
THE INFLUENCE OF THE ISLAMIC FACTOR ON THE FORMATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

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Abstract

A key aspect of the article is an attempt to describe religious identities' formation in the situation when the Islamic factor receives much support and comes forward. Central to the entire article is the life of Islamic believers inhabiting the south of the Tyumen region of Russia. We conducted a survey describing the life of these people that showed the growing role of Islam conducive to the tolerance of views and beliefs, the understanding of ethnic differences of people. This is a useful account of the socio-cultural life in the northern region. During the study, we found that Muslims living in the south of the Tyumen region did not experience any oppression based on nationality. The survey shows that in the region there are favourable conditions for the respect of religious traditions, customs, rituals, studying and developing Muslim religion, which result in the harmonization of relations with people of other faiths and beliefs. There is much evidence that mass media stir up hysteria about the 'Islamic threat'. Nowadays, across Russia and the Tyumen region, the issues of prevention of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism, the adherents of which misuse the provisions of this religion for achieving unjust goals, are acute. The conducted sociological studies have demonstrated the increase in the level of Muslims' tolerance to representatives of other religions and atheists. The finding can contribute to the creation of a harmonious civil society in Russia.

Keywords: ethnic, identification, affiliation, population, believers

1. Introduction

The Tyumen region is one of the largest regions in Russian. It includes two autonomous regions - Khanty-Mansiyskiy - Yugra and Yamalo-Nenetskiy, the region's territory is over 1.4 million km². It takes the third place in Russia in

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terms of the territory size, and the thirteenth place in terms of the number of inhabitants. The Tyumen region is a multi-ethnic region, inhabited by representatives of 143 nationalities. The most numerous are Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Bashkirs and Chuvashs. Currently, more than 250 thousand representatives of the Tatar population live on the territory of the region. Tatar population of the Tyumen region consists of the indigenous Siberian-Tatar population and a group of newcomers of the Tatar population (Kazan Tatars), mainly from the territory of the Volga region, who moved in the 16th-20th centuries under the influence of various factors.

In the south of the Tyumen Region, the population of the Tatars is 106,954 people (8.1% of the total population), 50273 of them are males, 56681 females. Let us show the distribution of Tatars in the cities of the south of the Tyumen region (Table 1), the remaining population lives in rural areas.

Table 1. The number and gender composition of the Tatar population in the cities of the south of the Tyumen region (people).

City	Total number	Males	Females
Tyumen	34464	15851	18613
Zavodoukovsk	149	66	83
Ishim	425	288	137
Tobolsk	17259	7817	9442
Yalutorovsk	2403	1136	1267

Under the liberalization and democratization in the early nineties of the twentieth century, when the principle of conscience freedom was realized, a number of scientists attempted to determine the thesis that Islam could provide continuity of generations, cultivate respect for the traditions of the past, define spiritual and moral norms, thereby become the basis formation of tolerant and civil society [1-3].

Recent evidence suggests that the residents of the Tyumen region, professing Islam, show interest in religious rites and traditions. The past decade has seen a dramatic intensification of national self-awareness, especially among the representatives of the younger generation of the Tyumen region. According to the results of our study conducted in 2001-2010, the ethnic self-identification of the younger generation is fairly stable and has a positive orientation among the Tatars in the south of the Tyumen region (Table 2).

Table 2. The dynamics of respondents' answers (18-30 years) on the level of satisfaction with their national identity, in % of the total number of respondents.

Level of satisfaction	Year	
	2001	2010
Satisfied	77.7	90.3
Not satisfied	1.7	3.2
Do not pay attention to nationality	13.5	6.0
No answer	7.1	2.4

Currently, there are two centralized religious organizations of Muslims in the Tyumen region - the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of the Tyumen Region, and the Kaziyat Muslim Board of the Tyumen Region of the Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of the Asian part of Russia. The Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia is represented in the region by one organization. Mosques are erected in cities and villages. Muslims can make pilgrimages to Mecca. In 1905, 137 mosques were registered. Today there are about a hundred mosques in the region, but a third of them do not have official legal registration. The national policy contributes to the preservation of living ethnic groups (Tatars of Tyumen region 2010). So, in the region there are held national festivals (the Turkic group of peoples 'Tan Yoldyzy', the Cossack festival 'Blagovest', the folklore festival 'Tugureek uen', etc.); days of national cultures of the peoples of the Tyumen region (Tatar, Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, Lezgin, Kirghiz, etc.); regional national holidays ('Kurultay', 'Akaty', 'Sabantuy', etc.). The Committee on Nationalities Affairs promotes national public associations in organizing work on the study of national (native) languages and other subjects of an ethnocultural orientation.

