

PLACE AND ROLE OF ISLAM IN REGIONS OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, THE CAUCASSUS AND CENTRAL ASIA

ZAID ABDULAGATOV. THE INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN ISLAMIC EDUCATION ON THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS OF MOSLEMS OF DAGHESTAN (Ending. Opening in № 3 (309), 2020) // *The article was written for the bulletin "Russia and the Moslem World."*

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Abstract. Author based on historical facts showed that foreign Islamic education Caucasians was a problem for the Russian government in the early XX century. According to historical data, assessments and data of a small opinion poll in the article concluded that the current foreign Islamic education contributes to changes in the religious identity of Moslems of Daghestan in the direction of their consciousness salafisation. Thus, the foreign Islamic education enhances sectarian tensions in the country.

Indicators of the influence of foreign Islamic education on manifestations of extremism and terrorism in the Republic of Daghestan. According to statistics of recent years, in the age structure of detainees, convicts, killed in the course of anti-terrorist operations, Daghestan youth (from 15 to 30 years old) is designated in the range from 65 to 75 per cent. The radical change in this power confrontation has not yet happened.

At the same time, it is the youth that is the main age group that actively raises their Moslem educational level, including in foreign Islamic educational institutions. The average age of the respondents making up the sample was within 30 years.

According to official data, more than 400 Daghestanis were trained in Al-Azhar (Egypt). About 40 of them were destroyed during counter-terrorism operations by law enforcement agencies.¹ Obviously, there is no guarantee that the remaining 90% of Al-Azhar's Daghestani graduates are law-abiding citizens of the republic.

The well-known leaders of the North Caucasian radical Islam Anzor Astemirov and Magomedali Vagabov, who were cadis of the Caucasus Emirate², studied in foreign Islamic educational institutions³ after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There are many other figures of Islamic radicalism who studied in foreign educational institutions, who have been and are conducting active extremist and terrorist activities in the North Caucasus. They were also preachers of the ideas of active participation of Daghestanis in the activities of ISIS (an organization banned in Russia). Thus, Kamil Sultanakhmedov, who received his Islamic education abroad, for many years conducted preaching work in Izberbash and in the large Kayakent district of the Republic of Daghestan. A video of his oath to ISIS appeared on the Internet on June 2, 2015.⁴

It is worth noting once again that, according to various estimates, from 2 to 5 thousand Daghestanis participated in the activities of ISIS. As the head of the RD R.G. Abdulatipov (2013–2018) stated to media, 47 Daghestanis from the Untsukul region

of the republic alone were fighting in the ranks of ISIS against the government forces of Syria. A representative of the Untsukul district leadership,

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With the beginning of the perestroika processes, the road was opened for foreign preachers of the values of Islamic education in Russia. In particular, teachers from Arab countries actively worked in the Islamic educational process in Daghestan. They had a strong influence on the formation of the youth wing of the radical Salafi movement in Daghestani Islam. Information about how it was held at the Islamic Institute named after Imam Shafii in Makhachkala, was given to the author by a former student of this institute, now the head of the Department of Oriental Manuscripts of the Institute of the IAE DSC RAS, Sh.Sh. Shikhaliev:

“... As a rule, there was no curriculum, no link to any textbook or program... Students taught by Arabs had broad views on general issues of Islamic civilization (Islamic culture, history, Aqida). ... The education exercised by Arab teachers gave knowledge about Ibn Taymiyyah, different trends in Islam, about hadiths. Knowledge was given about D. Afghani and other Islamic reformers (M. Abdo, R. Rida). They are designated in the Daghestani Sufi discourse as “spreaders of evil”, “lost”, “heretics”. ... Daghestani teachers also have good knowledge of hadiths, but they are strongly attached to Muamalat, and the Arab ones – directly to the Islamic call, Aqida.

... Many who studied with Arab teachers adopted Salafi (Wahhabist) ideas. One of the Arab teachers was Muhammad Hani, a graduate of Al-Azhar, a Hafiz (he knew the Quran by heart). In addition to the Islamic Institute named after Imam Shafi'i, he also worked at DSU, taught Arabic. He was assigned to graduate school (in history) published a brochure about the imam Shamil... Was caught recruiting Daghestani students. He often went to pioneer camps, conducted classes. The rest were citizens of Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, Egypt, KSA. Abuzagir Mantaev, Yasin (Makhach) Rasulov, well-known leaders of the youth wing of the Daghestani radical Salafis, studied at the Islamic Institute named after Imam Shafi'i, moreover, they studied in groups of Arab teachers ...

