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Islam and political evolutions in Tatarstan

The revival of Islam in Tatarstan: first steps

The role of Islam as one of the traditional confessional communities of Russia is becoming more and more significant in its social and political life. In some regions of Russia, first of all, in the Volga-Ural region, Islam contributed to the forming of public identity and the principles of peaceful coexistence between different confessions and nationalities. And no doubt, it had considerable influence on the political situation of the region. Under the conditions of formation of the new statehood and state ideology, demand for development of the principles of peaceful existence of different nations and confessions, the historical experience of the Volga-Ural region and the Tatars as well as the present religious situation in Tatarstan is of big scientific and practical interest.

The Republic of Tatarstan, one of the main Muslim areas in Russia and the very embodiment of multinational and polyconfessional community, has seen an extraordinary revival since the perestroika in the late 1980s. Revival of Islam in Tatarstan was a part of a more general process of searching for new ideological alternatives and primarily didn't presuppose the revival of Islam itself. Islam was just an important tool of the Tatar national movement that served to reinforce a distinct Tatar identity and demands for greater autonomy or independence. Consequently, it is very important to consider the process of the development of Islam in the framework of state-Islam relations taking under consideration the national peculiarities of the region.

State-religion relations develop according to logics of an experienced stage of the religious revival. Their distinctive feature is formation of new model of mutual relation of the state and religious structures. The activities of national, social and political organizations that were considering the Islamic factor as a crucial component of national identity and a necessary instrument in the struggle for independence led to creation of the first religious institutions in Tatarstan. In 1992 the independent Spiritual Board of Muslims (SBM) was founded. Its creation, on the one hand, was stipulated by the growth of national movements, social and political organizations, and the inevitable decentralization of the control over Muslim communities on the other. The period from 1988 to 1992 was the first stage of recovering Islamic values in the Tatar society, and it can be conditionally called the period of legalization.

The most important and crucial period of further development of Islam in the social and political life of Tatarstan is the period from 1991 to the end of 1990s which includes its institutionalization and structuring. It was during this decade that such main institutes of Islam like Muslim communities, educational

institutions and the Muslim clergy were set up. Besides, it was the period of active political activities of Muslims caused, first of all, by the fact that Muslim intellectuals strived to acquire their own section of the political clout. And, for this reason, attempts were made to create Muslim and Islamic-nationalistic movements and political parties. It all started in 1989 when Tatar Public Center (TPC) was founded that clearly expressed its position towards Islam as a crucial element of spiritual revival. But in the programs of TPC and another authoritative national organization Ittifaq the Islamic component had mere declarative character, and, with its function mainly reduced to preservation of universal values, considered as one of the fundamentals of the national culture and moral health of the nation. However, in the middle of the 1990s, when national movements became unpopular, the situation had changed and they switched their focus from nationalism to Islamism. At the same time, each party had its own view into the role of Islam in the Tatar society. One of the co-chairmen of the Pan-Tatar Public Center R. Safin states that Islam has to be “tatarized” in order not to let the Tatar nation vanish among other Muslim nations. In other words, Islam has to get adjusted to geographical climatic and living conditions of a nation and has to be in constant dialectical development in concordance with achievements of a civilization. The leader of the Ittifaq party, Fauziya Bayramova, speaks of the supremacy of Islam over nation, and rejecting the ideas of jadidism, Sufism and euroislam, calls for a return to the original and universal traditions of Islam as given in the Koran in order to preserve the Tatar nation. Moreover, Bayramova promotes the idea of creating the separate state by the Tatars on the basis of Islam. She considers it the main goal the Tatars must strive for.

Among the new tendencies of the Tatar society in the second half of the 1990s the neo-paganism stands out which became widespread mainly in the city Naberezhniye Chelny. Very close to the ideas of Turkism, the neo-paganism considers tengrism (from the old-Tatar word “tengre” which means God) as its main principle. The followers of this sect regard tengrism not as the religious doctrine of Turkic nations but as the way of life and world-view emerged in ancient times. Rejecting Islam as alien religion, they think it is through the tengrism that Turkic nations have to be consolidated. According to Z. Agliullin, one of its ideologists, the tengrism must become the ideological basis of the revival of the Tatar nation. However, it is unlikely that the tengrism doctrine will be restored as the main national ideology in the social and political life of the Tatars.

