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PROBLEMATIC ISSUES OF INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC ASSOCIATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY UKRAINE

By Serhii Ismahilov and Galyna Sagan

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Abstract

The article analyzes the revival of the Islamic religion which began in Ukraine in the 1990s. The authors point to the problematic issues of the institutional establishment of Islamic associations in contemporary Ukraine. In particular, four stages of development of Islam in independent Ukraine, which have their own institutional and ideological characteristics, are distinguished. Thus, the first stage was the creation of the first three spiritual administrations (the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine, and the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine), the development of which defined the ideology of future development of Islam in Ukraine (national orientation, leadership projects, etc.). That ideology was unacceptable to many independent Muslim communities who refused to participate in national and leadership projects. This led to the formation of the second stage (2007-2010) of the local development of Islam. The completion of the stage was marked by the creation of the common Council of Spiritual Administrations and Centers of Muslims of Ukraine. The next stage (2010-2016) is characterized by the artificial creation of associations affiliated with other Spiritual administrations. In the fourth stage, which has been going on since the end of 2016, the processes of self-identification of Muslims in a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic environment, the participation of Muslims in the protection of their homeland, etc., have intensified. In total,

nine Muslim Spiritual Administrations or Centers have been established during the years of independence, four of which (DUM of Crimea, DCM of Ukraine, DUMU “The Unity” and DCM of Crimea) now operate in the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia and have embarked on the path of collaborationism. The authors draw attention to the numerical indicators of accounting of Muslim communities and believers in general, the peculiarities of the Islamic educational process, the dependence of Ukrainian Spiritual administrations on foreign Islamic centers, and the attempts of political activity of the Ukrainian Islamic *Ummah*.

Keywords: Islam in Ukraine, Muslim Spiritual Administrations, Spiritual Centers, Council of Spiritual Administrations, the Muslim Party of Ukraine.

Introduction

The history of Islam in Ukraine stretches over a thousand years. Muslim communities have existed in the territories of the Crimea and Donbas, as well as in some present-day regions of Ukraine, and for centuries, mosques and other Islamic places of worship have been built. However, after 1944, when the Crimean Tatars were forcibly displaced from the Crimea, Stalin’s political terror spread over Islam in general. In fact, the entire religious confession was prohibited.

After the Second World War, neither a centralized Muslim religious association was left in Ukraine, nor did any mosques or religious community function. The whole spiritual life of Muslims went underground. Islam in Ukraine has almost disappeared from the sphere of public religious life, becoming an object of personal faith, the basis for domestic customs and rituals. A considerable number of followers of Islam dwelt in many big cities of Ukraine (Kyiv, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Makiivka). However, all their religious opportunities were limited mainly to funeral-commemoration rites held in secret in private homes of older Muslims. That is why the institutional development of modern Islamic associations of Ukraine is of the same age as Ukrainian independence. However, during this short historical period, Muslim organizations have gone through several stages of their development, each with its own logic, specificity, and direction.

The Revival of the Islamic Religion in Ukraine in the 1990s

The year 1989 was the starting point of modern Islam in Ukraine. The Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union adopted the Resolution on condemnation of the criminal deportation of Crimean Tatars. Over a period of three years (1989-1991), about 200,000 Crimean Tatars returned to Crimea.¹ This led to a wave-like surge in ethnic and religious self-awareness of many people whose ancestors were Muslim and this process expanded beyond Crimea. Muslim religious communities began to form, old mosques were restored, and new mosques were built. First contacts with fellow believers beyond the borders of Ukraine were established. The dynamics of the revival of Islam at that time demonstrated that only four Muslim communities were established in Ukraine (in the Crimea) in 1990, but by the end of 1991, there were 32 of them.² However, Islamic religious associations (spiritual administrations) began to emerge only with the declaration of the state independence of Ukraine.

At present, there are over a thousand Muslim religious communities (including the occupied territories) functioning in Ukraine. However, there are no official statistics on the number of Muslims in the country. According to various estimates of religious leaders, there are between 700,000 to two million believers,³ although experts consider that these numbers might be too conservative. Thus, according to the report "Islam and Civil Society in Times of Trial", the proportion of Muslims is 9% of the total population of Ukraine (i.e., about 400,000 people).⁴ At the same time, most scientists use the 2001 census data, summarizing the representatives of "Muslim" nationalities (Crimean Tatars, Volga Tatars, Azerbaijanis, Chechens, Arabs, etc.). Generally, the most realistic is the above-mentioned figure of 400-500,000 Muslims, the majority of whom are the Crimean Tatars (about 300,000).⁵

At the institutional level, these believers are united in nine Muslim Spiritual administrations and Spiritual centers. In addition to the associations, there are also 75 independent Muslim religious organizations (at the beginning of 2019). All these Islamic administrations, centers and independent communities are Sunni, except for six Shia

¹ М. Якубович, *Іслам в Україні: історія і сучасність*. (Вінниця: ТОВ "Нілан-ЛТД", 2016), 218-219.

² М.І. Кирюшко, О.Є. Бойцова. *Бойцова. Іслам в Криму: релігійно-національна самоідентифікація кримськотатарського народу*. (Київ: Світогляд, 2005), 202.