A public organization (1992) for the implementation of the Islamic appeal was organized by Arab teachers".⁶ A similar thing happened in many regions of Russia with the Moslem population. Since the beginning of the 90s of the XX century the State Islamic Institute functioned in Grozny, where 420 students studied at the same time, and 12 immigrants from Sudan, Jordan, Syria and other Arab countries worked as teachers [7, p. 69-70]. Such madrasahs appeared in the Volga region, for example, Almetyevsk madrasah in Tatarstan.⁷ As a rule, the graduates of these IEI formed radically Salafist views that were not characteristic of regional traditions. Researchers often note the undoubtedly positive aspects of foreign influence on the Islamic educational process in Russia, but they forget to give a complete picture of this phenomenon. According to V.O. Bobrovnikov, despite the high statistical indicators of the growth of modern Islamic educational institutions in Russia, the general level of education fell. "The education was organized better in the Wahhabi madrasah, opened with Saudi money, the largest of which, al-Hikma (more than 750 students), worked intermittently in 1991-1999 in Kizilyurt".⁸ At the same time, it is well known that it was the Kizilyurt District of the Republic of Daghestan that was one of the centers for the propaganda of radical Salafi ideas

and Salafi terrorist activities in Daghestan in the 90s of the XX century. The problem for traditional Islam, society, as it turned out, and for the state, was different: how the foundation of the Moslem doctrine – aqidah, one of the many disciplines of Islamic education – is taught. One of the main provisions of aqida is Tawhid (monotheism), the attitude to which is one of the main criteria separating Salafis and Sufis. It was this circumstance that caused and is causing particular concern among representatives of the local clergy. Such a danger in the educational system was seen not only by the North Caucasian clergy, but also by the clergy of the Volga region. The ideas of Wahhabism through the legitimate system of Islamic education in Russia, in their opinion, spread “not only in the North Caucasus, but also in the Penza, Ulyanovsk, Orenburg, Sverdlovsk regions and in Tatarstan”.⁹

Foreign Islamic education: pro et contra. It would not be fair, following certain facts of the survey data, to give unequivocally negative assessments of the influence of foreign Islamic education on the social, civic behavior of a Moslem. Undoubtedly, education in this system is much richer, more diverse in its influence on a person. The above facts are important only to the extent that they indicate weak, vulnerable spots in this system from the point of view of universal, including secular, and not locally confessional interests of the Daghestanis, which in the long term and ideally should develop in line with the common interests of Russian society and the state.

In the Russian society there is an opinion that foreign education contributes to the radicalization of the Islamic consciousness of Moslems. This assessment is mainly held by supporters of Sufi Islam, who have historically been irreconcilable opponents of various manifestations of Salafism. At present, it is Sufi Islam that is the “official” Islam in the Republic of Daghestan. At the same time, the question of the negative impact of all foreign education on inter-confessional, confessional-state relations is not so obvious. In this regard, one of the tasks of the sociological study was to identify the impact of

foreign Islamic education of Moslems of Daghestan on their social (religious) behavior.

The arguments put forward by supporters of foreign Islamic education in its defense are different and basically boil down to the following.

1. Extremism is manifested by those young people who studied abroad, but did not complete the education, did not receive a diploma.

2. Islamic education abroad cannot form radical Salafism for the reason that the ruling regimes in these countries themselves are “terribly afraid” of extremism.

3. Foreign Islamic universities are good in teaching theological disciplines, such as fiqh (Moslem law), the Quran, Hadith and others, but they do not teach the specifics of educational work in the countries to which the students will return, that is, Russia, England, the USA, Kazakhstan, etc. And this is another education that has no direct relation to Moslem education.

4. There is no radicalism in Islam itself. Radicalism occurs in situations where there is a bias between the understanding of the values of secular life and the netherworld. When people treat this world (dunya) as a mistake of God and look for ways out of it, striving for the next world, a motive for radicalization appears. It is a mistake to believe that knowledge of the culture of Islam is equivalent to understanding the specifics of the problems that generate radicalism.

