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ISLAM IN UZBEKISTAN: THE HISTORY AND MODERNITY

ЎЗБЕКИСТОНДА ИСЛОМ: ТАРИХ ВА ҲОЗИРГИ ЗАМОН

ИСЛАМ В УЗБЕКИСТАНЕ: ИСТОРИЯ И СОВРЕМЕННОСТЬ

Key words: Islam, Sufism, Mavarannahr, Naqshbandiya, tariqa, hajj, umrah, calandar, hanafizm. Hanbalism, Moturidia, pre-Islamic beliefs, Zoroastrianism.

Калит сўзлар: ислом, сўфийлик, Мовароуннахр, Нақшбандия, тариқат, Ҳаж, Умра, қаландар, ханафийлик, мотуридия, исломдан аввалги эътиқодлар, зардуштийлик.

Ключевые слова: ислам, суфизм, Мавераннахр, Нақшбандийа, тариқат, ҳаджж, умра, қаландар, ханафизм, ханбализм, матуридийа, доисламские верования, зороастризм.

The region, where the Republic of Uzbekistan was included, was called differently in different historical epochs: as Sogdiana, Transoxania, Turan, Mavarannahr, Turkestan and finally, Central Asia.

Central Asia was the crossroads of trade routes from the long time, as well as a unique place for symbiosis of various religious teachings and beliefs, like Zoroastrianism, Shamanism, Manichaeism, Judaism, Christianity and Tengrism. The arrival of Islam in the region marked a new stage in the development of the religious and political situation in Mavarannahr.

After the Islamization of the region during the VII and XII centuries, Mavarannahr became one of the centers of Islamic civilization, which made a significant contribution to the development of Muslim culture and Islamic sciences. In the region there was a peculiar local form of existence of Islam and culture. Synthesis of cultures and religions gave the Muslim world a plea of brilliant theologians, *faqih*s and *hadis scholars* like Imam al-Bukhari, Imam al-Maturidi, Imam at-Termezi and many others.

The region undergoes strong Islamization with the beginning of the Arab conquest from 643 to 644 A.C. The process of Islamization was very difficult among the population of region. The matter was aggravated by the fact that the population did not want to accept a new religion and continued to pray to their gods and practice their religions. The Arabs began systematized conquest and Islamization of the region only under the

governor of Khorasan Kuteiba ibn Muslim (704-715). Famous historian at-Tabari described in his book "Histories of Prophets and Kings" about the political military processes of those period and a number of booty and slaves who carried away by the Arabs.

Several centuries passed before the final Islamization of the peoples of Central Asia. In this connection, at-Tabari¹ wrote that the Khorezmians, or the inhabitants of the mountain regions of Mavarannahr remainers "*mushriks*", it means *Pagans*, even under the Samanids in IX and X centuries... And another historian al-Macdisi wrote that half of the inhabitants of Bukhara remained as Zoroastrian seven in XI-th century. Also another historian Ibn al-Asir² confirmed it in his book "al-Kamil fit-Tarih" ("Comprehensive History").

Some cities and fields of Mavarannahr resisted strongly against Islamization and Arabs. According to Narshakhi's³ book "The History of Bukhara" Bukhara's residents were converted to Islam three times, but each time they retreated and returned to their beliefs. For the fourth time, Kuteyba ibn-Muslim ordered the inhabitants of Bukhara to give half of their homes to the Arabs so that they mingled with the local population and learned about their life.

Islamization of the Mavarannahr took place in two stages. The first stage was a rigid planting of the Muslim religion, because the general population did not want to adopt a new religion and continued to pray to their gods and practice their religions. Ibn al-Asir in his works mentioned that only Kutayba ibn Muslim hijacked about 100 thousand slaves from Central Asia. The cruelty of the Arab conquerors towards the local population was so strong that they fled to the Fergana Valley and asked for protection.