³ See more: С. Здіорук, "Конфесійно-історичні аспекти поширення ісламу на теренах України і сучасне мусульманське середовище." *Українське релігієзнавство. Бюлетень*. 57 (дод.) (Київ, 2011), 124.

⁴ *Іслам та громадянське суспільство в часи випробувань*. Аналітична доповідь. За ред. О.В.Богомолова. (К.: Інститут сходознавства ім. А.Ю.Кримського НАНУ, 2015), 3.

⁵ С.И. Богомоллов, *Ісламська ідентичність в Україні*. (Київ: ИД "Стилос", 2006), 28.

communities that have already received state registration.⁶

The development of Muslim religious associations in independent Ukraine can be divided into four chronological and substantive stages.

The First Stage of Development of Islam in Independent Ukraine

This stage chronologically covers the period from 1990 to 2007. At that time, the first three associations were created, namely, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Crimea, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine, and the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine.

The first Muslim religious association which emerged in independent Ukraine was the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Crimea (hereafter the DUM of the Crimea). In 1990, the Kadiyat of the Muslims of the Crimea (the KMC) was created, which in 1992, was altered into the DUM of the Crimea with granting it the status of a *muhtasibat*, an administrative unit autonomous in a canonical way. At the time of its creation, the KMC was within the jurisdiction of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia (the DUMES). The process of reforming it into the DUMC was the result of the efforts of qadi Seitjelil Ibrahimov, who advocated for the creation of an entirely independent Spiritual administration at first for the Muslims of the Crimea, and a little later, he initiated the creation of a unified Spiritual administration for all Muslims of Ukraine.⁷

The Mufti of the DUMES, Talgat Tadzhuiddin, opposed gaining the full canonical and organizational independence by the DUM of the Crimea. However, when the process of separation of the Muslims of Ukraine became irreversible, T. Tadzhuiddin began to insist on the subordination of the DUM of the Crimea to another religious organization—the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (the DUM of Ukraine), headed by mufti Ahmad Tamim.⁸

In 1992, preparatory work for the creation of a unified Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine and the Crimea was undertaken in Ukraine. However, this initiative was actively opposed by the Russian mufti T. Tadzhuiddin and the mufti of the DUMU A. Tamim, who still managed to disrupt the unity congress of the Muslims of Ukraine and prevent the creation of a

⁶ “Дані Департаменту у справах релігій та національностей Міністерства культури України. Форма 1. Звіт про мережу церков і релігійних організацій в Україні станом на 01.01.2019 р.” РІСУ. https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2019/75410/ Accessed 27/03/2020/.

⁷See more: E.B. Бойцова, В.Ю. Ганкевич, Э. С. Муратова, З.З. Хайрединова, *Ислам в Крыму: Очерки истории функционирования мусульманских институтов*. (Симферополь: Элиньо, 2009), 40-45.

⁸ Э. С. Муратова, *Ислам в современном Крыму: индикаторы и проблемы процесса возрождения*, (Симферополь: Элиньо, 2008), 66-75.

unified Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine and the Crimea. That is why in 1992, only the DUM of the Crimea, which was registered as an independent Spiritual Administration, was created. Sheikh Seitjelil Ibrahimov became the first mufti of the DUM of the Crimea. He held this position from 1992 to 1995. In 1995, Nuri Mustafayev was elected a new mufti. He was an active supporter of the involvement of the Muslim communities in Crimea in the political tasks of the National Movement of the Crimean Tatars. A new position was introduced in the *muftiate*—a representative of the *Mejlis* of the Crimean Tatar People. In fact, the DUM of the Crimea was brought under control of the *Mejlis*.⁹ In 1999, Emirali Ablayev was elected the *mufti* of the DUM of the Crimea. Since then, he has been re-elected as the *Qurultay* of the Crimean Tatar People three times, and is still holding this position.

The DUM of Crimea is the largest Muslim association of Ukraine in terms of the number of communities. As on January 1, 2014, (before the Russian annexation of Crimea), it consisted of 920 religious communities (350 officially registered and 570 working without official registration). Almost all of them were provided with places of worship at that time (but about 60% of these places of worship were adapted buildings).¹⁰ Most of them are located in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, but several communities are in Kherson and Zaporizhia regions, as well as in Sevastopol.

Under the conditions of the temporary occupation of Crimea, the DUM of Crimea was re-registered in accordance with the requirements of Russian legislation. Now, it is called “The Religious Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol” and cooperates actively with the new authorities. Despite this fact, the DUM of Crimea continues to be within the legal framework of Ukraine, is registered and even has five registered communities here.¹¹

In the order of the emergence and number of communities, the second is the Muslim

⁹ А. Булатов, “Ислам в Крыму: от трагического прошлого к проблемам современности.” *Ислам в Содружестве Независимых Государств*.. №4 (5) (2011). <http://www.idmedina.ru/books/islamic/?4166> Accessed 27/03/2020/

¹⁰ “Звіт про забезпеченість церков і релігійних організацій України культовими будівлями та приміщеннями, пристосованими під молитовні, станом на 1 січня 2014 р. (форма № 2).” *Офіційний сайт Міністерства культури України*. http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=244950598. Accessed 27/03/2020/; “Наказ Міністерства культури України «Про річну статистичну звітність з питань державно-конфесійних відносин в Україні за 2013 р.» (релігійні організації)” *Офіційний сайт МКУ* /http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=244950598. Accessed 27/03/2020/.