The Muslim clergy as the developing stratum

In order to have a deeper view of the situation connected with the revival of Islam in Tatarstan, it is important to determine the role of the Muslim clergy in that process. From about one hundred in 1990 the number of imams and other religious figures has now reached five thousand. And the role of clergy in returning the Islamic values to the Tatar society has increased. The present Tatar clergy can be divided into the following groups:

1. Postgraduate students of the Muslim educational institutions (including the local ones) focused on the religious educational system based on common Islamic principles without taking under consideration the national peculiarities of Islam.

2. Religious figures with higher or vocational secular education who got religious education mainly in local madrasahs or by attending short-term courses in Muslim countries.

3. Representatives of so-called “mass Islam” who traditionally relate to the rural areas. It needs to be noted here, that the main part of countryside imams doesn't even have a basic religious education but there is no substitution for them because young imams don't eager to return to villages after graduation.

It should be noted here, that Islam does not have a strict institutionalization frame, and, for this reason, we can only relatively speak about the institute of Muslim clergy. Mainly, the process of restoration of the institute of Muslim clergy took the form of turning unofficial and untrained countryside mullahs into the officially registered clergy. However, that clergy was emerging as a special social stratum. On the other hand, it still would be too early to speak about the world outlooks and modes of behavior of the clergy as somewhat distinctive and differing from others since it was rather diverse. The difference of views in many fundamental issues among the clergy can be explained by the heterogeneity of its structure, because urban and rural imams, madrasah teachers have different social statuses. Besides, heterogeneity of the clergy is conditioned by its ideological position. The worldviews of younger generation are mainly formed in educational institutions and that gives rise to conflicts between young clerics who usually tend to promote a universalist vision of Islam (which can often lead to its radicalization) and old generation who still stick to traditional Islam. But, in spite of this, today there is no overt contradiction between the young and old generations in Tatarstan. Moreover, there is quite a clear position of the clergy towards the revival of Islam in the society which is primarily focused on retrieving a part of the spiritual heritage that served to the preservation and strengthening of the traditional Tatar Muslim society. On the other hand, for further development the clergy today needs high-qualified specialists in Islam and that considerably depends on the quality of religious education. In this connection Russian Islamic University can be mentioned. Founded in 1998, it became the center for preparation of high qualified-cadres including theologians and ulamas, as the faculty of theology was opened in 2003.

We have to admit, however, that in general, the process of development of the clergy in Tatarstan is still under way. Unlike in the beginning of the of the XX century, today the clergy is not considered as an essential element of the social structure of the Tatar society and has rather uncertain and unstable position. Therefore it has to look for a new ways and forms of strengthening its position in the society. But this process is stipulated by the whole range of factors like existing controversies between the national movements and the clergy, the absence of theoretical basis of the clergy as well as the absence of inner financial and technical resources.

Politicization of Islam in Tatarstan: does it make any sense?

Another important problem which has an influence on development of the clergy is the correlation of Islam and politics. This phenomenon can be explained through the different approaches to the role of politics in Islamic renewal. The present-day Muslim clergy of the region so far is happy with the proposition of “political indifference” towards religion, which makes them quite passive in political arena. That is why today clergy is deprived of its political individuality and as a subject of politics joins other social strata that are kin to it in origin, location, etc.