During this stage of Islamization, the Arabs also used the method of economic incentives, according to it people who did not accept Islam had to pay a separate poll tax (*jizya*). Narshahi reports that in 716 A.C. Kutayba Ibn Muslim built a mosque in Bukhara and ordered its residents to gather in it every Friday. The one who attended the Friday prayer received two dirhams.

Many people accepted Islam in order not to pay the Arabs the *jizya* or pursue other selfish goals.

¹ Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839- 923) – Islamic historian and theologian, he studied in Persia, wrote in Arabic. The author of the "History of the Prophets and Kings", tafsir and works on Islamic jurisprudence.

² Izzuddin Abul-Hassan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jaziri, known as Ibn al-Athir (May 12, 1160–1233 or 1234) is one of the most famous Islamic historians of Kurdish origin.

³ Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Jafar an-Narshahi (899-959) - Central Asia. historian. The author of "Tarihi Bukhari" on the Arab. lang Written in 943-944.

According to the same sources, “the Sogdians and Tohars, even at the final stage of the conquest of Mavarannahr, renounced Islam at any convenient opportunity.” Realizing that forcible Islamization does not work properly, the Arabs and local rulers have moved on to a new method of region Islamization: to involve the local population in Islam through Islamic call activities, which so-called *da'wa* (Islamic call).

The second stage of the Islamization in the region began in the second half of the VIII century. Where Islam was predominantly spreads through Islamic call activities.

The mass of theologians of non-Arab origin who appeared in consequence of the seizure of territories and the expansion of the boundaries of the Umayyad Caliphate, made a great contribution to the development of the theological sciences and culture. They formed a local form of Islam in accordance with cultural, legal, and partly ritual traditions. The present system in Uzbekistan of “*nafila*”, it means *additional religious rituals*, is a pre-Islamic tradition. But it was introduced and legitimized in the region by local Hanafi theologians.

The Hanafi theologians played a special role in the spreading of Islam in Central Asia in the late of VIII-th and early IX-th centuries. During this period, political structures of Karakhanids from X to XIII centuries and Karluk's in VIII and IX-th centuries supported *sufis* and *mutakallim* equally, since a policy was convenient for the management of theologians ... In the beginning the Hanafis came out victorious only in Samarkand, Ustrushana, Balkh, Termez and Ferghana cities. And such centers as Tashkent, Turkistan, Khorezm, and partly Bukhara remained under *Shafite* mazhab for a long time - until the end of the XII century.

The Hanafi mazhab remained the most loyal and more adapted to local pre-Islamic traditions. Local *faqih*s reprocessed very skillfully and successfully from common Islamic positions the norms of customary law - that they do not contradict the canons of Islam. Thus, the Samarkand *faqih*s in their judgments and *fatwas* took into account the interests of all strata of the population, including the non-Muslim communities of the city. Later, this teaching called as *al-Maturidiya*⁴ and received wide popularity among all the Hanafits in the Muslim world. In the course of this creative process, they issued *fatawa*, which legitimized many pre-Islamic ancient traditions and customary laws.

⁴ The founder is Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944). Acknowledging that faith lies in the verbal confession of Allah, and not only in the observance of religious rites.

The article is devoted to the development of Islam in the Central Asian region, the stages of penetration, the difficulties of proliferation and the characteristics of this process. The issues of Islamic call at the initial and subsequent stages are considered. The role of Sufism in the spread of Islam among both the sedentary and nomadic peoples of the region. A special place in the article is given to the colonial and Soviet period of development of Uzbekistan. A special place is given to the independent period of development of Uzbekistan, the peculiarities of the restoration of historical national-religious monuments and the values of the people.

