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# CONTEXT

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## The Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia (TsDUM) and its strategy of subordinate partnership in dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church

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*Renat Bekkin*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Under conditions of competition with other federal muftiates, the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia (TsDUM) has developed a deliberate focus on maintaining good relations with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC). This paper analyses the strategy of TsDUM and its mufti Talagat Tadzhuddin regarding the ROC. The author argues that Tadzhuddin's actions indicate he may be playing a more complicated game than his policy of cleaving closely to the ROC of itself suggests. Against researchers and experts who consider Tadzhuddin's actions irrational, the author argues Tadzhuddin is a skilful strategist who has deliberately donned the mask of the holy fool (*yurodivy*). The author also offers a brief overview of the history of TsDUM in the 1990s and 2000s, exploring the reasons behind the disintegrative processes within the muftiate that began in 1992.

**Key words:** Islam in Russia, the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia (TsDUM), the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly (OMDS), muftiate, mufti.

### Introduction

On September 22, 1788, Catherine II signed an epoch-making decree proclaiming the creation of the Spiritual Mohammedan Assembly in Ufa. This was subsequently renamed the *Orenburgskoe magometanskoe duhovnoe sobranie* (the Oren-

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burg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly or OMDS). It brought together Muslim religious figures from almost every territory of the Russian Empire.<sup>2</sup> Its establishment secured for Islam the official status of a “tolerated” religion in Russia.

The creation of OMDS was a radical step with serious consequences for the entire hierarchical system of the Muslim community of Russia. The state was building a system of relations with Islam that was fundamentally different from what had existed since the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Islamic scholars in Russia had previously lacked a hierarchical structure. Local imams based their legitimacy on their personal authority among the Muslims of their community.<sup>3</sup>

Not only did OMDS begin to administer and regulate Muslim religious practices centrally, it also acted as intermediary between the millions of Muslims in the empire and the authorities. The government naturally found it more convenient to deal with an organised structure incorporated into the system of state-controlled institutions than with individual and un-institutionalized members of the Russian Islamic ummah, who relied on their authority among Muslims and needed neither legitimation nor support from the state.<sup>4</sup>

OMDS and the other Muslim muftiates in the Russian Empire (the Taurian Mohammedan Spiritual Directorate and the Transcaucasian Mohammedan Spiritual Directorates of Sunni and Shiite Teachings) were incorporated into the system of government institutions along with the the Orthodox Russian (*Rossiyskaya*) Church (PRC)<sup>5</sup> and cooperated with it as fellow units of the state apparatus rather than as independent religious organisations. On the other hand, the PRC enjoyed more privileges than the other religious organisations and, as the state religion, Orthodoxy had a higher status in imperial legislation than Islam. To

2 The assembly became a unit of the government administration, responsible for the religious affairs of Muslims in the European part of Russia (*de facto* and later *de jure* excluding the North Caucasus), Siberia and parts of Central Asia, including the Kazakh steppe. The religious affairs of Muslims living in the Crimea and Western provinces were regulated by the Taurian Mohammedan Spiritual Directorate, established in 1794.

3 “Submission to the decisions of a particular ‘*alim* (pl. ‘*ulama*) – an expert in theology, Islamic traditions and ethical and legal rules (Shariah), depended solely on his personal authority, level of knowledge, and way of life,” (Denis Denisov, *Ocherki po istorii musul'manskikh obschin Chelyabinskogo kraya (18 – nachalo 20 v.)* [Essays on the history of Muslim communities in the Chelyabinsk Region (from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century)]. (Moscow: Mardjani Foundation, 2011), p. 43).

4 It is not by chance that some Muslim religious leaders had a negative view of OMDS. For more on this, see: Alfred Bustanov, “The Bulghar Region as a “Land of Ignorance”: Anti-Colonial Discourse in Khvārazmian Connectivity” in *Journal of Persian studies*, 9 (2016), pp. 183-204.

5 The name “The Russian (*Russkaya*) Orthodox Church”, or the “Moscow Patriarchate” was formalised only in 1943. In the laws of the Russian Empire, the name used was “The Orthodox Russian (*Rossiyskaya*) Church.” In the theological and secular literature, the following names are also common: The Russian (*Rossiyskaya*) Orthodox Church, the Pan-Russian (*Vserossiyskaya*) Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Catholic Greco-Russian Church, the Orthodox Greco-Russian Church, and the Russian (*Russkaya*) Orthodox Church. According to some authors, the continuity of the modern ROC with the Russian Orthodox Church as it existed under the Russian Empire is at the very least debatable.

begin with (up until 1803), OMDS was directly subordinate to the Holy Governing Synod (supreme body) of the the Orthodox Russian (*Rossiyskaya*) Church. Later the affairs of the Orthodox and the Muslim religions were administered by different agencies, but the head of the Synod, the chief procurator, participated in discussions of state religious policy towards Islam.