Nevertheless, there is no unity among the clergy in the matter of the role of politics in Islamic renewal. Thus, Talgat Tadjutdin, a representative of the clergy formed back during the Soviet era, is against political activities of Muslim clergy thinking that “nations cannot be divided, according to religion and politics”. In his opinion, this, first of all, contradicts the main Islamic rules since “people, according to the Koran are divided just into three categories: believers, unbelievers and hypocrites”. Second, he believes that political parties destroy a centuries-old Russia’s tradition of reconciliation and harmony. Contrary to that, “young imams” who joined religious structures when all kinds of perestroika ideas were in the air consider the role of politics in the religious renewal of society. After receiving their official status (normally, becoming a mufti in some region) and, for various reasons yet without due influence on their congregations and support of authorities, they put certain hopes in politics using it as much as they can. V. Sadur explains the need of the new wave of Muslims to participate in politics by the fact that “dependence on secular authorities, often with anti-Islamic sentiments, in the situation when there is no one to complain to, brings forward a tendency to join it”. G. Galiulla, supporting political parties and movements, says that “in a state with non-Muslim form of government where Muslims make up minority, it is only through political movements that the interests and rights of believers can be defended. It is the only way to influence on the decisions made by authorities. N. Ashirov, being one of the heads of the Supreme Coordination Centre (SCC) of Spiritual Boards of Russia, said that “consolidation of any Muslim organizations is possible only if they share common spiritual and ideological principles, based on the Islamic doctrine. Therefore, political activities of Muslims have to be based on the moral and ethical principles of Islam resulted from its common goals, not from national, regional or personal interests”.

Thus, as we can see, political factor is included to the judgments of some Tatar religious figures. However, it should be noted that the Tatars still consider Islam within the bounds of confessional and cultural identity. Consequently, Islam doesn’t play a key role in regulating social relations. Probably that happens because of the absence of effective mechanisms which would incorporate Islam into social and political life through creation of full-fledged Muslim communities. Without having its clear position on many important issues, the Muslim clergy will not be able to contribute to the religious renewal of the modern society. And the first problem it has to deal with is the identification of the role of Muslim Umma

within the secular state. Though, formally, all Muslims believe that the ultimate mission of Islam is the creation of a global Islamic community-state embracing all humanity, Tatar clergy is not unanimous in methods of achieving this mission which results in different approaches to the role of the national state. Thus, official clergy sticks to the idea of a gradual islamization of the Tatar society through its spiritual recovery. It supports collaboration with secular authorities allowing for the combination of Shariyat with the secular legislation. It should be acknowledged that clergy rarely speaks of its attitude on this matter since it would mean acknowledging the secularization of Islam and following the position of “Islamic secularism”. In this connection, the officer of the publishing house “Iman” Jagfar Mubarak concerning the situation in Tatarstan says “the positions of president and mufti are created to preserve the state and the religion, as well as to guarantee the government based on the principles of justice. The president represents political and religious forms of government. But at the same time he mustn’t govern the state and religion alone. The religion is governed by the Fathers of the Church and muftis. As for the president, he must become the guarantor of the peace and to prevent one religion from dominating over the other”. He emphasizes the fact that Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, doesn’t have any ramified clerical institution and separate stratum of clergy. Consequently, it can’t be a rival for a state”. Such point of view can be considered as one of the ways to find a compromise in favor of the secular policy of Tatarstan’s government.

The Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan: a political pro-governmental Muslim structure.

Ambiguity and complexity of the process of the Islamic revival in Tatarstan reflected in the Spiritual Board of Muslim’s activities as well. Yet in 1990 it was decided to by the leaders of the national movement to remove the Spiritual Board of Muslims of European part of Russia and Siberia (DUMES) to Kazan in order to strengthen the role of the city as national and spiritual center of the Tatars. As the mufti of DUMES T. Tajutdin had rejected the idea of removal, the Pan-Tatar Public Centre actually started creating its own Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan, claiming that it would include Tatar Muslims from other regions.

Headed by the mufti Gabdulla-khazrat Galiulla, the SBM of RT primarily was aimed at other tasks rather than emphasizing the formation of confessional policy. Since the national movement along with various public and political movements was trying to use religious factor for its strategic purposes, newly founded spiritual board had to operate, mainly, in the national and political sphere. Thus, D. Iskhakov, one of ideologists of the Tatar national movement in the late 1980s-early 90s, thinks that “though the Spiritual Board of Muslims was an autonomous organization, it was developing as a faction of the national movement”. Indeed, all the way until the mid-1990s, the SBM of RT was more political than religious. Being in the opposition to the authorities, it was very weak both organizationally and structurally. It still did not have control over periodicals and educational institutions; it had neither structures for on-site activities nor permanent sources of

funding; it also had difficulties identifying its political sphere and could hardly expect the understanding among common believers. Besides, the SBM of RT was under the constant pressure of the DUMES which still had influence on the regions.