5. The ban on foreign education, including Islamic education, is not legal. You can become extremists without leaving Russia.

6. There is a prejudiced attitude towards graduates of foreign Islamic universities in Daghestan, since they often destroy stereotypes created by ancestors, based not on Sharia, but on customs. It is very difficult to give up what the ancestors relied on, but after all, they could be mistaken. That is, the point is not in foreign education, but in relation to it.

7. In the conditions of Daghestan, there is an opinion that the Islamic educational system is exemplary and of high quality, superior to foreign systems of this kind. The same is true for other republics of the North Caucasus.¹⁰ In fact, most of the teachers of the IEL in Daghestan, and throughout Russia, are, at best, graduates of the same Daghestan, Russian universities and madrasas. Or, they received their education, studying clandestinely or independently during the years of Soviet power.¹¹ "By the level of teaching, the branches of Islamic universities in Daghestan" (52 branches, about 3000 students) can be compared with the average madrasahs" [8, p. 4]. In this position, ethnographer A.A. Yarlykapov, who claims that "Islamic universities that appeared in the 1990s practically remain at the level of madrasahs and even mektebs."¹² Foreign education fills this gap.

8. Graduates of foreign IEL, in particular from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Mecca, Medina), practically cannot be teachers of Daghestan IEL. Firstly, they are afraid of accusations of extremism, Wahhabism (KSA is the birthplace of Wahhabism), and secondly, they are simply not allowed to engage in this kind of activity. That is, Islamic education in Daghestan and in Russia as a whole initially has a religious and political content, which strengthens the existing interfaith confrontation.

Islamic education abroad as a problem for the state and society.
This problem can be indicated in the following form:

- In different muftiats, in the positions of the Islamic leaders of Russia, the attitude to foreign education is different, which makes it difficult to have a single content of the educational process in terms of program definition, uniform regulatory requirements for the list of foreign IELs acceptable for Russians.

- There is no certainty in this matter among secular experts. In the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, there are both supporters and opponents of foreign Islamic education among them.

- The authorities still have not been able to solve the problem of controlling the departure of young Moslems to foreign IEs. To a greater extent, this concerns the private trips of young people to foreign countries.

- The mechanism for sending Russian students to Islamic educational institutions abroad has not been formed.

- The effectiveness of cooperation with foreign IEs in the preparation of appropriate training programs is low.

- There is no mechanism for mutual recognition of Islamic educational institutions in the Russian Federation and abroad, which is an obstacle to the accreditation and licensing of the IEs of the Russian Federation.

- Some muftiats have "their own" Islamic universities abroad. The contradictions between the muftis are intensified by foreign Islamic education.

- Graduates of foreign educational institutions have more problems with employment than their peers who received their education in Russia.

- Graduates of foreign Islamic educational institutions in Russia form a different Islamic culture that contradicts the traditional one. The emergence of this culture is developing in terms of conflict, with violations of the law, manifestations of extremism and terrorism.

- "... Even in the well-known Islamic universities" Al-Azhar "(Cairo)," Abu-Nur "(Damascus)," Az-Zaytun "(Tunisia), a Daghestani student may" face the fact that he does not comply with Islamic norms. ... More than 70% of students who return to Russia after studying abroad are unable to perceive the true knowledge of Islam. ... It is important for Russia to start training its own specialists".¹³

The results of sociological surveys. An analysis of scientific and journalistic literature on the problem under discussion shows that researchers have not yet carried out sociological work to identify the reasons for the outflow of young people to foreign

Islamic educational centers, the influence of these centers on the social (religious) behavior of Moslems in Russia.

In the sample structure, young people are represented more than the older generation: 54.8% versus 45.2%. On the whole, this corresponds to the active participation of young people, both in the general processes of the Islamic revival, and their share of participating in the activities of illegal armed groups. These data of the sample correspond to the level of declared religiosity of ethnic Moslems of the republic: youth – 95%; general in Daghestan – 90% (Older generation – about 85%).