¹¹ Дані Департаменту у справах релігій та національностей Міністерства культури України. Форма 1. Звіт про мережу церков і релігійних організацій в Україні станом на 01.01.2019 р. *PICV*. https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2019/75410/ Accessed 27/03/2020/.

religious association, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (the DUM of Ukraine). As of January 1, 2019, it consisted of 122 religious organizations.¹² Since 1992, the Main *Muhtasibat* Administration, which was subordinated to the DUMES, has existed in Kyiv. In April 1993, it was transformed into the DUM of Ukraine and became legally independent of foreign organizations. The unchallenged *Mufti* Ahmad Tamim is the head of the DUMU now. The administration headed by him is in a conflicting relationship with the DUM of Crimea, the DCM of Ukraine, the DUMU “UMMA,” and the Religious Administration of Independent Islamic Communities (the RUNMGU) “Kyiv Muftiyat.”

In the early period of its development, the DUM of Ukraine came under the leadership, ideology, and influence of a new religious branch in Islam, Ahabashism. Currently, Ahabashism in Ukraine and the DUM of Ukraine are practically synonymous (*Al-Ahabash*, better known as the “Association of Islamic Charitable Projects,” was founded in the mid-1980s by the Ethiopian preacher Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harari and is now regarded as one of the new sect-like branches of Islam). Since Ahabashism is considered a non-traditional branch for Muslims not only in Ukraine, but also in the Islamic world, most Muslim communities in the country did not want to join the DUM of Ukraine.¹³

The DUM of Ukraine officially calls itself a follower of Sunnism, but their doctrine has a number of peculiarities in their views on the essence of Allah, Divine Attributes of Allah, and some other aspects of doctrine. Only those who share their beliefs are considered by *Al-Ahabash* to be Muslims, while others are considered either unfaithful or misguided.

In 1994, as a result of the conflict between the Muslim communities of Donbas and the leadership of the DUM of Ukraine, a new All-Ukrainian Muslim Association emerged called the Independent Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (Donetsk), which was later renamed as the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine (the DCM of Ukraine). The point is that Donbas’s Muslims accused the leadership of the DUM of Ukraine of illegitimacy, and also accused *Mufti* Ahmad Tamim of not being suited to the position of *mufti*. The DUMU leadership, in turn, accused these communities of “Islamic fundamentalism.”

The conflict between the Kyiv Center and the Muslim communities of Donbas began

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Б. Салгирчук, “Куди йде мусульманська умма України після агресії Росії?” *День*. 2016, 31 липня. <https://m.day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/polityka/kudy-yde-musulmanska-umma-ukrayiny-pislya-agresiyi-rosiyi> Accessed 27/03/2020/

almost from the moment of creation of the DUM of Ukraine. In 1993, communities opposed to the DUM of Ukraine united around the “Association of Independent Muslim Communities,” the leader of which was Rashid Brahin, the head of the Muslim community “Star of the Prophet” in Donetsk. On September 23, 1994, on the basis of this association, the “Spiritual Center of Independent Muslim Communities of Ukraine” was created (since 1999, it was called the DCM of Ukraine). The DCM of Ukraine was officially registered in January 1995.

According to official statistics, as on January 1, 2019, the DCM of Ukraine included 16 religious organizations¹⁴ from four regions of Ukraine. Most of them were in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Since 2014, the DCMU communities in the occupied territories have been functioning autonomously in each of the regions.

A special feature of the first stage of development of Islam in Ukraine is the active processes of formation of Muslim education in Ukraine (madrasas and mosque-based Sunday schools), as well as the emergence of a new generation of the Islamic clergy. Relations with the foreign Islamic religious and political centers became increasingly sustainable, which often financed the construction of new mosques and paid for the religious and cultural programs.

It should also be noted that until the beginning of the 21st century, the lives of Muslims in Ukraine has been formed during difficult competitive relations between the three religious associations. The peculiarity of these relations was that the DUM of Crimea and the DCM of Ukraine adhered to the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other spiritual administrations. However, the DUM of Ukraine openly disregarded this principle. This consisted primarily in attempts of this administration to expand its influence on the communities in Crimea and Donbas. Therefore, it is natural that the DUMU’s relations with other Islamic centers were and still remain disagreeable.

In addition, the division into three Spiritual Administrations occurred not only because of the practice of different branches of Islam. A division according to national affiliation also played an important role in it—Islam in fact acted as a factor for certain ethnic mobilizations. Thus, the DUM of Crimea, from the very beginning, had positioned itself as a Spiritual Administration only for the Crimean Tatars and therefore worked closely with their political-

¹⁴ Дані Департаменту у справах релігій та національностей Міністерства культури України. Форма 1. Звіт про мережу церков і релігійних організацій в Україні станом на 01.01.2019 р. *PICV*. https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2019/75410/ Accessed 27/03/2020/

public body, the *Majlis*. The DCM of Ukraine focused mainly on the Volga Tatars of Donbas. The DUM of Ukraine attempted to deal with all the so-called “Islamic diaspora”– residents and visitors of Ukraine who came from the countries where Islam was either the dominant religion or a significant minority. It should also be noted that each of these organizations was headed by a sufficiently charismatic leader who, by his intransigence and through personal leadership ambitions, was also a source of tension in the relationship between the Spiritual administrations and centers.

