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KANYBEK KUDAYAROV. ACTIVITIES OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS OF TÜRKIYE IN THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

Keywords: Türkiye; Kyrgyz Republic; Diyanet; Hizmet; Fethullah Gülen; Yjyk Birimdik; religious organizations.

Kanybek Kudayarov,
PhD(History), Research Associate,
Center for Interdisciplinary Research,
INION RAN,
e-mail: kana8306@mail.ru

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Abstract. The article briefly examines the activities of Turkish religious organizations operating in Kyrgyzstan – “Diyanet”, “Hizmet” and “Yjyk Birimdik”. Despite significant differences in political orientation, ideological component, type of activity, coverage of the target group and other characteristics, in general, Türkiye has a fairly strong influence on the Kyrgyz Muslim Ummah.

After the collapse of the USSR, the authorities of the newly formed Kyrgyz Republic adopted policies aimed at developing democracy and liberalizing the economy. The openness of the country, which was fundamental for building a new state, resulted in an influx of a huge number of various non-profit organizations into the republic, including multiple NGOs involved in missionary activities.

The religious policy of Kyrgyzstan was governed by the Law “On Freedom of Religion and Religious Organizations” adopted on December 16, 1991 [1]. In 2008, it was subsequently replaced by a new Law (with a similar name) [2], which was slightly changed and amended in 2011, 2012, 2019 and 2021. An important feature of the 2008 version of the Law was the tightening of the registration procedure for organizations, which was designed to contain their rapid growth to some extent. However, this did not have the desired effect, since their number as of January 1, 2020 reached 3,329, which is 1.7 times more than in 2005, when their number was 2005 [3]. According to the State Commission for Religious Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic (SCRA KR), the total number of registered religious organizations in the republic has grown considerably, reaching 4,144 entities by the end of March 2024 [4]. Most of the organizations (3,743) are Islamic, the overwhelming majority of which are run by the representatives of the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. In terms of external Islamic influence on Kyrgyz society, several countries have taken the lead – Türkiye, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc. [5]. However, the closest country to Kyrgyzstan in terms of ethnic, cultural and linguistic characteristics is Türkiye, and its religious influence on the republic is the subject of this article.