The Muslim Jews in Central Asia *

by Dr. Albert Kaganovitch

Introduction

The history of the Bukharan Jews who were converted to Islam (the Chalah) remains almost unknown till today. Although many publications on the history of Bukharan Jews devoted a few lines to Jewish converts to Islam, most of their authors, lacking a sufficient number of reliable sources, only mention the problem and attempt to determine the time frame of the conversions.

Zaravshanskii okrug. Pervye uroki (Zaravshan okrug. First lessons; between 1865 and 1872) - Sergei Mikhailovich Prokudin - Gorskii Collection (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA).

Yet, there are several works of limited scientific interest on the problem. I. Babakhanov (1) briefly reported about the history of the Chalah *o*n the basis of oral reports and described their religious rites. The same issues were discussed in greater detail by O. Sukhareva in her monograph on the history of Bukhara,(2) which described the methods used in converting Bukharan Jews to Islam and areas in the city of Bukhara where the Chalah lived. M. Zand's article presented evidence about the areas of the Bukhara emirate and its capital Bukhara in which the Chalah had settled, and reported data about their mid-nineteenth-century population.(3) The almost complete absenced of sources on the history of Muslim Jews in Central Asia makes it impossible to form a complete picture of the conversion of Central Asian Jews to Islam and their subse-quent legal status and social circumstances. But, the documents of the Tzarist period discovered by the present author in the Central Archive of Uzbekistan allow us to trace a specific period in the history of the Chalah.

** Source: Kaganovitch, Albert: The Muslim Jews in Central Asia. In: Tolmas, Chana (Ed.): Bukharan Jews. History, Language, Literature). Tel-Aviv : « M+ » Pub. House 2006, pp. 111-141.*

(1) I. Babakhanov, "K voprosu o proiskhozhdenii evreev-mululman v Bukhare" (On the origin of Jewish converts to Islam in Bukhara), *Sovetskaia etnografia*, no. 3, 1951, pp. 162-163.

(2) O. Sukhareva, *Bukhara 19 - nachala 20 veka* (Bukhara in the 19th-early 20th centuries), Moscow, 1966, pp. 172-178.

(3) M. Zand, "Yahadut bukhara u-kibush asia ha-tikhona be-yadei ha-rusim" (The Jews of Bukhara and the occupation of Central Asia by the Russians), *Pe'amim*, no. 35, 1988, pp. 46-83.