

HAJJ OF THE TATARS FROM THE PAST - TO THE PRESENT

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The relevance of the investigated problem is caused by the growing importance of the religious factor in the socio-political and religious-cultural life of the global community and Russia in the XXI century. The purpose of this article is to identify and analyze trends in the development of Tatar religious activities such as Hajj during the XI - XXI centuries. The leading method of the study of this problem is a historical-comparative method: in retrospect the emergence of this institution and the existence under conditions of the different socio-economic formations have been analyzed; a particular emphasis is made on the post-Soviet period. A special attention is paid to the question of organization of the hajj: route construction and different programs, cost factors of trip tickets, etc. It is proved that the system of organization of doing Hajj in the Republic of Tatarstan as an obligatory ritual for every Muslim is now almost developed. In a short time (since the 1990s.) the stage of formation passed, competence centers are defined, and logistics are established, all the requirements of the Islamic religion, the Russian and international legislation are observed.

Keywords: history; hajj; Volga Bulgarians; relations between the Volga region and the Arab East; Islam in Tatarstan; Muslim religious board in Tatarstan.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Hajj in Russia is studied well enough. But first of all it is related to such predominantly Muslim regions of the Russian Empire as Turkestan and the Caucasus, and almost did not affect in terms of the ethno-confessional Volga region. As for Turkestan the most comprehensive book is the book by V.P.Litvinov "Extra-regional pilgrimage of Turkestan Muslims", where the author sets out the basic principles of state regulation of hajj to Mecca and Medina (Litvinov, 2006).

In general, the topic of the Muslim pilgrimage from the Russian empire is revealed in details in the article by V.Brower "Russian Roads to Mecca: Religious Tolerance and Muslim Pilgrimage in the Russian Empire", published in 1996 in the United States (Brower, 1996). Among the new works on the subject we should note the monograph of A.T.Sibgatullina "The contacts of Turkic Muslims of the Russian Empire at the turn of XIX-XX centuries". The author examines the conditions of the organization of the Muslim pilgrimage from Russia to Hejaz: the routes, the main problem associated with the staying on the territory of the Osman Empire, etc. (Sibgatullina, 2010). The article of Y. N. Guseva "Hajj of the Muslims of the Volga-Ural region in the first third of the twentieth century" relates to the question of Hajj of the Muslims from the Volga region (Guseva, 2013). Thus we

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see that the Hajj of Tatars, except for our article (Akhunov 2014), has not been discussed and has never been the subject of any special research.

METHODS

In the Volga region and in the Volga Bulgaria Islam was officially adopted in 922, but actually it entered there much earlier. Bulgaria for a long time remained the only developed state formation in the north-east of Europe. It played a major role in the life of the peoples of the region. The country is the first in Europe began to found iron. Besides metallurgy the jeweler's art, leather industry, culture, science and education were developed.

Tatar legends say that even in the VII century that was immediately after the genesis of Islam in Arabia, the companions of the Prophet Muhammad brought the new religion to the Volga region. Unfortunately, the fact that the Tatars did not have their ancient written sources does not allow scientists to confirm or deny these versions.

RESULTS

The first information on the Volga Bulgars belong to IX-XI centuries. The most well-known source is the travel notes of Ibn Fadlan, the Secretary of the Embassy in Baghdad, who arrived in the Volga Bulgaria in 992. It was him who was the first to write about the first Bulgar Mosque, he described the way the local imams practiced Islamic rituals.

It should be noted that the very arrival of the Arab delegation was "provoked" by Volga Bulgars, who several years earlier sent their ambassadors to Baghdad asking them to send Islam experts and architects, who were able to build new mosques. This implies that at least at the beginning of the tenth century, the ancestors of the Tatars - Volga Bulgars actively traveled around the Muslim world.