However, since the mid-1990s, the situation began to change. The official circles were interested in holding the unifying congress and election of a new mufti. Indeed, the SBM of RT, headed by G. Galiulla, with its unreasonable, sometimes extremely oppositional policy undermined political authority of the republic. In the congress of the SBM of RT held in 1998 Gusman-hazrat Iskhakov was elected as a new mufti. The president of Tatarstan M. Shamiev also attended the congress and shared his own view concerning the problem of relationships between the state and the religion: “Lately you can hear such statements like “Why does the government interfere in our religious affairs?” Here we are not talking about the interference or intrusion in the affairs of religious figures or Muslim authorities but about our concerted service to the people. Though the religion is separated from the state, it is not separated from the society”.

G. Iskhakov, supported by the official authorities, began to form the new policy of the Spiritual Board taking into account the present situation. And that was the first stage of the period of structuralization (1998-2002) which is closely related to the activities of the SBM of RT and its forming and implementing confessional policy. The basic tendencies of the given period are the strengthening of interconfessional stability and forming of Muslim institutes that considerably facilitates the interaction between the state authorities and the Muslim clergy as well as streamlines the work within the Muslim religious organizations which are included in structure of the SBM of RT. The Spiritual Board, naturally, has been trying to define the basic principles of building its relations with the state. Those principles included the principle of loyalty and the principle of separation of state and religion. But this is still not enough to take an active political stand and formulate political goals and intentions. Indeed, these principles would fail to form the religious policy, but they are convenient and efficient enough for the operative management of religious relations. The principle of loyalty, if necessary, enables spiritual boards and their affiliates to approach the authorities pointing to the fact that believers have full rights as citizens, and, like all others, need the support of the state. They would also argue that if a problem is not solved at the level of the religious community, sooner or later, it will spread throughout the entire society penetrating into various spheres of life. As for the principle of the separation of state and religion, it is often used to keep religious organizations from interference by the state.

Talking about political interactions of Islam and the state, mufti G. Iskhakov noted that the main problem is not so much in strengthening secular tendencies in society but that “today, we are still unprepared to involve clergymen in the government. We should also remember that Tatarstan is a multinational state. Tatar Muslims make up 51 or 52% of the population, and the rest is taken by others. If we say that there should be a state religion, it may happen that those others could be better prepared to realize this idea. I am afraid that they can take over us, and

that may end up in dissension”. The Mufti rather clearly voiced the undesirability of a typical situation in Muslim countries: the more vigorously attempts a predominant ethnic group to employ its religion as a means of state integration, the stronger there is a reaction by ethnic groups of other religions often resulting in their campaigns targeted for autonomy or separatism.

The management of the SBM of RT, headed by G. Iskhakov realized the importance of solving the organizational problems as well. The republican law “On freedom of conscience and religious organizations” adopted in 1999 had a considerable influence on the system of regulations of the state-Islamic relations. According to the law, all Muslim organizations of the Republic of Tatarstan are represented and governed by the one centralized religious organization the SBM of RT. In fact, this law was aimed at the regulation of religious relations between two subjects of confessional policy – the state and the SBM of RT.

Another problem the SBM of RT had to deal with was the system of Muslim education. It is known, that educational system in Tatarstan was built with the financial and staff assistance of international Muslim charitable foundations that were completely controlling this sphere in the early 1990s. The situation has seemingly changed since the late-1990s. The Federal authorities started to pay closer attention to numerous international Muslim charitable foundations that used to fund spiritual boards, publishing activities and had their own schools. That put the whole system of religious education under the serious threat. In this connection, the SBM of RT officially appealed to the president of Tatarstan asking for financial support. Besides, the SBM of RT was concerned not only with financial problems but with the problem of penetrating alien and destructive ideas to the society as well. That is why it was necessary to take under control the process of increase of educational institutions which not only failed to prepare qualified specialists but also caused a lot of financial, legal and even ideological problems. And the madrasahs which were remote from Kazan became the most convenient places for these alien ideas to be spread. In this situation the SBM of RT decided to consolidate a number of madrasahs in order to increase the quality of their education. Thus, in 2000 the number of educational institutions decreased to 8 including Russian Islamic University.