The processes of islamization in Russia in general and in the Tyumen region, in particular, leave effects on various aspects of life of the Islamic population. Therefore, for the purposes of the study, it was important to find out what influence the Islamic factor has on the formation of religious identities in representatives of Muslim communities. In the research, the authors managed to prove that in modern conditions, Islam positively influences the formation of religious identities.

2. Methods

Many researchers have utilized several methods to describe Muslim communities. We developed a special sociological research program to describe the formation of religious identities in the situation of the actualized Islamic factor. The program includes the aspects which are as follows: the conceptual development of the initial proposition, the definition of concepts and specific indicators, and the hypothetical validation of the theoretical, methodological, and empirical foundations of the study. The benefit of this approach is that it provides a multidimensional vision of the phenomenon under analysis.

The first step of the research program was to define the theoretical and methodological part, which included the formulation and support of the problem under analysis. Prior to the commencing the study we defined its goals and tasks, provided the theoretical interpretation of basic concepts. This stage resulted in the hypothesis and the empirical interpretation of important concepts which laid the foundation for the study.

On completion the management of the hypothesis, we singled out and analysed the following categories: religious and national identity, ideological attitudes, traditions and customs, religious confession and consolidating and differentiating features of identification.

The spectrum of the problems is epistemological and objective in nature, since, firstly, it is generated by a lack of knowledge about the state or trends in the processes of people's life activity, reflected in their positive ethnic self-identification [4]. Secondly, the interests of the state and ethnic groups are inconsistent or, otherwise, consistent which leads to contradiction in social interactions [5].

In order to understand the essence of the described phenomenon and to achieve the goal, we conducted a sociological research in the years 2001-2015. In April 2001, we carried out a survey of respondents, the main participants of which were the Siberian Tatars of the city of Tyumen and some people living in the southern part of the Tyumen region. We interviewed 299 people, 42% of the respondents were men, 58% women.

In February-June 2015, we held a survey among the Tatars in the cities of Tyumen, Tobolsk, Yalutorovsk, and in some localities in the districts of the region. 265 of the participants were urban residents and 456 were villagers. The sample type is quota (nationality, gender, age, residence). The sampling error is of 5%.

In the summer of 2015, during an ethno-sociological study on the state of the contemporary confessional situation within the framework of the State Program of the Republic of Tatarstan 'The Preservation of the National Identity of the Tatar People (2014-2016)' 30 in-depth interviews with religious people, representatives of the clergy, and leaders responsible for the implementation of the national policy in the Tyumen region were held.

A major advantage of this approach is that it provides a number of attractive features: quantitative and qualitative analyses to gain insights into the dynamics of the studied phenomenon.

3. Results

3.1. Attitude to religion

The results of studies conducted among the Tatar population of the region (the years 2001-2015) showed stability in the positive orientation of ethnic self-identification [<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/osobennosti-proyavleniya-etnicheskoy-tolerantnosti-v-malyh-sotsialnyh-gruppah-v-mono-i-polietnichnom-regio-nah-rossii>; 6-8].

Table 3 shows the results of the survey regarding the attitude towards religion, depending on nationality. From these data we can formulate the followings:

1. The level of the population religiousness is 62.8%. This is higher than the average index across Russia. For example, according to the data of the study conducted in 2007 by the Institute of Socio-Political Research (ISPR) (headed by Osipov GV, Lokokosov VV, Shultz VL), the religiousness of the population in the central and regional parts of Russia was only 53.0% [9].

2. The population, who did not make the choice between the statuses of believers and non-believers – 11.4%.
3. Non-religious population – 6% (convinced atheists).
4. The ratio of religious and non-religious population depends, in our opinion, on socio-economic, socio-political, confessional, ethnic, and other factors. In Russia this ratio is about 3:1 [9].

Table 3. The outlook mindsets of respondents about the correlation between one's nationality and religion (%).

	Answer variants			
	I am a believer	I am not a believer	I am looking for my path to the God	It is difficult for me to answer
All respondents	62.8	6.0	11.4	19.8
A Tartar by nationality (he/she)	61.1	8.1	10.1	20.2
A Siberian tartar by nationality	61.8	5.0	13.8	16.7
A Kazan tartar by nationality	58.9	9.1	16.7	11.9

It should be noted that the socio-demographic characteristics of religious and non-religious representatives of Islam are blurred, i.e., it is difficult to trace the dependence of the level of religiousness in correlation with the age, sex, social status, place of residence, education, employment, marital status, income level of the respondents. Such conclusions were confirmed by in-depth and expert interviews conducted in 2015 during an ethno-sociological research. The program was conducted by the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan and was implemented within the project ‘Tatars in the Regions of the Russian Federation: Religious Revival and Identity Problems. Ethno-sociological study of the current situation’. The program was designed to cover all areas and aspects of the problem in order to improve the effectiveness of the measures taken and the impact of the program on all the main factors on which the preservation and development of the level of the national identity of the Tatar people depend. The aim of the program is to create conditions for the preservation and development of the national identity of the Tatar people in the Republic of Tatarstan and beyond. An important feature of the Program is that the main results of its implementation ensure inter-ethnic peace and harmony through the harmonization of national interests and interests of the Tatar ethnic community, strengthening the unity of the Tatar ethnic community.