By 1830s, OMDS was already firmly established as an institution facilitating state control over *‘ulama’* activities and representing the Muslim population of the empire in their relations with the authorities.<sup>6</sup>

It has undergone only minor changes since. Projects of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries aimed at reforming it were never fully implemented. In Soviet times, the Ufa muftiate not only survived but even managed to retain its importance as a religious organisation with jurisdiction over the European part of the USSR and Siberia. What did change was the procedure for selecting candidates for election as mufti.

Notwithstanding competition from other muftiates aspiring to represent all the Muslims of Russia, OMDS’ post-Soviet successor, the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia (TsDUM) has succeeded in remaining one of the largest Muslim religious organisations in modern Russia, measured by the number of registered religious communities it comprises. TsDUM also claims to be the key partner representing Muslims in their relations with state authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church. TsDUM managed to acquire and keep this status largely thanks to a well thought-through strategy of relations with the ROC.

In discussing dialogue between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in modern Russia, one must first clarify the level it is being conducted at and who the main players are.

Such dialogue is conducted at two main levels: between ordinary believers (observant and non-observant Orthodox Christians interacting with practicing and ethnic Muslims) and between religious leaders<sup>7</sup> and the organisations they represent. Interaction between the ROC and the Muslim spiritual administrations (muftiates) can involve a third party, i.e. the state, an important and often inevitable intermediary.

To give an example, under both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, interaction between Muslim and Orthodox religious organisations took place only through the mediation of government officials.

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6 According to Gavrillov and Shevchenko, OMDS was “an optimal form of organisation. It allowed the country’s Muslim community to be institutionalised as an important element and actor within the creative development of Russian civilization.” (Yurij Gavrillov, Aleksandr Shevchenko, *Islam i pravoslavno-musul'manskie otnosheniya v Rossii v zerkale istorii i sociologii* [Islam and Orthodox-Muslim relations in Russia in the mirror of history and sociology], (Moscow: Kulturnaya revolyuciya, 2010), p. 37).

7 In Russian, the term “spiritual leaders” is often used as a synonym for religious leaders. In my opinion, the use of this term is not entirely correct. Not every religious leader is also a spiritual one.

In modern Russia, the situation is visibly different. Both the ROC and the Muslim spiritual administrations have the formal right to conduct independent policy in the sphere of inter-confessional interaction.

This is how it looks at first glance, but there is an important circumstance that must be taken into account in talking about the relationship between the ROC and the muftiates. In the Russian context, this is not interaction between independent entities equally equidistant from the state, but between a *de facto* established church (the ROC), on the one hand, and Muslim religious organisations representing what is called a “tolerated” religion, i.e. a confession whose rights and privileges are limited in comparison with the ROC in most Russian regions, on the other.

The ROC justifies the thesis of Orthodoxy’s primacy over the other religions in Russia by drawing a linkage between ethnic and confessional identity, so that “Russian Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Catholics, etc., are recognised by the ROC as independent ethno-confessional minorities (while religious minorities without ethnicity, e.g. the Pentecostals, are ignored)”.<sup>8</sup> Speaking on the subject, Patriarch Kirill has made two important reservations: other confessions must (and usually do) recognise the predominance of the Russian Orthodox element in the construction of Russian identity and of the ROC in religious relations with the state.<sup>9</sup> The ROC’s right to the position of first among equals (i.e. the other confessions) is justified not only by Orthodoxy’s numerical superiority, but also by its alleged contribution to the development of the Russian state: “The Russian Orthodox Church deserves the honorific of the largest, oldest and most influential religious organisation in the country and one that has made a decisive contribution to its formation and development.”<sup>10</sup>

The concept of “traditional religions” has played a major role in justifying the primacy of the ROC. One of its authors is Igor Kunitsyn, a former official of the Moscow Patriarchate. Back in 2004, he wrote about the prerequisites for forming a system of traditional religions:

There is a brutal information war in our country, more precisely, a war about the differences within it, a war of values. The technological basis for this weapon of “bloodless defeat” is global information exchange and tracking systems that allow values in a given region to be monitored and influenced. The weapon’s purpose is to deprive peoples of socio-cultural protective mechanisms. They are working inconspic-

8 Alexander Verkhovsky, “Nacionalism rukovodstva Russkoi pravoslavnoy tserkvi v pervom desyatiletii XXI veka” [The nationalism among hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church in the first decade of the XXI century], in *Pravoslavnyya tserkov pri novom patriarhe* [The Russian Orthodox Church Under the New Patriarch], (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2012), p. 149.