Radicalization of Islam in Tatarstan: is it a real threat?

One of the most important and urgent problems the revival of Islam in Tatarstan faced was the process of radicalization of Islam. It was Wahhabism that in the beginning of the 1990-s first penetrated to the republic’s territory. The favorable conditions (little knowledge of Islam among the population, absence of the republic’s own financial resources to develop Islamic education and to build mosques and madrasahs) allowed Wahhabist doctrines become widespread among both the common believers and the religious authorities. In 1999 madrasah “Yolduz” in the city of Naberezhniye Chelny became notoriously famous for spreading Wahhabit activities when one of its postgraduate students proved to be involved in the organization of terrorist act in Moscow. Another incident related to

the same madrasah happened the same year in December when several branches of gas main near Kukmor were blew up by the group of students that madrasah. Along with Naberezhniye Chelny, the Wahhabi groups were also revealed in such cities like Almetiyevsk, Nizhnekamsk and Kukmor. Today the network of Wahhabits still exists in Tatarstan. It includes both who support the wahhabit ideas not being involved in any extremist activities and organized groups of Wahhabits. And there are different approaches in the society concerning Wahhabits. Some consider them as a traditional religious movement and don't see any danger in their activities. But some consider them as an extremist sect that has to be eradicated.

There are some other movements which became widespread in Tatarstan. In this connection the unofficial Turkish movement called "nursisty" (the official name of the sect is "Nurjilar") is worth mentioning. The followers of the "nursisty" propagandized the ideas of the Turkish theologian and philosopher Said Nursy or Badiuzzaman, as they called him. The peculiarity of this movement was that, being apolitical, it focused on public activities especially on secondary educational institutions. Thus, since the mid 1990-es, seven Tatar-Turkish lycees have been established in Tatarstan. Besides, the "nursisty" engaged in wide publishing activities which also contributed to the promotion of their doctrine. The books of Said Nursy could easily be found in many mosques of the republic.

The "nursisty" movement has become of prime importance in Tatarstan, when few years ago the Security Services of the republic started pursuing the readers of the books of Said Nursy. They were accused of following the extremist sect based on the ideas of the books of Said Nursy which considered as containing the calls to arousing interethnic and interconfessional hostility. At the same time the books of Said Nursy were declared as containing the extremist ideas by one of the courts of Moscow. However, in spite of this, the nursisty movement is considered as moderate by politicians and religious figures in Tatarstan. The special analysis has been made on the books of Said Nursy and as a result no extremist ideas have been found in them. According to Rafik Mukhametshin, doctor of political sciences, the "nursisty" is a movement which has nothing to do with extremism. The main idea promoted in the books of Said Nursy is spiritual perfection and the ways to achieve it. R. Mukhametshin thinks that it was probably because of the mythic threat of Panturkizm that the "nursisty" began to be closely monitored by the security services.

The Tatar-Turkish lycees are also proved to be involved in the extremist activities. Recently, they have been officially accused of spreading extremist ideas. However, the lycees' representatives rejected the fact of being involved in any extremist activities. It's worthy to note that the Tatar-Turkish lycees are considered as one of the best secondary educational institutions in Tatarstan.

Along with radical movements, there are some unofficial Islamic sects in Tatarstan which have local roots. One of them is the sect called "Fayzrahmanisty" which was founded and headed by Faizrahman Sattarov (also known as Nasrullah babai). Sattarov was among those few people who got theological education in Bukhara. He worked as imam in the big cities of the Soviet Union and then filled the post of qadi in DUMES. The doctrine of faizrahmanisty comprises the ideas

borrowed from other Islamic sects, although structurally it is modeled on the Sufi order. It rejects all Sunni mazhabs (especially the Hanafite one) and promotes the main principle "to live according to the Koran only". Recently the apocalyptic motives have appeared in his statements. It's known that F. Sattarov is in overt opposition to the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Tatarstan while the latter considers him as mentally ill. As for the relations with the state, the Fayzrahmanists are loyal to it insisting that the state has to be secular, not religious. Nowadays Fayzrahmanists are "officially" located in the territory of the small mosque in Torfyanaya street near Kazan. According to some specialists, the communities of this sect also operate in such cities like Naberezhniy Chelny, Leninogorsk and Almetiyevsk.

