

Muslim Education in Tatarstan as the Factor of Common Civil Russian Identity Development

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Abstract: The development of Islam in Russia is determined by the level of Muslim education. Muslim education in Tatarstan, as a social institution had deep roots training Muslim clergy and spreading religious values, providing the knowledge about Islam. After the implementation of atheism policy during the Soviet period of the Russian State, there was the break of traditions in the system of Islamic education which predetermined the organizational complexities of the Islamic Revival in Post-Soviet Russia. The development of madrasas network in the late 90s of the XXth century in Tatarstan took place with the support of the Islamic world (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Turkey and others) guiding the teachers, providing textbooks, taking the visitors from Russia who wanted to receive religious education abroad. The external influence on the process of muslim identity development in Tatarstan can not be assessed unequivocally, it had both positive and negative results. The study reveals the peculiarities of Islamic education system development in Tatarstan at the present stage, the possibility of using the potential of Islamic education levels in the formation and strengthening of general civil Russian identity. The steps of religious leader multi-level training system preparation are described. The conclusion is made that the formation of Muslim intellectuals layer who own centuries old Islamic traditions, developing the work at the local level within the framework of the traditional Tatar Islam will promote the harmonization of inter-confessional relations. The establishment within the Muslim education system concerning personnel, intellectual and organizational basis for the prevention of extremist behavior will strengthen all Russian civic identity.

Key words: Inter-confessional peace, common civic identity, Islam, muslim education, extremist

INTRODUCTION

Religion has a constructive potential, influences not only the nature of the state confessional relations, but also aims to maintain a high level of spiritual safety. The process of Islamic revival that began in Tatarstan during 90s of XXth century is clearly manifested in activation of charity, the development of Islamic infrastructure, the moral health of society, the creation of muslim education system. In the context of ideological pluralism, opened borders and the possibility of a dialogue with the believers of the Islamic world, the young Russian muslims obtained their opportunity to study the history and culture of Islam.

Islam in Tatarstan has deep roots and is characterized by tolerance and flexibility. These features developed such characteristic traits of the Volga region Muslims mentality as a deep rational thinking, a peaceful and friendly living in a multiethnic society. The Muslim education traditions lost during the Soviet State period and the loss of succession at the knowledge transfer about Islam led to the simplification of canonical Islam and the appearance of its folk forms.

At the end of the last century, Islam returned to public relations through the establishment of Muslim educational institutions network which also occurred at the participation of the Muslim world. This component introduced a number of behavioral stereotypes in the Muslim landscape, at the same time, it did not provide any influence on the formation of Muslim identity in Tatarstan because of their insignificance. The policy of counter action to alien phenomena in Muslim educational space resulted in more stringent requirements for the opening of new schools and the reduction of their number. So, if at the end of the 90s “the system of professional religious institution was overblown in Republic, then in addition to RIU, there were two senior Islamic institutes, 4 higher and 12 secondary Muslim madrasahs (Yakupov, 2005) and in 2002 the Russian Islamic University, 2 higher Kazan madrasahs, 6 secondary madrasahs and 1 Muslim high school 700 students and 80 teachers worked there” (Iskhakov, 2002b).

An impaired continuity in the transfer of knowledge about Islam and the lack of training institutes and Muslim clergy development in Russian regions led to the fact that not own traditions were used as the development models,

but the experience of various Islamic countries was assimilated. So, the Turkish influence on the formation of the Muslim Tatarstan was in the spread of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi teachings (pseudo Sufism) which is contrary to the course chosen by the official clergy of the republic on the revival of Islam. The creation of madrasas by the supporters of S. Nursi, the imposition of an alien ideology to Muslims in the region and “different approaches to the state regulation of the Muslim community” (Mukhametshin, 2003a) are the source of tension in the Muslim community.

The control over the Muslim educational segment and as a consequence the elimination of randomness were reflected in the fact that “during 1998-2002, there was the optimization of madrasahs system, some of them lost the status of professional madrasahs, some schools were converted from institutions to madrasahs. In general, three tier system of education institutions was confirmed is a sufficient one. These are the secondary, higher madrasahs and a Russian Islamic University” (Yakupov, 2002; Mukhametshin, 2008). Currently, there is the need to build the continuity between these levels of education.