9 James Warhola not entirely correctly called this “hegemonic ecumenism.” For more on this, see: James Warhola, “Religiosity, Politics and Formation of Civil Society in Multinational Russia” in *Burden or Blessing? Russian Orthodoxy and the Construction of Civil Society and Democracy*, Ch. March (ed.) (Boston: Boston Univ., 2004), pp. 91-98.

10 *Russkaya doktrina* [Russian doctrine], O.A. Platonov (ed.) (Moscow: Institut russkoi civilizacii, 2016), p. 176.

uously but constantly to bring about the spiritual disorientation of the Russian people. Cultural heritage is devalued. The sharp edge of the weapon is directed against traditional values and denominations. In many countries they want Russian citizens to feel they are European, Asian, anything, just not Russian; Catholic, Protestant, Krishna, just not Orthodox. On the world stage, the global totalitarian system is raising its head and growing stronger... The current legislation covers a far narrower range of problems than is necessary. A religious policy must be built that provides legal tools to protect traditional spiritual values from destructive global processes.<sup>11</sup>

Kunitsyn proposed dividing traditional confessions into federal and regional ones. He offers the ROC and TsDUM as examples of the former.

As well as subjective factors (the muftiate's absolute loyalty to the state and the ROC), there is also a weighty objective factor – history: TsDUM has a history that goes back to 1788, unlike the other muftiates of modern Russia, which were created at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Under Kunitsyn's concept, they would be granted the status of regional traditional religions. The federal government can thus wash its hands of the matter, if the regional authorities ban the activities of a less loyal muftiate, e.g., the Council of Muftis of Russia.<sup>12</sup> It is no accident that it was in defining an artificial construct like “traditional Islam” that the Orthodox publicist Roman Silantyev wrote, “In Russia, it is traditional Islam that teaches Muslims to be law-abiding citizens of Russia and, of course, to respect the Christian majority.”<sup>13</sup>

In modern Russia, a traditional religion is understood as one that is traditionally professed by people who live within the country.<sup>14</sup> There are, however, grades of traditional religion. According to Vsevolod Chaplin, the second most important person in the ROC after the Patriarch in 2015 and the ideologue of the conservative wing of modern Russian Orthodoxy, “confessional minorities (including atheists) may be tolerated within the ‘single community of faith,’ but are ‘excluded from its basic social and mystical mission.’”<sup>15</sup>

In other words, in Chaplin's opinion, there is in Russia a dominant religion called to a social and mystical mission, while there are also tolerated religions called to serve a more modest purpose – to exercise pastoral care for the members of confessional minorities. It would appear to have been Chaplin who reintroduced the term “tolerated religion,” which existed in the Russian Empire from the end of the

11 Igor Kunitsyn, “Federal'ny zakon i nacional'ny interes” [Federal law and national interest], in *NG-Religii*, 2 June (2004).

12 There are several current translations for the title of this muftiate, e.g., *The Russian Council of Muftis*, *Russia's Council of Muftis*, etc.

13 Andrey Mel'nikov, “Prinuzhdenie k mezhhobshinnomu miru” [Coercion to intercommunal peace], in *NG-Religii*, 2 February (2011), [http://www.ng.ru/ng\\_religii/2011-02-02/1\\_islam.html](http://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2011-02-02/1_islam.html), accessed 15 January 2019.

14 At the same time, situations can arise when the people traditionally professing a particular religion come to hold non-traditional interpretations of their religion. This is the case with Islam.

15 Vsevolod Chaplin, *Cerkov' v Rossii: obstoyatel'stva mesta i vremeni* [The Church in Russia. Circumstances of place and time] (Moscow: Izdatel'skij sovet Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi, 2008), pp. 151, 185.



18<sup>th</sup> century up to 1917, back into the lexicon of the modern ROC. It is noteworthy that three of the four modern traditional religions are considered “tolerated religions”, viz. Islam, Buddhism and Judaism.<sup>16</sup>

It is also noteworthy that both Silantyev and Chaplin have been directly engaged on matters relating to dialogue with other confessions, the former in 2001–2005, as secretary of the Interreligious Council of Russia (IRC), the latter in 2001–2009, when he was deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations and also a member of the ICR.

The IRC was established in 1997 and is the main pan-Russian representative body and platform for communication between the ROC’s hierarchs and the heads of the Russian muftiates.

## The Interreligious Council of Russia

At present (as of January 2019), the Presidium of the Interreligious Council of Russia consists of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia (honorary chairman), Metropolitan Illarion (chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department of External Church Relations), Ravil Gaynutdin (chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM RF)),<sup>17</sup> Talgat Tadzхудdin (chairman of TsDUM), Ismail Berdyev (chairman of the Coordination Centre for Muslims of the North Caucasus), Kamil Samigullin (chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan (DUM RT)), Berel Lazar (chief Rabbi of Russia, the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia), Adolph Shayevich (chief Rabbi of Russia, the Congress of Jewish Religious Associations and Organisations of Russia) and Damba Ayusheyev (head of the Buddhist traditional Sangha of Russia).