However, in spite of its complexity, the situation in Tatarstan remains rather stable. The radicalism has more theoretical than practical character. Therefore, the number of Islamic radicals is quite low which proves that the interethnic and interconfessional stability are highly appreciated by both the authorities and civilians of Tatarstan.

Modernization of Islam in Tatarstan: what kind of Islam does the Tatar society need?

The revival of Islam in Tatarstan is a complex process. No doubt, that during that process such issues like modernizing the Islamic society and reforming Islam itself as well as the return to the traditional religious values become of prime importance. In this connection, such terms like "Euroislam" and "Tatar Islam" became widespread among the Tatar intellectuals and clergy.

One of the key points regarding the modernization of Islam is whether Islam should remain the moral foundation of a developing modern society. However, it does not mean the approval of everything which is done in the name of modernization. Islam should remain a restraining force, while the Muslim society should build its life after commandments of Allah guided by its own reason and accepting whatever befits modernity, including scientific accomplishments of the West. One of the intellectual search forms in this area is "Euroislam" that has received a rather widespread publicity in media over the last decade. This concept has caused hot debates with its followers and opponents. Lots of Muslims reject this concept from the very beginning believing that it contradicts the main provisions of "true Islam" though many of them understand the truth of Islam differently as well.

In Russia "Euroislam" has been conceptually developed by Raphael Khakimov, a political adviser to President Shaimiev. The main task formulated in the book by Khakimov "Where is our Mecca?" is the reinterpretation of the holy texts in order to develop the understanding of Islam compatible with most present-day social and political values. The key instrument in achieving this goal is *ijtihad* that "provides for considering the evolution of a society suggesting the present-day interpretation of Islamic norms and proceeding from the spirit of the Koran". R. Khakimov assumes that Muslims have to make a decision whether they reject

Western political and other values as such simply because they are of the Western origin. Naturally, it is not a question of “turning away from the East and currying favors with the West. This is a question of borrowing anything of value available in the world... The West cannot be transported to the East. They have different soils. The East will not take liberalism in its pure form. The East should reflect it through its own traditions... But the East and the West are brought together by ijtehad which is nothing else but the beginning of liberal thinking”. Can we agree with R.Khakimov in that theologians are afraid of Islam modernization and rationalism that, allegedly, exclude faith? Theologians are, indeed, afraid of Islam modernization, but they admit a need to modernize the Muslim society and oppose Westernization. R.Khakimov sees a way out of this situation in the Muslim world in a need of prospective reproduction by the Muslim world of the evolution made by religion in the Western world where every individual independently chooses a system of belief that suits him most. He stresses the need to act rationally accepting ideas suggested by reason and suggests renewing religious ideas in which he pictures the solution of problems for the post-modernist person. The Islamic society will enter the way of progress again if it admits these ideas. Defining the “true” Islam, R.Khakimov says that this is the faith in the transcendent God who “manifests Himself in the Universe, gets embodied in earthly life, and naturally, in the human being”, as well as the faith in the human mind since Islam is a religion of the free man, this is the way to freedom. For him - the faith is a free choice of the individual made without violation of his mind. God gave the full freedom to the man in this respect since the Prophet said: “All the world has been made a praying place”. Anyone can find a place to communicate with the Lord: in the corner of his house, at office or even working at computer or doing research. Anyone is free to determine his own attitude to the Lord... According to the Koran, the faithful man cannot be a slave of Allah because he has a freedom of choice, he has made this choice himself, and he conscientiously worships and serves this course confessing Islamic commandments.

Presenting a rather skeptical overall situation in the Muslim world, R.Khakomov describes an optimistic image of Islam in the Tatar society where Muslims, thanks to Euroislam, are capable of reconsidering the present-day world and finding their place in it.

Are Islam and democracy compatible? Can Islam become an engine for the modernization of society? R.Khakimov has no doubts about that. But aren't we taking a risky and slippery way of driving Islam into the limits of individual perception? Aren't we destroying it as a system and attitude for the world outlook with its established principles if we recognize only the rational in Islam declaring that “Islam and progress are synonyms? Euroislam does not give a clear answer to that.

