RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN ISLAM: THE CASE OF TATARSTAN

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Abstract. Traditionally, social authority in Islam has been vested with the Ulema, the authoritative scholars of the sacred texts. Since Russia does not have a central unified Muslim Spiritual Board, the Ulema may play an important role by insuring an effective interoperability of Islamic law with the laws of the secular state. Because the authority of the Ulema in Russia has been undermined by historical processes such as the official policy of atheism during the Soviet era, current debates focus on whether the recent Islamic revival produced a new generation of Islamic scholars capable of issuing authoritative opinions (fetwas). If so, which Islamic leaders can resume the position of religious authority and what criteria should be applied to their selection? This article uses sociological survey data based on Tatarstan to present some of the viewpoints and opinions that are part of the debate.

Keywords: Islam, Ulema, Imams, criteria of religious authority, Ulema councils.

Introduction. The institute of Ulema is considered to be one of the religious institutes, traditionally providing the social authority in Islam, aware of sacred texts and being able to interpret them properly. Ulama, Ulema, Alima (pl. from “alim” – being aware, “knowledgeable”) – is a collective name for the connoisseurs of theology by the historic-religious standards and ethic-juridical rules of Islam, theorist as well as practitioners in the area of traditional forms of education, jurisdiction basing on the standards of Shariah and rites implementing (Adamec, 2009; Newby, 2004).

Their importance in Muslim society life of different level is so huge, that this phenomenon is regarded by many authors as the civilized peculiarity and one of the most vital contribution of Islam to the world culture. From the very beginning “…hermeneutics – the ability to imagine theological knowledge and the ability to use it are becoming prioritized in the Muslim society” (Nurulla-Hodjaeva, 2012).

Alongside modern social, political and cultural reformations, which basically all Muslim people are facing, including the ones living in Russia and Eurasia in general, this given circumstance is claimed to be really important: “Integration of new ideas into Muslim consciousness depends on the possibilities of Islam ideologists to bring these innovations according to Muslim traditions and idols. No new ideas or models can be perceived by Muslim consciousness if not serious Islamic interpretation” (Muskhadjiev, 2011).

Moreover it is asserted that the social authority of religious scientists suffered dramatically in the times of colonialism, when their activity was limited. “The root of the problem, which Muslim people faced while losing the authority of religious scientists and priests and due to the absence of religious agreement in the Islamic world is a very essential moment in the history” (Khatam, 2016; Zaman, 2007).

This is absolutely just for Russia due to its atheistic past. In the times of active fight of the soviet state with religion in the end of the 1920-1930s hundreds and thousands of Ulemahs and imams were dispossessed, exiled, put into the concentration camps or shot down. “Muslim priesthood have lost the most educated and active part of its religious figures” (Minullin, 2011).

Meanwhile there is a variety of theoretical and practical problems and the existence of Russian Ummah in today’s life depends on their solution as well as effective interaction of the Muslim jurisdiction with the laws of the civic state. “Islam education, Shariah, understanding of Shariah can be modernized – a-p Hick. They have to be adjusted to definite time. Today in modern conditions I suppose that some Shariah rules should be made more influential, more intentional and more appropriate for the development of the modern world.” (Islam scientist, PHD, Tatar, 32, practicing Muslim)

Solving complicated theological issues requires the efforts of competitive bodies, but the legitimacy of their decisions should be proved by social acts (fatwas), proved by the authority of Ulema editing them, for instance the most complicated, conceptual and tangled problem is estimated to be the one of the legitimacy of Islamic community existence located far from the actual Islamic world (Dar al Islam) in the non-Islamic country. “Solving of this issue requires conceptual innovations in Islam, and this is impossible without using ijtihad. However the issue of the legitimacy of the last is questionable in Islamic world. Besides, the fact that the prevailing direction of Islam is Sunnism in Russia, which relates to reviving of ijtihad generally negatively, alongside with the fact that among Russian Muslims scientists-legists having proper theological qualification of Mujahid and recognition in Islamic world for implementing this practice are absent” (Gibadullin, 2012).

