather than as an individual. It is important to know who one's ancestors were, at least back to the seventh generation. You are not free to make choices about who you marry, or whether or not to become a believer in Isa. Your parents help you decide such things. Death is not the end. You go to join your ancestors in paradise.
Knowing <i>What is truth?</i> - Ability to think & reason (as in God's image) - Revelation through Scripture	Knowing Knowledge is mediated through mullahs, <i>tebip</i> , fortune tellers, etc. Through them you can find out more about the influences on your life. The Qur'an is

¹ Despite its use in the Qur'an: Allah is called the 'Holy One' in e.g. surah 62, verse 1.

² It is rare for people to attend mosque, though this is changing with the growth of orthodox Islam in Central Asia. Usually a family mullah is invited to the Huday yoly or sadaka meals.

<i>Biblical</i>	<i>Folk-Islamic</i>
Not limited to rational thought, possibility of divine communication	used to make charms and amulets, rather than as a source of truth. Mullahs learn oral stories from the <i>hadith</i> about prophets such as Abraham and Moses. Proverbs and sayings are important ways of learning values.
Community <i>What is society?</i> - Relationship & community important – the church as the body - Each individual is valuable - Equality between sexes but difference in roles	Community One only trusts those in one's own clan. People from other clans are not to be trusted. The clan has strong solidarity so one can expect loyalty working out in practical help from other clan members, especially those in your extended family (grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings etc.). Your older relatives may teach you some proverbs and sayings to pass on values. Women are less valued than men but have some independence. Hospitality is highly valued. Guests are expected to bless the home and all who live in it.
Time <i>What is time?</i> - Progressive, linear view of time - Time moving forward – strong concept of 'hope,' present world will end and commencement of new age - Time is an opportunity for people to fulfill God's will (or rebel against him)	Time Your destiny is written on your forehead, but it is possible to get help from <i>pir</i> (saints) or find out your next steps via fortune tellers. When bad things happen there must be some spiritual cause, perhaps a charm, or the evil eye. Life on earth is a test. You may end up in paradise if you live well.
Value <i>What is good?</i> - Ethics based on absolute nature of God – who has given moral principles to live by – revealed through conscience & Bible - Absolute truth - Can't live up to God's standards	Value Honour-shame are more important than truth. People tend to hide their problems rather than talk openly about them. God is watching, but not very closely, at least not until you are old. When you reach old age it's important to drink tea (rather than alcoholic beverages), grow your beard, and read the <i>namaz</i> regularly. For a woman it is less clear how to behave.

See also Rick Brown's worldview comparison.^[29:1] Though mainly on orthodox Islam, he does include quite a few mentions of what he calls 'popular' Islam.