This period is also characterized by the fact that the Muslims of Ukraine created their own political project, the Muslim Party of Ukraine (the PMU). The program documents stated that this political force “relies on the ideological foundations of Islam.” The foundational congress of the party was held in 1997 in Donetsk.¹⁵ However, this attempt by Muslims (like similar attempts by Christians) to have an impact on Ukraine’s political life was not successful. In addition to the fact that the PMU was not able to avoid internal conflicts and divisions, this party throughout its history had a conflict with the leadership of the *Majlis* of the Crimean Tatar people. The *Majlis* considered the PMU as competitors in the political representation of Crimean Tatars. However, not only was this the cause of the conflict; there were also significant political differences. The *Majlis* always had a pro-Ukrainian orientation and the Ukrainian national-democratic forces acted as its political partners. The orientation of the PMU was moderately pro-Russian, and the pro-Moscow Party of Regions later became its ally. It is natural that during the 2004 presidential election, the PMU campaigned for the pro-Russia-oriented V. Yanukovich, and the *Majlis* supported the pro-European presidential candidate, V. Yushchenko.¹⁶

The Muslim Party of Ukraine has not achieved any results in its political activity. In the 1998 elections to the Parliament of Ukraine, it received only 0.19% of the vote, and did not participate in the 2002 elections. On December 17, 2005, the PMU Congress adopted a decision on the party’s self-dissolution and joined the Party of Regions.

The Second Stage of Development of Islam in Independent Ukraine

The distinguishing mark of this stage (2007-2010) is related to the fact that, under the

¹⁵ С. Здюрук, “Конфесійно-історичні аспекти поширення ісламу на теренах України і сучасне мусульманське середовище.” *Українське релігієзнавство. Бюлетень*. 57 (дод.) (2011), 125.

¹⁶ “Говорит Мустафа Джемілев.” *Доклади на сессиях и конференциях Курултая крымскотатарского народа (1991-2001)*. (Симферополь, 2001), 143-144.

influence of the religious renaissance of the 1990s, new independent Muslim communities emerged quickly in Ukraine. Many of them were reluctant to join any of the three existing spiritual administrations or centers at that time. An increase in the number and authority of these independent communities is characterized by the process of their voluntary association into new Spiritual administrations and the creation of joint Council of Spiritual administrations and centers of Muslims of Ukraine.

In particular, in 2007, the Religious Administration of Independent Islamic Communities “*Kyiv Muftiyat*” (the RUNMGU “*Kyiv Muftiyat*”) was established. It was the fourth Muslim Spiritual Administration to emerge. However, unlike the first three, this administration was not All-Ukrainian but had a regional status. The *Muftiyat*’s Statute was registered on June 5, 2007. The founders of the RUNMGU “*Kyiv Muftiyat*” were the cultural and ethnic communities of Volga Tatars from eight regions of Ukraine. Currently, it has only one religious community and one religious center.¹⁷

Another peculiarity of this association is the fact that since its emergence, it has been oriented towards maintaining contacts with the Russian Muslims. In particular, it is connected with the Spiritual Administration of Tatarstan and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European Part of Russia (the DUMER). The unchallenged leader of the RUNMGU “*Kyiv Muftiyat*” Kanafia Khusnutdinov for a time even joined the Council of Muftis of Russia as an associate member. The center of the cult life of this association is the building of the Tatar House in Kyiv. Therefore, the religious life of this community is very closely related to the national culture and customs of the Volga Tatars.

In early 2008, leaders of a number of independent Islamic communities gathered in Kyiv to discuss the possibility of creating a new Spiritual administration through the voluntary unification of their communities into a single centralized structure. This is how the idea arose of creating the first Spiritual Administration, which was created neither around a certain spiritual leader nor for the needs of a particular national community. The unification was based on ideological principles (the Sunni branch of Islam; supporters of the *al-Wasat* idea, in other words, “moderation,” which does not recognize radicalism and extremes; and respects other

¹⁷ “Дані Департаменту у справах релігій та національностей Міністерства культури України. Форма 1. Звіт про мережу церков і релігійних організацій в Україні станом на 01.01.2019 р.” *PICV*. https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2019/75410/ Accessed 27/03/2020.

religions, cultures, and traditions).¹⁸

This is how the All-Ukrainian Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine “UMMA” (the DUMU “UMMA”) emerged. At first, it included about a dozen independent communities from 10 regions of Ukraine. The process of registering constitutional documents began after a long discussion about the statute, and the basic principles that would satisfy all communities. In September 2008, the DUMU “UMMA” received the state registration.

On January 25, 2009, Said Ismagilov was elected a mufti of this institution at the congress of the DUMU “UMMA.” He was subsequently re-elected several times, and since early 2020, he has remained the unchallenged leader of the DUMU “UMMA.” As of the beginning of 2020, 31 communities from 18 regions of Ukraine are included in this Spiritual Administration.¹⁹ The Military Chaplaincy Office of Muslims of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Center for *Fatwa* and Research, as well as the Eastern European Islamic University are also operating under the DUMU “UMMA.”