Мақола Марказий Осиё минтақасида ислом тараққиёти, унинг кириб келиш босқичлари, тарқалиши қийинчиликлари ва бу жараённинг ўзига хос хусусиятларига бағишланган. Ислום тараққиётининг бошланғич ва кейинги босқичларида исломга даъват масалалари, минтақанинг кўчманчи ва ўтроқ халқлари ўртасида ислом тарқалишида сўфийликнинг ўрни кўриб чиқилади. Мақолада Ўзбекистоннинг мустамлакачилик ва совет давридаги ривожланишига, шунингдек, Ўзбекистоннинг мустақил ривожланиш даврида тарихий, миллий диний ёдгорликларни ва халқ қадриятларини тиклашнинг ўзига хос жиҳатларига алоҳида ўрин берилган.

Статья посвящена развитию ислама в Центрально-Азиатском регионе, стадиям проникновения, трудностям распространения и особенностям этого процесса. Рассматриваются вопросы призыва к исламу на начальном и последующих этапах, роль суфизма в распространении ислама среди оседлых и кочевых народов региона. Отдельное место в статье отводится колониальному и советскому периоду развития Узбекистана. Особое внимание автор обращает на независимый период развития Узбекистана, особенности восстановления исторических, национально-религиозных памятников и ценностей народа.

Thus, the tolerance of the Hanafi theologians allowed the Turkic-speaking peoples to preserve their ancient Zoroastrian's holiday *Navruz* (New Year's holiday, the festival of spring), which was adapted to monotheism. Today *Navruz* is accompanied by reading the Koran, giving alms, mutual forgiveness of debts, reconciling the warring parties, preparing and distributing foods.

Thanks to the dialectical approach of the Hanafi scholars there were not forbidden the *traditional music*, songs and nomadic games, using of *horse meat* and drinking *kumis*, as well as wearing *national clothes* in the medieval nomadic Muslims of region.

The spread of Islam was slowed down during the Mongol conquest of the region in the XIII century. Many cities, *mosques* and *madrassas* were destroyed, and scientific and cultural centers were plundered.

Entire cities disappeared from the map forever. Significant damage was done to trade on the routes of the Great Silk Road. The adoption by the Mongolian conquerors of Islam by the Golden Horde under Berke (1255-1266) and the subsequent khans of Tudemengu and Uzbek, led to the advancement of Islam to the nomadic steppe, attracting all new groups and peoples. Religion has become one of the tools that ensure the consolidation of society. A deliberate propaganda of Islam was conducted among the nomads. However, the common people retained for a long time the religious beliefs of their ancestors, which we can see in the rudiments of Tengrism and Shamanism.

The role of Sufism in the region was increasing during this period. Sufis served as preachers of Islam among ordinary people. Sufi brotherhoods contributed to the spreading of adapted Islam to local conditions and ancient religious teachings among the Maverannahr's population. Along with the practice of *ziyarat* (it means *visit to the grave of saint*), people began to bury the bodies of the deceased *khans* and other great people near the saint's tombs. For example, there are the mausoleums in Turkestan such as mausoleum of Ahmad Yassawi, the Samarkand complex of Shahi Zinda and the mausoleum of Gur Emir, Bukhara's mausoleum of Nakshbandi, in Tashkent - the complex of Hasti Imom, the mausoleums of Kaffol Shoshi and Shaykh Khovand Tohur, also in Termez the complex of Imam at Termezi.

The Sufi brotherhoods of Naqshbandiyya and Yasaviyya had a significant influence on the power and common people. Under the control and participation of the Sufi communities there were mosques, madrassas, public and private ceremonies (funerals, weddings, etc.). The slogan of the lider of Naqshbandiya tariqat's Bahauddin Naqshband "Dil ba yoru dast ba kor" ("The soul must be turned towards God, and the hands should be in work") turned into a way of the people's life in the region for many centuries and became the basis of its socio-political activity.

The *Pirs* of sufi tariqats enjoyed great prestige among all strata of the people, their belonging to the aristocratic class of the Sayyid and Khodja allowed them to often leave their ancestral and ethnic interests, positioning themselves as ideologists of Islamic solidarity.