The first documentary information about Hajj made by Volga Bulgars, refers to the 1041-1042. The Arab historian Ibn al-Jawzi mentions the arrival of the Bulgars in Baghdad: "And one man came from Bulgars – they say that he is one of the greatest man of that nation, with his company of 50 people headed to make Hajj" (Halidov, 1998).

The famous Tatar scientist Gaynetdin Ahmerov described this story more explicitly (1864-1911). In his book "The Bulgarians Tarihi" ("History of Bulgar" - Kazan, 1909), he gives the example of the contacts of the Bulgars and their "overlords" - Abbasid caliphs: "In 433 AH (1042) 50 Bulgars went to Hajj through Baghdad. The Caliph of Baghdad welcomed them in his palace, gave them all kinds of honors and questioned them about the business. "It was also said that the Baghdad Caliph offered them a companion - "Amir al-Hajj" ("Head of the group of pilgrims") Ibn al-Qasim ibn al-Aksasi (Akhmerov, 1998).

This example shows that in hundred years after the official adoption of Islam by Volga Bulgars the relationship between the Bulgars and the Abbasid caliphate remained quite friendly. Later, in the XIX century the Muslims of the Volga region, who went to make Hajj, would more often stay in Istanbul. It is possible that during the time of the ancient Bulgars international routes of pilgrims went through Baghdad, not through Istanbul. Perhaps this was because of the lack of reliable and safe waterways and land transport, and therefore the most popular ways were reliable caravan routes through Baghdad.

The Volga Bulgaria officially adopted Islam in 922, but became an Islamic state much earlier. In X-XII centuries, Islam spread throughout this large Eastern European state. In place of the Volga Bulgaria Kazan Khanate was founded, after the conquest of Kazan in 1552 by Russian troops –the Kazan province, which existed until 1920.

During all these centuries, the ancestors of the Tatars, despite the lack of good roads, all sorts of danger, went on a long journey, which took several months of walking, riding on horses and camels, and sometimes–travelling by sea.

The trip of the famous pilgrimage Tatar theologian Shigabutdin Marjani, which was made in 1880 may be taken as an example. In Kazan, the scientist went on the steamship “Wolski” and went to Nizhny Novgorod. From there via Moscow and Kiev he went by train to Odessa. From Odessa he went by sea to Istanbul. There he changed the steamboat and came to the Egyptian city of Alexandria. After passing through Egypt by train, he reached Suez where he exchanged it for ship and finally reached Arabia (Essays of Marjani, 2003).

In 1899-1900 the famous Tatar theologian and educator Hamidullah Almushev virtually repeated the route of Marjani, but with a small hook to Europe. From his native village in Nizhny Novgorod province Petryaksy he got to the station Alaty. Then he got to St. Petersburg, from where he again by train with stops in Warsaw, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade and Sofia got to Istanbul. Then he reached Lebanon by sea and later visited Syria, Palestine, Egypt and a few months later got to Mecca and Medina. However, his visit was not hajj in itself. Having visited on his way a lot of countries, he tried to get to know the local attractions, venerate the tombs of the Muslim saints, staying at each location for two to three weeks. The monuments somehow connected with Islam, the history of the religion, its prominent figures attracted his attention first. He described what he saw very thoroughly as a discoverer who put everything in his travel diary, which was a valuable document on the history of the Middle East, of the end of the XIX century nowadays (Haj-name, 2006).

In 1882, in the Saudi city of Jeddah the Russian consulate was organized. A state Councilor - Tatar Shagimardan Ibragimov, who was appointed to the position of the First Consul died in the same year during Hajj. Although officially it was reported that he died of cholera but, according to some versions, he was killed by

local fanatics who had no idea that the tsar's officials may be a faithful Muslim (Grishin, 2015; Khayrutdinov, 2015; Tuhvatullin, 2015).

When the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia for the post of the first ambassador of the Soviets in Saudi Arabia was again appointed the Tatar Karim Khakimov from Bashkortostan, who later died in the years of repression.