Forms (types) of foreign Islamic education in which Daghestanis are involved. The importance of raising such a question is due to the fact that foreign education can be obtained both in a public and private educational institution, and even from a private person. The negative impact of foreign education on social (religious) behavior is rightly associated with the fact that Daghestanis often receive education outside the state system, where there are educational standards determined by the state. And a private organization, especially an individual, as a rule, cannot provide the student with the necessary knowledge, not only in various secular sciences, but also in theological. According to the poll, 48.9% of the respondents received Islamic knowledge in the private sector. Men use this form of education more than women (men – 50.0%; women – 44.4%). At the same time, 36.8% of men studied in a private educational institution, and 13.2% – from a private teacher. None of the women received an education from a private teacher. In general, about half of those leaving for foreign education (51.1%) go to state educational institutions.

How do Moslems of the Republic of Daghestan get to foreign educational centers. The question of how Moslems get into the foreign educational process remains relevant for Russia as a whole in terms of countering extremism and terrorism. Academician E.M. Primakov believed that for the most part they leave abroad at the invitation of fellow countrymen who are

already studying there, and, as a rule, “easily fall under the influence of radicals.”¹⁴

According to the poll, less than one third – 28.5% of Daghestanis were sent to education abroad by the Spiritual Administration of Moslems of Daghestan (SAMD) or some other Russian religious organization. Among men, these were 22.5% (women – 53.5%). Quite a significant number of people – 22.4% – received education at the invitation and funding of a foreign educational institution. The highest rates were for the item “it was a private trip” – 38.8%. Men – 42.5%, women – 22.2%. In general, 65% of men leave for other countries in order to obtain Islamic knowledge without the knowledge of any Russian Moslem organization. Only 7.5% of Daghestani men are sent for this kind of training by the SAMD. At the same time, it is the social group of men that is most susceptible to the influence of radical Islamic views.

*Educational level of Daghestanis leaving for foreign Islamic education.*¹⁵ The structure of the sample by education was as follows:

Secular education: Primary education (4th grade) - 6.0%; Secondary education (grades 9–11) - 42.0%; Secondary vocational education - 4.0%; Incomplete higher education (after 3 courses) - 10.0%; Higher education - 38%; Without education - 4%.

Religious education: Reading the Quran - 25.5%; Graduated from maktab - 21.3%; Graduated from madrasah - 14.9%; Graduated from Islamic University - 21.3%; Without education - 17.0%.

It is necessary to pay attention to the fact that groups with 4% without any secular education, and 6% with primary education, falling into private hands, may forever remain people with low secular education. On average in Russia, 0.1% of the population¹⁶ is considered to have no secular education, and this is considered a high indicator for normal adaptation to modern life.

At the same time, it should be noted that in the Islamic educational institutions of the Republic of Daghestan the share of

students with higher secular education is significantly less than among those involved in foreign Islamic education: 8.7% versus 38.0%. In addition, the Daghestanis who go to other countries for Islamic education are much older than those who receive such education in the republic. This suggests that the bulk of students abroad have made a serious independent life choice.

Islamic religious leaders often, in order to warn those heading for a foreign education from extremist ideology, offer to pre-teach them the basics of traditional Islam at home. It is equally important that the traveler be prepared in secular education, which the religious leaders do not like to talk about.

The structure of the religious education of those traveling abroad is no less flawed. "Reading the Quran" (25.5%) and complete absence of Islamic education (17%) make up 42.5%. At best, both of these groups risk years of studying in preparatory courses with the hope of entering a college. At worst, they will take lessons from private individuals, although initially they will need to somehow master the Arabic language. In any case, it is difficult to hope that these 42.5% will be able to receive a high Moslem education in a few years. According to experts, obtaining such an education will require at least 9 years of painstaking work from those who do not know the Arabic language and the foundations of the Islamic religion. And this is long-term socialization in a different socio-cultural environment.

A group of those who graduated from madrasah will also face many problems in terms of entering an Islamic university immediately (14.9%). At the madrasah level, students learn namaz, reading the Arabic text of the Quran, master the basics of the grammar of the Arabic language (sarf), the rules for reading the Quran (tajid), and the basics of the religion. There is no need to talk about any deep knowledge in Daghestan madrasahs. The overwhelming majority of madrasah teachers do not have appropriate methodological training [10, p. 110-111; 11, p. 5].