The sheikh Khodja Ahrar Vali⁵, who in fact ruled the Timurid's state in Mavarannahr at the end of the 15th century, possessed an unconditional authority

⁵ Nasiriddin Ubaidulla ibn Mahmud Shoshi, known as Khoja Akhrar (1404-1489) - a major religious and statesman of Mavarannakhr. The leader of the Nakshbandi Tarikata. Sheik, the nineteenth in the gold chain of succession of sheikhs of the tariqah.

throughout Central Asia. The formation of religious ideals among the nomads was influenced by the Islam-Sufi ethics and self-discipline of such personalities as Makhdum-i Azam, Mashrab and Sufi Allayar.

The influence of the Sufi sheikhs fell sharply during the period of the Russian Empire colonial rule (1865-1917). This was the reason for the negative attitude of the Russian colonial authorities towards Sufi tarikats and their leaders, who saw in them as the main danger for the Russian regime in Turkestan. There were a number of harsh measures including the liquidation and transfer of *waqf* lands and property from Sufi tarikats under the supervision of Russian authorities⁶. However, individual Sufi groups and their leaders continued their activity. In this regard, we should remember the brutally suppressed rebellion of the Sufi authority of Dukchi Ishan in Andijan in 1898⁷.

There were not any activities of sufi tarikats especially during the Soviet Union period. Since 1929, there was started the strict suppression of religion and the extermination of the theologians. And the *dervishes*⁸ and *kalandars*⁹ were recognized as reactionary counterrevolutionary elements to be immediately exterminated. In this regard, many were forced to use the principle "*Takiya*", meaning "prudent concealment of their faith", despite the fact that in Sunnism it had only a theoretical character. However, there were separate sheikhs who secretly tried to preserve the rules for mastering and conducting *zikr*, as well as teach the old traditions and give general concepts of rituals.

The anti-religious company and the harsh measures of the Soviet regime against Muslim believers led to the emergence of a vacuum of religious personnel, who were reduced to a minimum. Many Muslims began to visit the mosque only after they were retired without fear of sanctions from the soviet authorities. Some young people tried to get religious knowledge bypassing official authorities and Muslim's Spiritual Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan¹⁰. The illegal

⁶ The reason for the decree of the Emperor on the transfer of waqf tariqah under state supervision were complaints about the misuse of funds received from vakf property (1887).

⁷ Abu Jafar Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (839- 923) - Islamic historian and theologian, he studied in Persia, wrote in Arabic. The author of the "History of the Prophets and Kings", tafsir and works on Islamic jurisprudence.

⁸ Izzuddin Abul-Hassan Ali ibn Muhammad al-Jaziri, known as Ibn al-Athir (May 12, 1160-1233 or 1234) is one of the most famous Islamic historians of Kurdish origin.

⁹ Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Jafar an-Narshahi (899-959) - Central Asia. historian. The author of "Tarihi Bukhari" on the Arab. lang Written in 943-944.

¹⁰ The founder is Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944). Acknowledging that faith lies in the verbal confession of Allah, and not only in the observance of religious rites.

religious schools – *hujras*, which were led by separate Islamic authorities of that period by Shami-domulla at-Tarablusi (1860-1932), Muhammadjon Rustamov known as Domullo Hindustani (1892-1989) and Khasan-Hazrat Ponamarev (died in 1937), played an important role in the formation of a new generation of spiritual dignitaries of the republic and the region. The influence of the Khanbali mazhabin some of them intensified and they were more radical than the traditional Hanafi for Uzbekistan. They began to turn into religious centers of radical persuasion.

Modernity

The rapid revival of Islam in Uzbekistan began with the starting of Gorbachev's "perestroika" policy and it helped to strengthening of national unity and self-consciousness, also it helped to the inner unity and solidarity of the Muslim ethnoses. The number of people who called themselves as Muslims has increased noticeably, also the number of mosques and pilgrims to *hajj* and *umra* has increased dramatically. The number of *hujras* has increased. In many mahallas– (traditional Uzbek quarters) there were "*hujras*" in which Arabic language and traditional Muslim disciplines were taught. Many young and old people considered it their duty for a Muslim to attend classes in these *hujras* and teach the basics of Islam.