In the Soviet times, only few Muslims from all over the USSR were able to make Hajj. For example, in 1955 only 20 people made Hajj, although in the same year, for example, 58,089 pilgrims from Yemen came to Saudi Arabia, and 34 618 from Egypt.

When "perestroika" began and the "iron curtain" was destroyed, many Muslims wanted to make Hajj, but the lack of funds and the problem with the Soviet ruble convertibility prevented them from it. Only in 1990 the first large group of the Muslims from the Soviet Union which consisted of 1 500 people visited the holy places at the expense of the personal funds of the King of Saudi Arabia.

The growing centrifugal forces in the Muslim Umma of Russia accelerated by the fall of the USSR led to the establishing of the Muslim religious board in the Republic of Tatarstan (MRB RT) and in August 1992 the Muslim religious board of European Russia and Siberia (MRB ERS) (Ahunov 2013). In 1992, even before the MRB RT, the first Hajj by buses with departure from Kazan was organized (Yakupov, 2005).

After the recognition of the legitimacy of the newly created MRB RT, the process of organizing the Hajj in the republic was put under the state control. For example, to make Hajj in 1993 in agreement with the President of Tatarstan Muslim religious board ordered two aircrafts owned by the company "Tatarstan Airlines". This year 300 Tatarstan citizens made Hajj paying 350 thousand rubles for their tickets (Approx. US \$ 400). Acting imams, madrassa and Sunday school teachers could pay for the tour at a discounted price of 100 thousand rubles (May '25 Tatarstan Muslims begin Hajj to Mecca', 1993). The following year, 1994, many Muslims of Russia, including Tatarstan, again used the gift of the King Fahd of Saudi Arabia (The delegation of the Muslim community of Russia went on a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia at the invitation of the King Fahd, 1994).

By the way, charity vouchers will be distributed within the following years, but in much smaller quantities. For example, in 1999, the King Fahd allocated to Russia 750 free vouchers for hajj to the poor, which led to a variety of abuses on the part of present distributors. It became particularly acute during the economic crisis and the triple devaluation of the ruble against the dollar. Before the crisis in August 1998 hajj trip costed on average 1500-1600 US dollars, but in 1999 the operators were forced to reduce the price to minimum \$ 900 according to the principle of "less than lesser" (Suponina, 1999).

The economic crisis of 1998 made possible partly-forgotten types of travel to the holy places - by bus or combined: by airplane and by bus. Even in 1996, the

chairman of the Izhevsk club “Hajj” F. Mahiyanov offered to organize Hajj by train, making as a starting point Kazan a starting point as a major transport hub. According to his plan the Muslims of neighboring regions and republics could get from Kazan to Astrakhan by a special train, and then - by air, sea or road transport to Mecca and Medina. At every major station he planned to place stalls (later, minimarkets) “Hajj”, to supply the Muslim pilgrims with all necessary things, as well as billboards with information about life of the local Tatars (Mahiyanov, 1996). Of course, this was not in demand, but its appearing said that the problem of organizing Hajj in Tatarstan still exists.

Lack of finance of the population after the crisis in 1998 also forced to seek for new forms of Hajj organization in the Republic of Tatarstan. Since October 2001, an aid program in the organization of Hajj “Idel-Hajj was launched by MRB RT” It provided financing on the basis of accumulation of funds, training and education of groups of pilgrims in the local Islamic University, as well as complete organizational services (visa, transfers, airfare, accommodation, health insurance). The insurance company “Nasko-Tatarstan”, “Tatfondbank” and the tourist company “Idel” took part in realization of the program (“The Republic of Tatarstan. An insurance program that allows you to save money for a pilgrimage to Mecca was developed, 2002).

Originally planned cumulative funding system of Hajj acquired concrete forms in 2008, there was proposed the program: according to this program every person who wanted to make Hajj should postpone monthly 1 thousand rubles for 5 years. “Idel-Hajj” chooses an investment company that invests money in halal (permitted) investment projects, and then pays for the participation of the pilgrim in Hajj.