However, the “Euroislam” conception, despite promoting the positive ideas of progress and trying to adjust Islam to the modern realities, has been heavily criticized by the official religious authorities. Some of the religious figures even characterized the ideas of R. Khakimov as destructive for the principles of Islam.

Quite different approach to the problem of Islamic revival in the modern Tatar society is presented by Valiulla Yakupov, former Deputy Mufti of Tatarstan Spiritual Board. In his works V.Yakupov has devoted several publications to revealing eternal values of “Tatar” Islam traditions and criticism of religious reformers that aim only at adjusting and simplifying ideas of the Western culture. Criticizing reformers of Islam, V.Yakupov pays his attention to the fact that “problem is not in Tatar Islam. The choice of our ancestors was, undoubtedly, true and correct. The problem is in the attitude towards our ancestors. In order to understand traditions and define ways of their revival, V.Yakupov believes it is important to overcome Europe-centrism in understanding reality, forming respect to one’s own people and their achievements. This, in turn, presupposes developing a new methodological approach in estimating Islam values. Islam has already had a cult of science and learning, it has never competed with science, and, of course, it was far from fighting science as Christianity did. Islam is a faith oriented at knowledge and science. Islam does not need to bring its theology in conformity with scientific achievements. For this reason, considering all phenomena of Muslim life in artificial terms of Islam reform and conservation, djadidism and cadimism is unproductive. The return to its origin, actually, is neither a reform nor conservation, neither jadidism nor cadimism. Talking about the importance of traditional (mazkhab) Islam, V. Yakupov states that it has not undergone any changes and has been tested by time. And the Tatars who have preserved khanafit traditions in the purest form without any changes (reforms) managed to live the pure prophetic Islam undistorted by later heresies up to this day. V.Yakupov states that mazkhab Islam has also contributed to preserving certain ethnic peculiarities of Tatars taking into account some local traditions and including them in Sharia sources. V.Yakupov believes that one of the fundamental issues of Islam revival is the preservation of the mazkhab systems that reflects the very critical spirit of Islam and its plurality. In the classical Islam, mazkhab performs conservative functions. V.Yakupov suggests that it is of great importance since mazkhab is a barrier to hold off unauthorized (unjustified) novelties from Islam, though, on the whole, Islam is oriented at innovations.

It is no wonder that V.Yakupov pays a special attention to the issue of mazkhab. He considers the preservation of traditional mazkhab as a factor contributing to solving numerous problems that delay the full return of Islam to the Tatar society. This would eradicate roots of spreading Wahhabism and hold off radical reforms.

Thus, as we can see, there are different approaches to the problem of modernization of Islam. It’s very important and urgent problem, which is closely reacted to the problem of unity and stability of the Tatar Muslim community.

Conclusion

Today Islam in Tatarstan is undergoing a very important stage of its revival. Its role in the public, political and spiritual life of the Tatar society is becoming more and more considerable. It has formed up organizationally and structurally, yet

it has not decided on its idea orientations and main principles of its existence. At the same time, we have to admit that the development of the system of religious education, the process of forming of clergy into the separate stratum gives us hope to be quite optimistic about the future.

Another important problem which the Tatar Society has faced is the problem of modernization of Islam. For many centuries, Tatar Muslims have been living in the multiethnic and multi-religious environment, and, because of that, Islam for them is a flexible and tolerant system enabling them to survive in any situation. That's why today, when the process of the return of Islamic values to the social, political and spiritual life in the region is under way, it is very important to preserve and promote the national peculiarity of Islam, especially among the young generation. That means that Islam in Tatarstan, being in compliance with the principles of taqlid, must follow khanafit mazkhab and deny the idea of "opening the ijihad" which can lead to the destruction of the main Islamic principles.

Bearing in mind the attempts to destabilize the political situation in the republic, Tatarstan's authorities have to pay more attention to the stability in the region.

Summing up, we can say that there is a lot of work to be done and that work will require more serious, thoughtful and intellectual efforts by all members of the society.

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