After the state registration of the DUMU “UMMA,” the newly formed association entered into an open conflict with the DUM of Ukraine. The leadership of the DUM of Ukraine tried to cancel the state registration through court and thereby liquidate the DUMU “UMMA.” However, this attempt was unsuccessful; the court upheld the lawfulness of the registration of the DUMU “UMMA.” However, since then, the relations between these two Spiritual administrations have remained unchangingly strained.

The second stage of institutional development of Islamic associations in contemporary Ukraine is also characterized by the attempt to create the Council of Spiritual Administrations common to all spiritual administrations. So, in the spring of 2009, with the assistance of the then Head of the State Committee of Ukraine for Nationalities and Religions O. Sagan, the DUM of Crimea, together with the DUMU “UMMA” and the RUNMGU “*Kyiv Muftiate*,” created the “Council of Spiritual Administrations and Centers of Muslims of Ukraine” under the State Committee for National Religions in Ukraine. The newly formed council assumed representative

¹⁸ See more: М. Якубович, С. Ісмагілов, *Іслам у Східній Європі: традиція поміркованості*, (Ічня: Формат, 2019).

¹⁹ “Громади ДУМУ «УММА»”. *Офіційний сайт «УММА». Духовне управління мусульман України.* <https://umma.in.ua/ua/gromady-dumu-umma> Accessed 27/03/2020.

functions to act on behalf of Muslims of Ukraine and to organize and conduct the *Hajj* for Muslims of Ukraine.²⁰

After the liquidation of the State Committee for National Religions of Ukraine in 2011, the leaders of the mentioned associations gathered in Simferopol, changed the name of the council to the “Council of Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Ukraine” and decided to continue their work despite the liquidation of the State Committee of National Religions of Ukraine under which they functioned. Formally, this council did not announce the termination of its activity, but since 2014 (after the annexation of Crimea) it has actually not been functioning.

The creation of the Council of Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Ukraine has been the first, and so far, the only successful attempt at a dialogue and cooperation between the three Spiritual administrations of Ukraine. It should be noted that the DUM of Ukraine and the DCM of Ukraine were also invited to participate in this council. However, in view of the disagreeable relations with other Spiritual administrations, these Muslim institutions ignored the invitation to join an inter-denominational dialogue between the Islamic associations of Ukraine.

Thus, the second stage of institutional development of Islam in Ukraine is characterized by the emergence of fundamentally new approaches to the formation of Spiritual administrations. Namely, a change can be seen in the emphasis from national grounds and leadership qualities of the leaders to the introduction of ideological criteria and democratic approaches in the formation of Spiritual administrations and the election of their leadership. At this stage, the main lines of confrontation between the Spiritual administrations, which still generate tension within the Muslim community of Ukraine, have finally been formed. First of all, this is a non-constructive position of the DUM of Ukraine, which categorically does not accept the activities of other Spiritual administrations of Muslims.

The Third Stage of Institutional Development of Islam in Independent Ukraine

This stage began in 2010 and lasted until 2016. Its most active phase unfolded just before Russia’s occupation of Crimea and the particular regions of Donbas. A special feature of this stage is the process of an artificial creation of associations affiliated with other Spiritual administrations. In particular, at this stage, two organizations emerged: the Spiritual Center of

²⁰ М. Якубович, *Іслам в Україні: історія і сучасність*. (Вінниця: ТОВ "Нілан-ЛТД", 2016), 226.

Muslims of Crimea and the Religious Administration of Ukrainian Muslims “The Unity.”

After a long confrontation with the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Crimea, a number of independent Muslim communities (at least they positioned themselves in such a way at that time) initiated the creation of an independent regional religious association, the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea (the DCM of Crimea). Its statute was registered on December 14, 2010. The DUM of Crimea actively opposed the registration of this administration since it maintained that the creation of any independent Muslim communities and associations in Crimean autonomy was unacceptable. According to the leaders of the *Muftiat* of the DUM of Crimea, the whole territory of Crimea is a “canonically indivisible administrative unit” and since the times of the Crimean Khanate, this territory in its religious life has been subordinated to the *Mufti* of Crimea elected nationally in the *Qurultay* (a national assembly, the highest representative body of the Crimean Tatar people).

However, the leadership of the DCM of Crimea appealed to the basic law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations in Ukraine,” which did not limit the possible number of religious associations in any administrative-territorial units of the country. According to the official statistics, at the time of their active development (2014), the DCM of Crimea consisted of 27 religious communities from different regions of autonomy.²¹ Until 2014, the DCM of Crimea was headed by *Mufti* Ridvan Veliev.

The DUM of Crimea in numerous official statements calls the DCM of Crimea the followers of the *Al-Ahbash* branch, which introduces an ideological line in Crimea, initiated by Ahmad Tamim, the *mufti* of the DUM of Ukraine.²² This is confirmed by the official ideological and theological position of the administration, as well as their literature and constant references to the founders of the *Al-Ahbash* branch in media resources. In 2014, under conditions of the temporary Russian occupation of Crimea, communities of the DCM of Crimea “were registered” under the Russian law as the “Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims—the Taurian Muftiyat”(the CSAM TM). Ruslan Saitvaliev was chosen its mufti. The CSAM TM now consists

²¹ “Звіт про забезпеченість церков і релігійних організацій України культовими будівлями та приміщеннями, пристосованими під молитовні, станом на 1 січня 2014 р. (форма № 2).” *Офіційний сайт Міністерства культури України*. http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=244950598 Accessed 27/03/2020/; “Наказ Міністерства культури України «Про річну статистичну звітність з питань державно-конфесійних відносин в Україні за 2013 р.» (релігійні організації)” *Офіційний сайт МКУ* /http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/publish/article?art_id=244950598 Accessed 27/03/2020/.