The state declared two religious holidays– Ruza hayit and Kurban hayit as days off. A number of anniversary dates of religious figures of the region were celebrated, international contacts with Muslim countries and organizations increased, and finally, religious printed products increased rapidly.

During the years of independence, the authorities paid much attention to the formation and development of the national consciousness and values of the population. Along with the adoption of relevant laws and regulations, a number of major events were held on an international and national scale. In the formation of a "harmoniously developed young generation" of religion, one of the main constructive roles is assigned as an integral part of the spiritual values of the people.

At present time, the state has created equal and comfortable conditions for the functioning of all religious confessions. To this date, there are 16 religious confessions in Uzbekistan, including 2238 religious organizations. The largest in number are Muslim organizations. The Spiritual Board of Uzbekistan's Muslims, Kaziyat of Muslims of Karakalpakstan, Tashkent Islamic Institute, 9 Madrasas and 2064 mosques.

Along with these constructive processes in the early 1990s, the activity of political parties and movements under religious and nationalist slogans was stepped up. For example, the activities of the

parties "Erk" ("Freedom"), "Birlik" ("Unity") and the Party of Islamic Revival, in whose programs the calls of nationalistic and religious persuasion were openly declared. As a result of spontaneously appeared religious literature belonging to different mazhabs, there were discrepancies and confusion in some Muslim communities. The flow of missionaries who have rushed to Central Asia from Muslim countries to preach "the right Islam" was increasing. Only for 1992-1993 about 50 preachers from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and other Muslim countries were expelled from Uzbekistan.

The process of politicizing of Islam in the republic, and later also its radicalizing was also facilitated by the penetration of illegal extremist literature from abroad like the Tafsir "Fi Zilyalil Quran" of Sayyid Qutb, Several Lessons of Islam of Abu Ala al-Maududi and by the return of certain radical elements after the end of the Soviet Afghan war company.

A great influence on the radicalization of the religious consciousness of youth was rendered by the war in Afghanistan. For example, Tahir Yuldash and Juma Namangani, the first leaders of the IMU, received their first lessons of Islam from the books of Sayyid Qutb and al-Maududi, with whom they got acquainted during Afghan war campaign. Some soldiers from Central Asia, who went over to the side of **Afghan mujahideen**, fell into the madrasas of Islamic radicals in Pakistan. Returning in the 1990s, many of them became instructors in the camps of Tajik and Afghan militants. Among them, groups of young Muslims from the Fergana Valley were formed. They called themselves **Mujaddidin** (advocating for the updating). Dozens of young people trained in the *hujras* of Andijan, Namangan and Kokand moved illegally to Tajikistan to participate in the civil war in the mid-1990s. Many of them later formed the first core of the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)**.

Among the most frequently mentioned in the media of the republic radical Islamic groups are **Hizb ut-Tahrir** and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). In 1990-2000, the activity of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) in Uzbekistan was intensified. Agitation and propaganda among the youth, the production and distribution of Islamist leaflets, pamphlets and the *al-Wai* magazine testified that the activities (HT) were of a serious and strategic nature. At present, HT has stopped active measures because of massive preventive measures of the state and is limited to issuing separate thematic leaflets.

In the 2000s, the groups of "jihadists" appeared in Uzbekistan. Among them is the "Union of Islamic Jihad", preaching the violent overthrow of the constitutional order and the establishment of an

Islamic state. Thus, in the summer of 2009, members of this group committed armed attacks in Tashkent, Tashkent and Kashkadarya regions with a view to the physical liquidation of law enforcement officers and religious *ulama* of Uzbekistan.