Data were collected using a special questionnaire. Answering the question how often the respondents visited the mosque, every fourth Tatar replied that he had never visited the mosque. Every second answer was ‘seldom’, and every tenth visited a mosque on Fridays. 8.1% of the participants found it difficult to answer this question. In our opinion, only believers could give a positive answer,

but the analysis showed that unbelievers also visited religious institutions, as well as those who were looking for the path to God.

The results of the study showed a dramatic increase in the percentage of people who chose the ethno-cultural and psychological criteria for their identification (Table 4).

Table 4. The dynamics of respondents' answers on the criteria for determining nationality, in % to the total number of respondents

Criteria	Year	
	2001	2010
Person's wish	36.8	31.8
Native language	22.5	39.7
Nationality of a father	23.6	17.9
Nationality of a mother	6.2	3.5
Citizenship	5.4	5.4
Nationality of a father and a mother	4.7	-
No answer	-	2.4

Now we proceed to the analysis of the main criterion for describing the nationality which either stems from 'the respondent's mother tongue' or 'the respondent's own desire'. The analysis of data, presented in Table 4, showed the dominance of the main criterion 'the respondent's mother tongue' and not the criterion 'the respondent's own desire'. Interestingly, 10 years ago, these criteria had the opposite meaning. At the same time, such criteria as 'the nationality of the father or mother' have lost their initial significance today.

Table 5. Dynamics of respondents' answers about the factors that bring people of one nationality together, in % to the total number of respondents.

Factor	Year	
	2001	2010
City we live in	4.7	20.7
Language we speak	36.2	80.6
History	19.5	40.5
Traditions and customs	34.5	82.1
Behavioural features	2.6	8.1
Features of national character	2.3	16.5
Religion	18.3	61.5
Appearance	5.9	10.4
Confessional unity	0.8	5.1
The generality of the calendar rites	1.6	17.4

It is a common knowledge that a language and culture bring people closer to a particular community. The growing spread of the national language, its use from generation to generation, the broadcasting of television and radio programs, the periodicals and magazines in the Tatar language evoke a feeling of pride for the nation. In addition, language provides the preservation of an

original ethnic culture. Thus, language and culture, being indirect indicators of ethnic self-identification, are essential elements of the national self-identity of a person (Table 5).

Now we proceed to the respondents' answers to the question whether they observe the customs of their people. We received the answers in the years 2001-2015. Note that the situation has changed dramatically, i.e., the number of representatives who observe customs and traditions of the Tatars has increased 4.5 times (Table 6).

Table 6. The dynamics of the answers to the question, if the respondents observe the customs of their nation, in % to the total number of respondents.

Follow the traditions	Year	
	2001	2010
Completely	6.1	27.2
Partially	65.0	64.6
Do not observe	24.2	5.1
Do not know the traditions	4.7	2.1
No answer	-	1.0

We asked the respondents if they planned to start studying, observing traditions and customs. Almost every second Tatar responded positively. The answer 'I do not plan' was received from a six times smaller number of respondents. At the same time, more than one third of the respondents did not think about it, and one in ten found it difficult to answer this question. Women more often than men answered the question positively (Table 7).

Table 7. The answers to the question about the respondents' plans for studying and observing traditions and customs, depending on their gender (%).

	Answer variants			
	I will study and keep our traditions	I do not plan to study our traditions	I haven't considered the question	It is difficult for me to answer the question
All respondents	46.8	6.8	38.3	8.1
Men	43.6	6.7	42.6	7.8
Women	47.2	7.7	36.1	9.0

3.2. Attitude to inter-ethnic marriage

The current study found the same processes in the family sphere. More often representatives of the Tatar population start to treat inter-ethnic marriages positive (33.7%) or indifferent (26.6%). At the same time, 2.7% agree to such a marriage, however, depending on the nationality of the spouse. The ratio of experts to inter-ethnic marriages is different: every second expert in 2002 was negative, one in four was positive, 13.0% were indifferent, 9.6% were willing to

accept such a marriage, but depending on the nationality of the spouse. In 2015, respondents became more loyal to inter-ethnic marriages.