²² See more: Кирилл Губа. “Ислам в Крыму: вчера и сегодня. Вызовы и угрозы мусульманской общине Крыма исходят извне.” *Свободная Пресса*. <https://svpressa.ru/politic/article/139735/> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

of about a hundred communities (at least, such data is declared by their mufti on his website,²³ but the actual number may be about 20 units²⁴) in Crimea and declares a stable pro-Russian position. However, the DCM of Crimea did not refuse the Ukrainian registration as well. Formally, it is still legal in Ukraine as well—there are two communities outside Crimea that are officially registered in the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine.²⁵

One of the youngest Spiritual administrations at the time of creation in Ukraine has also received the All-Ukrainian status—the Religious Administration of the Ukrainian Muslims “The Unity” (the DUMU “The Unity”). The managing center of this administration is located in Makiivka City, Donetsk region (now an occupied territory).

The DUMU “The Unity” is the most non-public association in Ukraine. Over a period of its existence, it has never had its own information resources—either printed or electronic. Therefore, there is very little information available on the structure of the administration, its activities and governing bodies. It is known from the media that the DUMU “The Unity” received a state registration on July 4, 2012. It is headed by *Mufti Rinat Aysin*. He publicly calls himself the representative of the *mufti* of the DUMES (the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European part of the USSR and Siberia) *Talgat Tadzhuiddin* and recognizes him as his spiritual advisor. The founders of the administration are five Muslim religious communities from Donetsk region, Kyiv, Zaporizhia, Sevastopol, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. At present, the number of communities of the DUMU “The Unity” is estimated to be no more than nine communities²⁶ as they operate in the territory, which is not controlled by Ukraine and therefore statistics are not kept.)

Under conditions of the temporary occupation of particular areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the available information on the activity of the DUMU “The Unity” is entirely insufficient. However, it is known that *Mufti Rinat Aysin* participated in the International

²³ *Центральное духовное управления мусульман – Таврический муфтият. Официальный сайт.* <http://cdumk.ru/tsdumtm/deyatelnost-tsdumtm> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

²⁴ Б. Салгирчук. “Куди йде мусульманська умма України після агресії Росії?” *День*. 2016, 31 липня. <https://m.day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/polityka/kudy-yde-musulmanska-umma-ukrayiny-pislya-agresiyi-rosiyi> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

²⁵ See more: “Дані Департаменту у справах релігій та національностей МКУ. Форма 1. Звіт про мережу церков і релігійних організацій в Україні станом на 01.01.2019.” РІСУ https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2019/75410/ Accessed 27/03/2020/.

²⁶ Б.Салгирчук, “Куди йде мусульманська умма України після агресії Росії?” *День*. 2016, 31 липня. <https://m.day.kyiv.ua/uk/article/polityka/kudy-yde-musulmanska-umma-ukrayiny-pislya-agresiyi-rosiyi> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

Conference in Grozny in 2016, where he signed the so-called “Grozny fatwa” as “Mufti of the DPR,”²⁷ and also successfully “cooperates” with the leadership of “the Donetsk People’s Republic” and “the Luhansk People’s Republic” which are unlawful quasi-state illegitimate associations that emerged in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and are still existing thanks to Russia’s militaristic support.

The spiritual administrations, which emerged during the third stage of institutional development of the Muslim associations of Ukraine, united a very small part of the Muslim community, failed to become prominent on the religious map of Ukraine but became more prominent under conditions of the Russian occupation by their open collaborationism.

The Fourth Stage of Institutional Development of Islamic Associations in Contemporary Ukraine

This stage began at the end of 2016 and continues until this day. It is characterized primarily by the intensification of processes of self-identification of Muslims in a multi-denominational and multi-ethnic environment, the deepening of the adaptation of Muslims in Ukrainian society, and the increase of their religious and political activity. In particular, the Muslims of Ukraine actively participated in the events of the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014) and the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO). Many of them still remain in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other security forces.²⁸

The cooperation and inter-confessional dialogue between the Muslim organizations of Ukraine has continued. Islamic spiritual educational institutions have an important role to play in this cooperation. There are a total of four spiritual educational institutions and about a hundred Sunday schools in Ukraine (excluding the occupied territories).

At this stage, several new spiritual administrations were created. The most notable among them is the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (the DUM ARC), which operates in the territory controlled by Ukraine. In particular, in November 2016, the communities of Muslims displaced from Crimea held a congress at which they decided to create the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (the

²⁷ See more: “Муфтий всея ДНР и его Всеукраинское духовное управление «Единение»”. *Інформаційно-аналитический портал «ГолосИслама, RU*. 2016, 4 мая / <https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=29630> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

²⁸ See more: М. Якубович, *Від Майдану до АТО: Українські мусульмани в умовах військово-політичної агресії (2013-2016)*. (Вінниця: ТОВ “Нілан-ЛТД”, 2017).