Another essential issue of the modern society closely connected with the first one is the problem of religious extremism. The solution of it is also possible with attendance of authoritative theologians. “Extremism is not only the problem of states but also the problem of Muslim Ummah and its religious leaders. There aren’t people able to convey all values of Islam to the folk correctly. Probably these extremists who reach their targets through Islam have more people being able to manipulate the consciousness of the mass, using their illiteracy”. (Islamic researcher, a woman, Tatar, 27, university degree). “Well-educated, knowledgeable Muslim will never go to streets killing people, never. So,
this issue can be solved with education, wisdom and literacy only. This will not happen unless there are special institutions and knowledgeable scientists who are authoritative.” (Imam, Tatar, 50, religious and civic university degree). “Actually we have thought that radical Islam can be extinguished, if we invite authoritative scientists from let’s say Egyptian Al-Azhar. They will have a detailed investigation of all these radical stuff, based on all evidence... it can surely help... a lot can be saved ... it should be presented for their authorities. Because they follow their authorities”. (Muezzin, Tatar, 28, college diploma).

There is an opinion among experts that the intellectual potential of Russian Ummah isn’t high enough to solve complicated theoretical and practical tasks. “I read mostly foreign Arabic countries books, because they involve greater knowledge”. (A man, a student of a civic university, 23, practicing Muslim). “There aren’t specialists able to interpret the core of Islam. Islam can not be understood in 2-3-5 years. It took 30-40 years to be taught by Sheikhs. One should learn the whole life to explain something later to people. Today the knowledge which can be obtained in midrass is shallow” (Imam, Tatar, 30, religious university degree).

But there is still an opposing opinion, according to which we “already have the number of Ulemas, whose theoretical and practical experience could be used to implement juridical acts-fatwas” (Gibadullin, 2012). But who exactly can claim this post and which objective criteria can help to specify genuine theologians?

Materials and Methods

There is a social research held among the mosque officers of the Volga region by The Center for Islamic Studies (Tatarstan Academy of Sciences) with the assistance of Russian Islam University and Kazan Federal University1. 750 Imams form Tatarstan and the Volga region who have taken a fortnight course in the Centre of religious institutions and the lectures of universities of the Russian Islam University qualification increasing have been interviewed in 2011-2016. Among various questions there were the ones like:

1) What criteria is essential for the religious leader having social authority from Ulema to stand out?
2) Are there any conditions in Tatarstan (Russia) for the formation of Muslim leaders?
3) Would you please point out 5 most authoritative Muslim figures of the modern world?

Results and Discussions

It should be emphasized that the issue about criteria the theological leader having social authority must stand out raised most difficulties. This issue was answered by 54% of interviewed imams, the rest didn’t want to or couldn’t answer. This fact proves idea of the issue to be complicated or ambiguous. Respondents having answered the question about the necessary qualities for the theological leader emphasize the presence of fundamental religious knowledge (about half), as well as the faith (iman), piety, eloquence and leader qualities. Ulemah from their point of view should the an example of the proper Muslim, active and being able to make his dreams come true. Despite so called “professional” characteristics, personal features are also considered to be vital (about 60%). There is a wide range of personal features presented including more than 30 points. The list is crowned by morality, patience, honesty, decency, kindness, communicativeness, spirituality, wisdom. The issue of conditions to form the religious leaders in Tatarstan (Russia) also caused a numbered difficulties in respondents; only 64.4% could answer it for sure. 47.3% consider these conditions as properly existing, 15.1% assume them partially existing and 2 % don’t agree that they exist; 35.6% of respondents were hesitating to answer or didn’t answer at all.

The polls carried out showed that among the most authoritative Muslim officials there are mainly local and regional leaders (representing Tatarstan and other regions of the Volga region), religious leaders of Russia are rarely met while the foreign ones are almost absent. Among the latest mentioned ones there is only an Egyptian theologian Jusyf Cardavy and Imam of Finland Muslim community Abdraholesman Kaya. This fact can be regarded as the evidence of the Russian common imams’ low level of involvement in the intellectual life of the world Ummah, which differs them from their predecessors of the pre-revolution years. They mostly take interest in the problems of Russian muslims and follow Russian religious authorities firstly. Among them there is an Islamic public officer, the chairman of the Russian Islam committee Geidar Dzjal, the chairman of the Central religious office of the Muslims, the chief mufti of the Russian Federation Talgat Tadjuddin, the chairman of the Russian federation mutifs council Ravil Gainutdin, the head of Russian association Islamic agreement Ulema council, Yamal-Nenets autonomous district mufti Farit Salman, Co-chairman of the Russian Federation mutifs council, mutif of Saratov region Mukadas Bibarsov, mufti of the Moscow Muslims Religious Office and the chairman of Chuvashia republic Religious office Albrr Krganov, the chief imam of Moscow cathedral mosque Shamil Alyautdinov, the chairman of Samara Muslim Regional Religious office Vagiz Yarullin and others. Many of them also work as theologians and Parsons, they are the authors of the books in Islam theology and Islam studies, bloggers and many are considered to be quite influential Russian religious officials. The only woman in this list is Valeria Porokhova – a well-known author of Koran semantic translation into the Russian language.

