The Russian conquest of Central Asia certainly was a watershed in the region's history: New masters from far away had come, and come for good. And they were Christians, not Muslims. Thus, for the first time since the Mongols had converted to Islam, non-Muslims ruled over Muslims in Central Asia. For how much did the religious difference count? and for whom? Are we all too quick in presuming that this must have made the real difference instead of the new power structures and, over time, the new economic orientation towards Russian markets (which also meant the closing of other markets in Afghanistan and India)? How did Central Asians feel about their new masters, how did they react to their colonizers, did they feel they were being colonized at all? or is this a concept we keep projecting into their minds?
The texts published here are some of the much more voluminous source materials discovered and partly made available by the Zerrspiegel project organized by the Institute of Oriental Studies, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle (you can find the database at http://zerrspiegel.orientphil.uni-halle.de). In this project, researchers from Tashkent, Baku and St Petersburg worked together in order to find out about the mutual perceptions of colonizers and colonized in the Russian context.
The present paper starts from the assumption that prayers, private as well as public ones, are a good source for finding out what really mattered to people, what they really were concerned about. And indeed,
the two private prayers published as texts 1 and 2 in this booklet give some idea about the changes that occurred in Central Asian thinking, even if we cannot pretend that these two samples are in any way representative of what was going on in the yards of mosques and mazars all over the region.

The two public prayers, on the other hand, were elaborated on behalf of the colonial power and meant to enhance the authority the tsarist regime enjoyed in Muslim circles or wanted to enjoy. That there was no unanimity within the colonial administration is shown in the essay by the colonial administrator and intellectual N.P. Ostroumov which is equally published in this booklet. At the same time, Ostroumov’s text is a fine example of Christian perception of Muslims.

The oriental sources were translated directly from the Chaghatay and Persian; thanks to Dr. Ildikó Bellér-Hann for helping with the Chaghatay. At some places, we have added some references to European research which we thought might be important, but this was not done systematically. Such references are found in the footnotes only and have not been entered into the bibliography. In other places, things evident to a Central Asian reader (but not so for a European audience) have been explained shortly in additional footnotes. All the additional material has been marked as Translators’ addition or Translators’ note.

Quotes from the Quran (in Ostroumov’s text) have been taken from Bell’s translation, quotations from the Bible from a standard English translation.

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