DUM ARC) on the mainland of Ukraine.²⁹ The reason for its creation was the collaborationism of both Muslim associations in the occupied Crimea, the DUM of Crimea and the DCM of Crimea. The Crimean Tatars, who were in the territory controlled by Ukraine, did not want to accept this collaborationism. The *Majlis* of the Crimean Tatar people actively supported them in this position.

The registration of the DUM ARC took place on November 23, 2017. In its essence, it is a centralized religious organization of Muslims-Crimean Tatars. Aider Rustemov was elected the mufti of the DUM ARC. The organization has six registered communities in different parts of Ukraine.³⁰ The DUM ARC cooperates closely with the *Majlis* of the Crimean Tatar people; its supreme body is the *Qurultay* of the Muslims of Ukraine and the Crimea.³¹ It is expected that in the near future, with the financial assistance of the Turkish Republic, a Great Mosque for the DUM ARC will be built in Kyiv.³²

In January 2019, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine the “AKHMEDIE” (five communities) was also registered, headed by Lachin Rizaev. The ideology of this administration is not clearly manifested, and nowadays, it is rather positioned as a leadership project.

The intensification of the inter-confessional dialogue between the Muslim organizations of Ukraine was primarily due to the initiative of the DUMU “UMMA” to reach agreement in the text and to sign the “Charter of Muslims of Ukraine”³³ and the “Social Concept of Muslims in Ukraine.”³⁴ The charter was solemnly signed on December 5, 2016 and 34 Muslim organizations of the Spiritual administrations of Ukraine participated in its ratification. Above all, there were the DUMU “UMMA,” the DUM ARC, as well as dozens of independent religious communities and public organizations. The Social Concept of Muslims in Ukraine was signed on December

²⁹ “Крымский муфтият открыл представительство в Киеве.” *Цензор.Нет.* 2018, 19 июня. <https://censor.net.ua/n3072380> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

³⁰ “Дані Департаменту у справах релігій та національностей МКУ. Форма 1. Звіт про мережу церков і релігійних організацій в Україні станом на 01.01.2019.” РІСУ https://risu.org.ua/ua/index/resources/statistics/ukr_2019/75410/ Accessed 27/03/2020/.

³¹ “Структура ДУМ АРК.” *Офіційний сайт. Духовне Управління Мусульман Криму.* <http://www.dumk.org/struktura/> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

³² “Крымский муфтият открыл представительство в Киеве.” *Цензор.Нет.* 2018, 19 июня. <https://censor.net.ua/n3072380> Accessed 27/03/2020/.

³³ С.В. Исмагілов, М.М. Якубович, “Хартія мусульман України.” *Ісламознавство. Навчально-методичний посібник.* (Вінниця, 2018), 173-178.

³⁴ С.В.Ісмагілов, М.М.Якубович, “Соціальна концепція мусульман України.” *Ісламознавство. Навчально-методичний посібник.* (Вінниця, 2018), 179-203.

11, 2017. More than 30 Muslim organizations participated in that process.

At these events, intentions for further cooperation were announced, about a dozen consultation meetings were held between the organizations, which signed the Charter and the Social Concept. However, this activity has not become practical yet. There were ideas to revive the existing “Council of Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Ukraine” or to create a new consultative body through which cooperation and dialogue between the Muslim muftis would be deepened. It should be noted that such consultations were ignored, as expected, by the DUM of Ukraine, headed by mufti Ahmad Tamim. Moreover, the DUMU leadership criticized such initiatives, although no alternative was offered.

It should be noted that the “Charter of Muslims of Ukraine” and the “Social Concept of Muslims in Ukraine” have not been properly evaluated in Ukrainian society yet. After all, they may fundamentally change the philosophy of the further development of the Muslim *Ummah* in Ukraine. Unlike many radical attitudes that characterize some branches of Muslims, including those in Ukraine, these documents interpret the Muslim community of Ukraine namely as part of this country. In particular, they declare that Muslims consider themselves the heirs of traditional Muslims who have lived in Ukraine for many centuries. They consider themselves Ukrainians, recognize the language, culture, laws of Ukraine, etc. That is, these documents have actually detailed for the Muslims of Ukraine for many centuries ahead, who they are and how they should feel in Ukraine.

Conclusions

Since the early 1990s, there has been an active revival of Islamic communities in Ukraine, which, with the beginning of the formation of independent Ukraine, began the process of establishing their own Muslim Spiritual administrations or centers. In particular, nine associations were formed: the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Crimea (1991), which now has a Russian registration under the name “The Religious Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol”; the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine with the center in Kyiv (1992); the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine with the center in Donetsk, later renamed as the Spiritual Center of Muslims of Ukraine (1994); the Religious Administration of Independent Islamic Communities “*Kyiv Muftiyat*” (2007); the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine “UMMA” (2008); the

Spiritual Center of Muslims of Crimea (the DCM of Crimea), which has another name in the Crimea, “Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims—the *Taurian Muftiyat*”; the Religious Administration of Ukrainian Muslims “The Unity” (the DUMU “The Unity”); the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Ukraine “AKHMEDIE” (2019). Currently, four of these associations operate in the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia (the DUM of Crimea, the DCM of Ukraine, the DUMU “The Unity” and the DCM of Crimea) and have embarked on the path of collaborationism.