A separate mansion from Hizb ut-Tahrir and jihadists are members of the group “**Jamaati Tablig**” (“Bringing the truth”). This group adheres to the Sharia and calls for the construction of an Islamic state. They openly engage in Islamic missionary activities among non-Muslims. In Uzbekistan, its activities were noticed in the 1990s, when members of the organization chose the **Langar** Mosque in Tashkent for their destructive activities.

In 2004-2005, the activity of Salafy groups was observed, the members of which are trying to gain a foothold and expand their influence in the republic. They carry out their main propaganda through Uzbek and Russian-speaking Internet sites.

It is necessary to mention about “**Akromiya**” group which appeared in Andijan in the mid-1990s. This group organized its cells on the basis of artisan workshops and was engaged in raising funds, propagating radical Islamic ideas. On May 12-13, 2005 in Andijan, this group raised an armed insurrection and attack on several state facilities, which resulted in the death of hundreds of people.

A prominent role in the dissemination of alien religious and political doctrines was played also by the **Nursites**, followers of Badi al-Zaman Said Nursi (1876-1960) and his follower Fathullah Gulen. In the 1990s, the Nursits discovered Turkish lyceums in Uzbekistan, where they secretly propagated their religious and political ideas (Islamism and Pan-Turkism) among students. Already in 1994, the Zaman newspaper was closed in the country, and then many “teachers” were sent away from Uzbekistan. However, already in the 2000s the activity of the Nursites was again noticed and suppressed by the state.

Against this background, the country began to see an intensification of recruiting Islamists among young people. Thus, in the media of the republic, the cases of recruitment of youth from the side of IGIL were mentioned more often. According to law enforcement agencies, there are data that more than 500 citizens of Uzbekistan are fighting in the ranks of the IGIL.

Conclusion

Thus, the revival of Islam in Uzbekistan in the late 1980s was caused by the interest of the population to the fundamental principles of their spiritual life, including religious-civilizational and national identity. This interest was caused by the desire of the Muslims of Uzbekistan to unite with the Muslim world. This

was due to the desire of the population to re-identify with the Muslim ethos after more than a century of colonialist and communist isolation. Along with these processes, politicization and radicalization of religion took place, resulting as a result of a complex of internal and external reasons for the emergence of a radical current within the Islamic movement in the country.

The revival of Islam in Uzbekistan in the late 1980s was caused by the interest of the population to the fundamental principles of their spiritual life, including religious-civilizational and national identity. This interest was caused by the desire of the Muslims of Uzbekistan to unite with the Muslim world. This was due to the desire of the population to re-identify with the Muslim ethnoses after more than a century of colonialist and communist isolation. Along with these processes, took place the politicization and radicalization of religion, which cause internal and external reasons for the emergence of a radical Islamic movement in the country.

After declaring independence in Uzbekistan sufism and its universal values were recognized as the spiritual heritage of the Uzbek people. The number of ceremonial events were held dedicated to the 675 and 680 years -anniversaries of Naqshbandi in 1993 and 1998, as well as anniversaries of Abduhalik Gijduvani and Khoja Achrar Vali in 2003. This, in turn, led to the study of sources and the transfer of a set of modern research on Sufism. At present time, there is some activity of Sufi figures of the Naqshbandi brotherhood in Uzbekistan. However, there was no big interest among the population in the ritual practice of Sufis.

Nowadays, Islam in Uzbekistan is one of the important factors which impacts strongly on the life of Muslims and society. Islam is the stable foundation of the historical and national customs and traditions of the Uzbek family and society. In Uzbekistan some people revere traditions through strictly observance of rituals, while others by affirming their Muslim identity, only symbolically observe rituals.

Now in Uzbekistan has created the necessary conditions for the professing of all religions and the performance of religious rites. In addition, the state has paid a great attention to the restoration of religious monuments since the first years of independence. Many historical and religious monuments of Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Termez, Karshi, Ferghana and other cities were restored and put in proper condition.

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