The Muslim schools of Russia had to prepare not the representatives of clergy and above all to promote the development of “a new generation of Muslim intellectuals, able to take an active part in the revival and the improvement of Russian society, deformed by Soviet power”.

By overcoming the organizational difficulties of 90s before the system of Islamic education at the present stage, there is the task of educational policy contours development that will determine the development of the Muslim Ummah and the future of Islam in Russia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study of Islamic education in the Russian regions as a public institution of Russian civic identity building and strengthening is based on document analysis. The analysis discourse will allow to identify the potential of Islamic Revival members (Muslim clergy, imams, graduates, Muslim community) and facilitate the successful integration of Muslims in secular society.

The Muslim educational space in Tatarstan passed a long way of its formation and development. Currently, restoring the theological traditions, it is intended to create a competitive intellectual school to increase the layer of educated Muslim intellectuals able to provide to church people the inviolability idea concerning the interfaith peace and unity of the Muslim community.

The main functions of Islamic education are the training of Muslim religious leaders who may provide

reasonable answers to pressing questions, engage in a dialogue on controversial issues; the education of the general public, deprived of the knowledge provision possibility about the history and culture of Islam.

Putin (2013), at the meeting with of Russian Muslims muftis, held in 2013 in Ufa said that “in order to face the challenges of our time successfully it is necessary first of all to ensure the high prestige of the domestic Muslim clergy and the Russian Islamic theological school. Priests must be educated people with high moral values and be able to provide a clear and canonically impeccable assessment to sharp modern challenges and threats”. The initiative, according to the president should be transferred to the Russian clergy and thus, it requires to remove informal leaders from an active work among believers.

As the result of the first madrasah operation, the stratum of young imams emerged, whose training was based on the general (legal) Islamic principles separated from the Tatar religious thought which leads to different interpretations in the field of dogma, fiqh, rituals and ethics. Therefore, there is the need to create a system of Islamic education which reflects the local traditions and the forms of Islam, using the experience of the domestic Islamic studies. The report of the mufti Iskhakov (2002a) at the II Congress of Muslims of Tatarstan Republic in 2002 noted that Muslim education “in the search for a model of Islamic sciences study with the Tatar characteristics”.

Thus, the active process of Islamic education centers creation in the country was gradually structured and acquired a multi-structure. Today, it is represented preliminary mosque courses the link of the secondary vocational education madrasahs Muslim higher education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of documents, discourse analysis, the secondary research of semi-structured interviews with the subjects of Islamic education allowed to reveal a number of problems existing in the way of a workable system creation for Islamic education in Tatarstan.

First of all, the region has to prepare a pleiad of recognized scholars accepted in the Islamic world. Popular educated imams, performing their sermons are gaining steadily the scientific credibility among youth. It is necessary to develop a common view on such controversial issues that are conducted in Tatarstan Muslim community as an acceptable use of innovations “bidgat” (Arab. innovation) in funeral rites: funeral repast on the 3rd, 7th, 40th day, female clergy, visit of holy places such as Bulgar, etc., the problems of taqlid principle (blind adherence to authority), idshtihad (making of an independent judgment on the socio-legal issues of Muslims activity) application are studied.

Secondly, the translated editions were used in the learning process for a long time, there was a need in national religious literature for the traditions of Hanafimazhab and maturid principles of aqidah (worship). There is a positive shift today and the achievements in this area are marked, the development of benefits for Qur'anic studies, Hadith, Islamic creed (Aqeedah) is studied, the basics of the Muslim worship (ibadat), a Muslim family and inheritance law are studied.

Thirdly, the public consciousness of ordinary Muslims, the Muslim clergy and secular intellectuals has different visions of Islam return methods. It is noteworthy, that different carriers of consciousness cooperate in the system of Islamic education. In this context, the classification of religious consciousness neotraditionalism, revivalism (fundamentalism) and reformism proposed by R.M. Mukhametshin seems to be interesting. The own models of Islam that should be developed appeared within these trends.