The results of the study indicate that over the recent years there have been some significant changes in the family issues. Firstly, respondents often deny interethnic marriages. If in 2001 every 3rd representative of the Tatar nationality expressed a positive attitude to inter-ethnic marriages, in 2010 – every 4th respondent reacted positively to such marriages. Secondly, they are less likely to express a positive attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages. Note that the attitude towards inter-ethnic marriages varies depending on whether the participants in a survey are members of a single-ethnic or mixed marriage.

There are some important findings which describe the trends identified in 2001-2015. They are as follows.

1. The higher the level of education of the respondent, the more often he creates a mixed marriage: in mixed marriages, 1.9% of respondents received primary education, 33.0-38.5% of respondents received secondary specialized education, 27.1-42.2% – higher education at university level.
2. More often, single-parent marriages are typical of the respondents who are engaged in education, culture, health, and commercial structures.
3. Tatars, who observe the customs of their people, often live in single-nation marriages. In 2015, every 10th Tatar, observing the customs, was in a mixed marriage. At the same time, 2.5 times more respondents created a one-national marriage.
4. Tatars who are fluent in their native language are more likely to join single-parent marriages. Most respondents (83.3%) speak their native language fluently, they talk and write. Among the Tatars who are in mixed marriages, there are 52.1%. At the same time, one out of every four of them admitted that they did not speak the language and studying the Tatar language was not a part of their plans. Among respondents who are in single-parent marriages, this is 4 times less.

The analysis of the answers on the state of the cultural and leisure sphere in the Tyumen region and the participation of social groups from the Tatar population showed that in different localities the opportunities were not the same, there was some discrimination in the offer of national services.

There is much evidence that to improve the national and cultural life of the Tatar population, it is necessary to take some measures. They are as follows:

- to develop special sections and circles for adolescents and young people;
- to create national schools;
- to maintain a regional centre of culture of the Tatar population;
- to support national libraries;
- to invite performing artists and amateur groups from Tatarstan;
- to organize amateur groups and Tatar theatres.

The Tatar population professes Islam of Sunni direction. Its significance has increased these days. Most of the participants of in-depth interviews identify themselves with Islam. On the question ‘Can a Tatar be a non-Muslim?’ the representatives of the clergy answered as follows: “A Tatar can be a non-

Muslim. But a Muslim Tatar cannot be a non-Tatar” (male, imam of the mosque, 35 y.o.); “A Tatar can be a non-Muslim, if he professes not Islam, but another religion. In our mosque, a niece of a Tatar woman married a Hindu in Moscow and now she professes his religion” (male, imam of the mosque, 49 y.o.).

In all spheres of the life of the Tatar population (everyday life, traditions, customs, culture, moral and moral attitudes), the traditions of Islam are important, which is associated with the changes in the world, the country, the region [10].

F.K. Gilfanova proposed a taxonomy of people professing Islam in the Tyumen region [11]. For the indicators of her taxonomy, she chose the views of Muslims, their age, observance of traditions and rituals. As a result, she revealed, firstly, the believers who were genuinely deep followers, including fanatics, and defined their main characteristics, i.e., unconditional religious commitment, blind faith in the God with a strong emotional beginning, active religious activity, complete rejection and hostile attitude to atheists and believers in another God. Within the taxonomy Gilfanova singled out moderately believing people, mostly elderly or of middle age, who in fact considered themselves Muslims. They were familiar with the principles of the Muslim religion, observed the traditions and performed the rites of Islam, but did not show activity in its propaganda. The 3rd type identified by Gilfanova were the weakly believing people of young and middle ages. This group was the most numerous of all types. Its representatives did not observe strictly the basic prescriptions of the Koran, sometimes went on holidays to the mosque, observed certain traditions. Most intellectuals were members of this group, supporting with their behaviour the traditions of Islam.

4. Conclusions

The sociological research, conducted by the authors, confirms that in modern conditions Islam is an important channel for educating the younger generation through respect for traditions. It helps to determine the spiritual and moral standards in the formation of tolerant respect for the views and beliefs, ethnic differences of the representatives of different peoples, which become the usual practice of the sociocultural life of the region. Muslims residing in the Tyumen region do not experience harassment for national reasons. In the region, there are conditions for observing religious traditions, customs, rituals, studying and developing their religion. They have the opportunity to observe traditions, customs and rituals of their people, learn their native languages, develop their own religious beliefs. And this promotes harmonization of relations with people of other religions, professing other religions.

At the same time, studies have revealed a number of aspects in the ethnic-confessional situation among the Tatars, including rapid growth and actualization of ethnic and confessional self-awareness, the growth of religiosity, the strengthening of the Muslim community integration, the influence of religion

on the identification processes in society, inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations.

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