Reasons for interest in foreign Islamic education: opinions of the respondents. One of the main reasons for the

attractiveness of foreign Islamic education for Daghestanis is "faster and better mastering of the Arabic language." This is indicated by almost 60% of the respondents' answers. This position is ahead of another – "the lack of highly qualified personnel" in the Daghestan IEI: 49.2%. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to consider the mastery of the Arabic language as the only determining reason for the departure of Daghestanis to study abroad. Arabic is needed not for the sake of mastering desacralized values, but precisely for the sake of Islamic, sacred ones. In this sense, in the total sample, quite large percentages were received not only by the problem of language, the lack of local personnel, but also the reasons for the narrowness of Islamic educational programs in Daghestan, which is that they are concentrated exclusively on mastering knowledge about the Shafi'i madhhab (30.6%), on questions of fiqh (23.5%). That is, interest in foreign education is caused by a number of reasons, the main of which can be ranked in terms of importance in the following order: Arabic, teaching (educational) personnel, educational programs.

One of the proposed answers to the question about the attractiveness of foreign education was its characterization as giving "true knowledge" about Islam. This position was noted by 27.1% of the respondents. According to another survey conducted in Islamic educational institutions of Daghestan in 2016, this figure was 1.6%. This suggests that a Daghestani goes to distant countries for Islamic knowledge, not only, but maybe not so much because there are no conditions in the republic to obtain sufficient knowledge, for example, on Sufism, Shafi'i madhhab. They are interested in other knowledge that, in principle, cannot be obtained in Daghestan, even if the Islamic education system is at a high level in the republic. It has a narrowly confessional content, while a large group of Moslems have a need to go beyond a separate Sunni madhhab, a movement.

In Islamic interfaith discourse, the concept of "true Islam" has a complex and conflicting nature. Salafis and tariqatists have

different interpretations of its content. The question of “true” Islam is one of the most debatable in Islamic interfaith discourse. It is central to the conflict between Salafism and Sufism in modern Islam. The accusation of disbelief (takfir) in Sunni Islam is carried out by the denial of Sunni madhhabs by Salafis and Salafism by Sufis. Wahhabism is one of the manifestations of Salafism, which arose on the basis of the Hanbali madhhab. The answer to the question of which of the respondents focuses on “true” Islam as the reason for the attractiveness of foreign education is associated with their answers to confessional identity.

Confessional identities of Daghestanis who received Islamic education abroad. The confessional composition of the sociological survey sample turned out to be somewhat biased towards Salafism in comparison with the confessional structure of the carriers of Islamic consciousness in Daghestan. In the Islamic confessional structure of Daghestan, given the presence in the republic of Hanafis from among the Nogai and part of the northern Kumyks, there should be about 89% of Shafiites. According to a sociological survey in 2016, 97.6% of the respondents identified themselves as Shafiites in the Islamic educational centers of Daghestan. Among those who studied abroad, 60.8% of the respondents named themselves Shafiites, as can be seen from the data in Table 1.

Table 1

Distribution of answers to the question:
“What madhhab do you profess in Islam?”
Studied in foreign Islamic educational institutions. (at %)

Madhhabs	Hanafism	Malikism	Shafiism	Hansalism	Faithy without madhhab	Another madhhab	Cannot say
The proportion of those who got into a random sample from the given madhhab (%)	5,9	2,0	60,8	15,7	15,7	7,8	

According to the table, the Salafism of the sample is determined by the fact that one part of the respondents identifies themselves with the Hanbalites, a Salafi madhhab, the right wing of which is Wahhabism, and the other completely denies any of their madhhab affiliation. According to the point of view of successive Salafis, the Islamic religion should be as it was before the madhhabs, i.e. it should be the religion of righteous ancestors (as-salaf as salihun) who did not divide Islam into madhhabs. Thus, 31.4% of the answers to this question can be considered as having Salafi content. As it turned out, it was these two groups that determined the main composition of those respondents who went to foreign Islamic educational centers in search of knowledge about "true" Islam.