Since the vast majority of imams who have been taking the course (about 80%) are living and working in Tatarstan, Tatar leaders are broadly presented in the research. There are about three dozens of names in the list, which includes the names of mufifs of Tatarstan republic (Gusman Ishkhakov, Ildus Faizov, Kamil Samigullin), their assistants (Abdulla Adygamov, Rustam Batrov, Rustam Khairullin, Rafik Mukhametshin). There are some past and present religious judges who are often mentioned with the Tatartan chief religious judge Djalil Fazilev, imam-mukhatsibs, the heads and the teachers of Muslim institutions, Muslim newspaper and magazines editors, the most popular imam-hatysbs, respected

1 More about the study [11].

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among their colleagues. Part of them was in the cradle of Islam renaissance in the republic, for instance Gulmulla Khaliullin, who is admittedly reckoned as the most authoritative and stirring imams of Tatarstan, who has opened “Medina” mosque in Kazan, Djalil Fazliev the manager of first regional mukhtasibats in Tatarstan or Gusman Iskhakov – the first rector of the Russian Islam University and others. The list has quite young people, including the youngest mufti in Tatarstan history Kamil Samigullin. Potential scientists often combine active social life with teaching in civic and religious universities, meanwhile they do scientific work, including Islamic theology. Djalil Fazliev, Ramil Junusov, Makhmud Sharafutfedin, and others are the authors of well-known religious books and popular parsons as well. There are several Islamic scholars, including those who have degrees, and the most titled among them is Rafik Mukhametshin – a PHD in Politics, professor and the associate member of Tatarstan republic Science Academy, the rector of Russian Islam University, mufti assistant.

Among more than 90 people chosen as authoritative by our respondents, 12 have been or are still the members of Religious Office of Mufti Ulema council. Religious Office of Mufti Ulema council is a deliberative body, founded in 1994 aimed at solving scientific-religious issues. Basic functions of Religious Office of Mufti Ulema council are connected with the preparation of theological acts (fatwas), explanation of traditional status of Muslim religion, investigation of basic preaching and the material for preparing for Religious Office of Mufti imam-hatsby. The same institutions exist in other Muslim organizations of Russia and more other countries (Muzakhakilov, 2014). Their appearing is connected with an attempt to resurrect traditional for Islam deliberative forms of solving actual issues for Umma, such as Shura – the council if the most authoritative and knowledgeable Muslim officers, scientists and theologians. The issue of building all-Russian deliberative body has been discussed for years now (Garajev, 2016). However if North Caucasian Ulema councils are considered to be rather influential in their regions, then Tatarstan council hasn’t become authoritative enough. One group of experts reckon that the whole system of Religious Office of Muftis isn’t centralized enough. “Mechanism of solutions executing is not actually established… Its status seems to be a bit suspended” (Garajev, 2016). On the other had there are direct and non-direct evidence of the fact that the authority of official religious figures isn’t ultimate. An absolutely controversial point of view was presented in the interviews not once. “There, somewhere above us there are conferences and meetings held, but we are living here far from them facing our problems” - say people. This is what happens: “the higher the post is taken by the religious figure-the further he is from people”. (Imam, a lecturer in the religious institution, Tatar, 40, 2 degrees). “…mufti has to be an authoritative scientist, not only somebody to be proud of but an icon for Muslims. One can tell about him: “I rely on him and I would like to get an answer from him. But it’s not like that.” (Imam, Tatar, 50, religious and civic degree). The position of almost half of respondents appears to be quite ambiguous, those who hesitated to answer the questions in the poll or those who refused to do it. Another reason which complicates formation of genuine religious elite by the Russian Muslims is an extra care coming from the side of official state, it’s the opinion of some of the experts. Admitting the necessity of collaboration between the religious body and the state to solve a lot of issues urgent for all Russian society, they still foresee the consequences unwanted for the both parts. “If it goes like that, then religion will shelter only “half-alive” imam-clerks. Connection with the people will be lost, and influencing the mass will become even harder. The youth will go underground and the will be pursued, which will definitely cause one more source of tension”. (Imam, a lecturer in religious institute, Tatar, 40, 2 degrees).