The adherents of neotraditionalism (Muslim clergy) understand Islam as a set of creeds frozen religious thought and a ritual and "consider the ritual system a priority and promote, it in the first place" (Iskhakov, 2006). The supporters of revivalism call for a return to basics and do not allow the modernization of Islam and its adaptation to new historical conditions.

The representatives of reformism (urban and rural youth, secular intellectuals) propose to move away from dogma and consider religion as a set of moral and ethnic standards.

L.V. Sagitova characterizing the relations within the Republic Muslims says about the problem of "traditional" and "new" Islam called "the shortage of professionally trained personnel among Muslim clergy on the basis of traditional Tatar theology against the background of well-trained personnel from the "young" imams who received a religious education abroad" (Tishkov and Stepanov, 2013).

In this case, the point of view by Mukhametshin (2008) is a model one. This researcher pointed to the need for "flexible and intellectually meaningful model of Islam, combining tolerance and piety".

We believe that, the possibility of Islamic education will help to integrate the carriers of reformism and revivalism in the Muslim community, cultivating the traditional values of Russian Muslim culture.

Fourth, the mechanisms of social support of teachers and graduates in Muslim schools are developed slowly which slows down the creation and increase of the Muslim clergy layer as a subject of social security.

Fifth, the Institute of Islamic clergy was developed initially by the village imams and their spiritual formation occurred in the Soviet times and could not be filled theoretically. At the same time, they were able to preserve and convey the Islamic culture that became the basis for the revival of tolerant Islam at the present stage. Thus, there is a need to adjust the activities of Muslim education system. Here are the key trends in the functioning of Islamic education aimed at maintaining of an inter-religious dialogue and inter-ethnic harmony.

The explaining of a true relationship of Islam to violence will allow to reveal the peaceful morality inherent in the doctrine and to demonstrate the inconsistency of literal interpretation of Islam. This area is implemented within preliminary mosque courses and vocational Muslim schools (madrassas) in the first level system of Muslim religious education in republic.

The development of the domestic divinity is able to work out an intellectual heritage recognized in the East which will raise the academic authority of the Russian clergy. The significant results in this direction are already demonstrated by the highest level of Islamic education the Russian Islamic University.

By providing an affordable and quality Moslem education Muslim clergy will satisfy the need to study the basics of Islam that will help to overcome a religious illiteracy and will develop a new generation of Muslims, strongly linked with the historical roots of their religion, and therefore, responsible citizens with a high legal culture.

The revival of the Tatar religious philosophical heritage, the creation of theory foundations of Islam in the country will contribute to the development of clear doctrinal boundaries, revealing the creative source of moral and ethical attitudes and socio political consciousness of Muslims. At that the theological heritage of the Tatar people is "not considered in the context of contemporary problems, not revealed and not studied thoroughly" (Mukhametshin, 2003b).

A high level of students' knowledge at Muslim educational institutions and ordinary Muslims based on local Islamic traditions will contribute to the preservation of an interfaith dialogue.

The involvement of Muslim religious leaders in social relationships an academic and a creative environment, the development of secular professions will strengthen the cooperation with the representatives of different religions and will create new social relationships and contacts that will strengthen the principles of good relations between neighbours and the harmonization of international relations.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in Russia became one of the main channels of Islam return in the spiritual life of society and the revival of spiritual values. The Muslim education in Tatarstan in the early 90s of the XXth century was experienced the difficulties of organization and content and created a workable social institution of provision and cultivation of knowledge about the history and culture of Islam. Today, the Muslim community has to define and develop theological orientations which will greatly facilitate the development of educational policy framework and will ensure the social effect of educated Muslims number increase.

The upbringing of Muslim youth in Hanafimazhab (Law School), the revival of the religious philosophical thought in the Volga region developed in the late XIXth early XXth century will preserve the continuity of educational traditions.

Muslim education, creating the conditions to fill the knowledge of Islam, develops the spiritual and moral foundations of society fostering conscious and responsible citizens Muslims, contributing to the strengthening of civic identity. The creation of Muslim intellectual layer will contribute to an international dialogue and reduce the tensions in the ethnic and faith area.

Young muslims who received a full religious education are able to counteract an extremist mentality, developing the values of moderate reasonable Islam in Russia and to face the challenges of time within globalization and the era of information technologies.

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