This program was developed in accordance with Russian legislation in compliance with Islamic norms and traditions. In 2002, the Russian Muftis Council approved the program and the support of the Coordination Council for Hajj under the Government of Russia, and its director - general director of the insurance company “Nasko-Tatarstan” R. Gataullin with mufti G. Iskhakov in 2002, he was elected as the member of the Board of Hajj Affairs under the Russian government. The same year, the questions about the organization of Hajj in Tajikistan became the subject of a specially created Department of Hajj at muftiat headed by Deputy Mufti A. Mingaleev. In 2003 it was transformed into the Department “Idel-Hajj.”

With the development of “Idel-Hajj” they organized Hajj for the Muslims of Tatarstan, and for more than 30 regions of Russia, where special offices were opened. “Idel-Hajj” took the following tasks: election of team leaders, doctors and Hajj training, routes development, organization of catering and accommodation of pilgrims in Mecca and Medina, coordination of actions with government authorities in preparation for the pilgrimage to the holy Muslim place and establishment of contacts with the Russian Hajj-mission and other tour operators who are engaged

in sending people to hajj, holding international conference on hajj with the participation of world tour operators.

In the course of the development the programs were carried out for those who wanted to make a small ritual of Hajj, in January 2010, during his visit to Kazan, the leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, agreed to open the route to Jerusalem for visiting the third holiest shrine of Islam –the mosque “al Aqsa “, that was developed and implemented for the rest of Muslims in Turkey (Abbas will discuss the issues of expansion of relations with Tatarstan pilgrimage, 2010).

According to “Idel-Hajj” in 2002 114 persons made a pilgrimage, in 2003 - 175 people, in 2004 - 178 persons, in 2005 - 509 people, in 2006 - 583 people, in 2007 - 1538 persons, in 2008 - 2192 persons, in 2009 - 3477 people. According to the experts in the field of tourism, on condition of getting 10-15% of the profits from each tour, “Idel-Hajj” could earn up to 30 million rubles per year (How “Idel Hajj” is “selling air”, 2012).

Since the beginning of 2011 “Idel-Hajj” worked with MRB RT on the basis of a special agreement on the accreditation of the hajj operators. With the change of the mufti in April 2011 “Idel-Hajj” lost the support of MRB RT which established their own operator, who picked up all the quotas intended for the Muslims of Tatarstan. The final blow to the “Idel-Hajj” happened in July 2012 after the attempt upon the life of the mufti of MRB RT I. Fayzov and the murder of the chief of the educational department V. Yakupova. The chairman of the Board of Directors of “Idel-Hajj” R. Gataullin fell under suspicion and was detained by law enforcement officials.

Currently, all the organization of Hajj is controlled by the “daughter” of MRB RT - LLC “Tatar Business World” (brand “MRB RT Hajj”) - the only officially accredited Hajj operator in the Republic of Tatarstan.

Since the Hajj is a duty of every Muslim, the demand for this service, despite the rise in prices, remains on a very high level, so the organization of pilgrimage brings sufficient profits. Therefore, this process cannot be developed spontaneously and is controlled by the MRB of Tatarstan.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thus, in this study numerous examples clearly show that the post-Soviet Tatarstan in comparison with other Russian regions could in the most civilized way solve the problem with the organization of Hajj. A clear and transparent system for collection of material has been built, the responsibility lies upon the Muslim religious board of Tatarstan, which follows all necessary international regulations, the Russian laws, which eventually completely decriminalized and legitimized this field of activity. All this can become a model and an example for organization of a similar system in other regions of compact residence of the Muslim population.

The materials of the article is of great interest for specialists who are engaged in teaching Russian history, historical geography of Russia, the political geography of Russia, the history of the Middle East as well as by theologians and orientalists.

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