Conclusion. Thus we can make the following conclusion on this step of your research. There is a whole bunch of religious problems occurring in the context of modern social-political and cultural reality, solutions of which can influence full-fledged existence of Russia Ummah, interaction of the Muslim law with the law of the civic state in particular. Resurrection of Ulems – authoritative priests, aware of the sacred texts, being able to interpret them properly and carry out juridical acts-fatwas, legitimate for Ummah and appropriate for the Russian society in general – traditional for Islamic institutions can be one of the ways to solve burning issues. Nowadays there are favorable conditions in Russia (Tatarstan in particular) alongside with the factors holding this process. These include not very high intellectual power of Russian Muslim Ummah in general, driven by the atheistic past of the country, as well as lack of balance in state-religious relations nowadays.

References

A STUDY OF PERSONALITY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL EMERGENCY CLIENTS IN YAZD IN 2017

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Abstract. In this research, we have investigated the personality profile of the social emergency clients of Yazd in 2017 and their demographic characteristics. This study is a descriptive cross-sectional study in which, via using a simple random sampling method, among the social emergency clients in 2017, demographic variables and personality traits were analyzed using MMPI2 test form 71 (N = 65). Social emergency clients had the highest scores in hypochondriasis (67.79 ± 9.29) and hysteria (67.68 ± 8.31). 23.07% of clients have shown simultaneously this disorder in two hypochondria and schizophrenia, which are the most common abnormal combination scale in social emergency clients. Also, 33.8% of people had suicidal attempts once. In addition, Yazd social emergency clients live in populated families which are far more crowded than the general Yazd households (mean = 5.23 ± 1.90 and P-value = 0.001).

Undoubtedly, more accurate knowledge of the demographic and personality traits of social emergency clients for experts who are working in these centers is very important and can be the most crucial step in providing these people with optimal services.

Keywords: Social Emergency, Personality Profile, Yazd.

Introduction. The study of mental health status in the community and the provision of mental health services to vulnerable social groups are among the concerns of the social sciences and psychology scholars and yet the issues of the injured and socially vulnerable communities and their psychological problems are one of the most challenging areas of research. On the other hand, social emergency centers are among the specialized centers affiliated to the state welfare Organization which began working in 1999 to intervene in individual, family and social crises. Studying and identifying social, judicial and crime prevention, providing permanent counseling services to socially injured people, preventing their diversion, specialist intervention aimed at reducing crime and preventing escalation of the crisis and social damages, and reducing harm to the vulnerable communities, identifying defusing crises centers, specialized actions in defusing crisis, and preventing unauthorized referral to the judiciary and prison system are among the most important tasks of these centers. In these centers, a team of psychologists, social workers, doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, receptionists and head of the center offers their services to people. People such as suicide attempters, sexual perversion, abused women and girls, elder abuse, running away from home, child abuse, disability and spouse abuse constitute the target group for crisis intervention in social emergency centers.

However, epidemiological studies have indicated that deviations from community norms such as collapsed families and victims of domestic violence are associated with a wide range of childhood problems, such as low self-esteem, increased risk of child abuse, increased incidence of divorce in adulthood, and increased incidence of mental disorders in adulthood are in danger of psychological disorders incidence (Zahir al-Din and Khodaifar, 2003). However, limited studies have been conducted on the prevalence of mental disorders and character type among socially-injured families and victims of domestic violence; in studying the causes of social harm, social and economic dimensions and less attention to the role of psychological causes, including the personality of people. So the need for this study is being felt.

It seems that the root of many social problems and social harms that are the cause of referring people to social emergency centers is directly or indirectly related to human personality. According to Allport (1937), the personality is a dynamic organization of the individual’s psychosomatic systems that determine his particular behaviors and thoughts. Personality can be considered as distinct patterns of thinking, excitement and behavior that interact with individual