In addition to the Spiritual administrations or centers, there are also public-religious Muslim associations in Ukraine. Among them are: the All-Ukrainian Association of Social Organizations “*Alraid*” (1997) and the Ukraine Muslim association (2012, Salafi Muslims).

Since the 2000s, autonomous Muslim associations have emerged in Crimea and other parts of Ukraine, connected, among other things, with the activities of the “Islamic Liberation Party” (*Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami*), a socially active Muslim traditionalism (the Salafi movement) and Shiism (the *Beit az-Zarqa* Center in Luhansk).

Thus, most of the aforementioned associations are oriented towards the organizational form, classic for the post-imperial space—Spiritual administrations. However, in the current conditions of democratic development of the religious environment, the very concept of “Spiritual Administration” has many institutionally new elements. Therefore, it only partially repeats the historically inherited structure.

It should be pointed out that all the largest Muslim associations of Ukraine (and, after all, autonomous communities except Shi’a) are Sunni. Therefore, it would be logical that institutional differences should not be projected onto doctrinal disputes. But, in practice, each religious organization chooses its own priority areas of activity (mosque building, social work, educational development, proselytism), attracts sponsorship funds, and organizes relations with fellow believers from other countries. Since the religious and legal practice of Sunni Islam inherently makes it impossible to have a kind of “clergy” or analogue to the Christian patriarch/pope, the multiplicity of Muslim communities in secular states is quite natural. This is observed even in the countries where Islam is constitutionally approved as a state religion.

The revival of Islamic institutions in the first decade of independent Ukraine occurred under conditions of a certain confrontation between the Crimean center, where most Muslim communities were concentrated, and the Kyiv and Donetsk centers. Actually, a certain rivalry of

these territorial units determined the main lines of development and confrontation of Islamic institutions in Ukraine. Such a start and the first years of the development of institutionalized Islam led to the strengthening of the philosophy of small spiritual centers, which were oriented primarily towards national grounds, in Ukraine. In particular, the DUM of Crimea positioned itself as a spiritual center for Crimean Tatars, the DCM of Ukraine focused mainly on the Volga Tatars of Donbas, and the DUM of Ukraine attempted to deal with all the so-called “Islamic diaspora.” It should also be noted that the rivalry of charismatic leaders of these spiritual administrations, who were re-elected many times after their election, did not contribute to the unity of Muslims in Ukraine. Such inalterability, on the one hand, had positive consequences, on the other, preserved the rivalry/confrontation between the institutions at the level of personal rejection.

The sharp confrontation of the first three major Spiritual administrations and frequent conflicts between them led to a situation where new Muslim communities registered in Ukraine were reluctant to join them. Thus, new spiritual administrations and centers emerged, which was not logical for a relatively small (half-million) Muslim community of Ukraine. In fact, half of the current eight institutionalized Islamic centers do not have a dozen registered communities.

With the beginning of the hybrid war with Russia, when the Crimea and Donbas (regions with the largest Muslim population) were occupied, the situation in the Muslim environment of Ukraine became more complicated. The Spiritual administrations (the DUM of Crimea, the DCM of Crimea, the DUMU “The Unity”) within these territories were registered by the legislation of the occupying side, but did not officially refuse registration with the Ukrainian state bodies. Such a policy on the brink of collaborationism led to the termination of cooperation in the occupied and not occupied territories of Ukraine and breaking of all public relations between Islamic institutions.

Since the beginning of the war in the Donbas, one of the Spiritual administrations—the DUMU “UMMA”—offered to its fellow believers a fundamentally different algorithm of positioning themselves in Ukrainian society. The manifestation of this algorithm became the “Charter of Muslims of Ukraine” and the “Social Concept of Muslims in Ukraine,” accepted and signed by many Muslim communities. These documents interpreted the Muslim community of Ukraine as full citizens of Ukraine, encouraged to recognize and study the language, culture, and laws of Ukraine, etc., which meant not to separate from Ukrainian society and not be indifferent

to the problems of Ukraine.

The logical continuation of such a policy is the active participation of Muslims in the defense of their homeland. As there are many defenders of Ukraine among Muslims, a specialized structure, “The Military Chaplaincy Office of Muslims of Ukraine” was created. Thus, for the first time in the history of Ukraine, the phenomenon of Muslim military clergy was introduced. The mission of this organization is to guard the Muslims who serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military units. In addition, several volunteer projects have been initiated by Islamic communities in recent years to assist soldiers in the Area of Operation of United Forces, to help the wounded in hospitals, displaced persons, and to feed homeless people in various cities of Ukraine.

Currently, Muslims of Ukraine are active participants of inter-confessional dialogues within the framework of inter-church associations (the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations and the All-Ukrainian Council of Religious Associations), as well as public councils operating under the ministries and departments of Ukraine. Thus, there is a constant dialogue and communication with representatives of other religious organizations (exchange of thoughts, participation in charitable and humanitarian activities, national and religious holidays, etc.), as well as with the Ukrainian officials and civil society.

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