Salafism of these two groups of the survey was revealed in their attitude towards Sufis. 57.1% of the madhhabless think that Sufis are "lost." In the general sample, only 21.7% think so. At the same time, 57.1% of the madhhabless and 85.7% of the Hanbalis in Daghestan consider the moderate Salafis the true Moslems, while only 13.3% of the Shafiis are of this opinion.

The high Salafi potential of foreign Islamic education is also manifested in the respondents' answers to the question: "Tell me, please, how do you feel about radical Salafis, or, as they are called in Daghestan, 'Wahhabis' "? The attitude of the respondents to the "Wahhabis" turned out to be more strict, in terms of their recognition as Moslems, than to the "moderate" Salafis. Nevertheless, more than a quarter of the "fundamentalists" show a "good attitude" towards them. There were 22.4% of them in the general sample. In the context of many years of active anti-Wahhabi activity of the state, the Republic of Daghestan still has the Law on the Prohibition of Wahhabi and Other Extremist Activities in the Republic of Daghestan (1999), a powerful anti-Salafi activity of the Tariqa Islam dominating in the republic, this is a high indicator of Salafist sentiments of those studying abroad. If we proceed from the number of 3000 Daghestanis who have studied abroad in recent years, then we would have, with a

representative sample, about 700 such supporters of radical Salafism, who under certain conditions may find themselves in the ranks of the “forest brothers”, ISIS. And in this case, Salafism, through the attitude towards the “Wahhabis”, was to a greater extent manifested by those who consider themselves Hanbalists or madhhabless. “Good attitude” to “Wahhabism” as to the true religion of Moslems was expressed by 57.1% of the Hanbalis and the same number of the madhhabless. Among those who identified themselves as Shafiites, only 10.0% think so.

Among those who called themselves Shafiites, the opportunity to gain knowledge about “true” Islam as the reason for the attractiveness of foreign education was noted by 13.3%. Among the Hanbalis and the madhhabless, this figure is 28.6%.

Only 10.2% of the respondents believe that “a Moslem must follow the laws of the state, even if they contradict Sharia.” Foreign Salafi influence at this point becomes obvious if we pay attention to the active work of foreign scientists in Russia. The World Council of Moslem Scientists (WCMS) in Daghestan headed by its Secretary General, Sheikh, Dr. Muhaddin Ali al-Karadagi in 2013–2014 held two theological conferences in Daghestan. In the materials of the conference, the section “Position of Islam in relation to cooperation with a secular state” Moslems are instructed: “Observance of the laws of the state is mandatory if there is a clear understanding that they do not contradict Sharia ... positive integration and observance of laws that do not contradict the principles of Islamic Sharia, service to the Motherland so that such patriotism does not contradict religious devotion in the framework of achieving the good.”¹⁷ In a republic where there is an “anti-Wahhabi” law, Muhaddin al Qaradagi, at a meeting with young Moslems in Daghestan, says that Muhammad Abdel Wahhab’s main book *Tawhid* “is not extremist or contrary to Islam and does not call for murder.”¹⁸

Main conclusions

1. The denial by some religious and secular leaders of the importance of Islamic education abroad for Russian Moslems does not correspond to the high level of this education, which attracts Russian Moslems. A Russian Moslem travels to distant countries not only for high, but also for other knowledge, which is not taught in Moslem educational institutions of Russia.

2. The content of the foreign education of Moslems includes such components that do not fit into the schemes of traditional Islamic culture of Russian Moslems, and, as a result, contributes to conflicts. First of all, this concerns Salafi and radically Salafi ideas promoted by a number of foreign Islamic educational centers, as evidenced by both the social (religious) behavior of the Daghestanis studying abroad and the results of a sociological survey among them.

3. A negative attitude towards foreign Islamic education is also formed due to the tough inter-confessional competition between official Islam, which is represented by the Sufi Islamic tradition in Daghestan, and the Salafis. The Muftiate of the Republic of Daghestan, for all its efforts, fails to take control of the organization of foreign Islamic education for Daghestanis.

4. Russia needs democratic control over those leaving for Moslem education abroad. The challenge is how to organize it.

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In the article of Nasibova A. [1] it is considered the formation of foreign policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan (AR) after getting its independence in 1991. The author analyzes the foreign policy course of the first presidents of the state. Particular attention is paid to the domestic factors that determined the international situation of the country.