The IRC includes four leaders of Muslim spiritual administrations: Ravil Gaynutdin (Moscow), Talgat Tadzхудdin (Ufa), Ismail Berdyev (Moscow), and Kamil Samigullin (Kazan). DUM RT gained representation on the Council in February 2017.<sup>18</sup> Its inclusion underscores the fact of its recognition at federal level.

16 For more on tolerated confessions in the Russian Empire, see: Paul Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy: Mission, Governance, and Confessional Politics in Russia’s Volga-Kama Region, 1827–1905* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

17 The official website of the IRC names the Council of Muftis of Russia as one of the founders of the Council. One of the members of the IRC’s presidium, Gaynutdin is referred to as Chairman of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM RF). The DUM RF was created in 2014 and intended gradually to replace the Council of Muftis. Because of discontent on the part of some regional muftiates, the Council has not yet been liquidated. Gaynutdin remains chair of both muftiates.

18 “Svyateyshiy Patriarch Kirill vozglavil zasedanie Prezidiuma Mezhreligioznogo soveta Rossii” [His Holiness Patriarch Kirill chairs a meeting of the Presidium of the Interreligious Council of Russia], <https://mospat.ru/ru/2017/02/22/news142642/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

Three of the four muftiates (the Council of Muftis of Russia, the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia, and the Coordination Centre for Muslims of the North Caucasus) claim to be Muslim religious organisations of an all-Russian basis. In recent years, however, the ascendancy of the North Caucasian muftiate led by Ismail Berdyeu has significantly decreased.

Given that there are at least three muftiates in Russia claiming to be all-Russian,<sup>19</sup> the ROC can choose which one to cooperate with.<sup>20</sup>

It is the ROC rather than the muftiates which decides who to conduct dialogue with and in what format. In turn, this circumstance influences the choice of strategy pursued by each of the muftiates in interacting with the ROC. For example, in 2006, when it became obvious the ROC was favouring TsDUM, one of the competing muftiates, the Council of Muftis of Russia, initiated the creation of a commission on Islamic-Christian dialogue.<sup>21</sup> The initiators announced a commission consisting of Muslims would conduct dialogue with representatives from all the Christian churches and other faiths.<sup>22</sup> The idea was negatively perceived by the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations (OVTsS), however, and no project was ever implemented.<sup>23</sup> In other words, the idea had been to create a structure to function in parallel with the IRC. The principal difference would have been that, in contrast to the IRC, the leading role in the commission would have been played by Muslim and not Orthodox figures.

The ROC thus demonstrated that dialogue was possible only when it was acting as "elder brother."<sup>24</sup> This position has been actively promoted by the church in society since the early 2000s. While still metropolitan of Smolensk and Kalin-

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19 The role of the third federal muftiate in modern Russia *de facto* belongs to the Spiritual Assembly of the Muslims of Russia (DSMR), established in 2016.

20 In their turn, representatives of the government can also conduct dialogue with representatives of another, competing muftiate.

21 "Pri Sovete muftiev RF sozdana komissiya po islamo-khristianskomu dialogu" [A commission on Islamic-Christian dialogue has been created under the Council of Muftis of the Russian Federation], <https://ria.ru/20060302/43872129.html>, accessed 15 January 2019.

22 "Pri Sovete muftiev RF sozdana komissiya po islamo-khristianskomu dialogu"

23 "Zamglavy OVTsS kriticheski odnositsya k idee sozdaniya pri Sovete muftiev komissii po islamo-khristianskomu dialogu" [The OVTsS deputy head criticizes the idea of creating a commission on Islamic-Christian dialogue under the Council of Muftis], <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/87023.html>, accessed 15 January 2019.

24 Father Valerian Krechetov, rector of the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God in Akulovo village and senior confessor of the Moscow diocese, said recently "The attitude towards Orthodoxy among faithful and true Muslims is not at all hostile, as is commonly believed." Father Valerian said that when conducting a course of talks two years ago at the Surikov Institute in Moscow, he was approached by a Muslim who had attended the lectures, who said his grandfather had told him 'When you meet a Christian, respect him. This is your elder brother.' 'This was the traditional attitude of true Muslims,' the priest emphasized. (Petr Mul'tatuli, "Imperator Nikolay II i musul'mane" [Emperor Nicholas II and the Muslims] <https://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=27036>, accessed 15 January 2019).

ingrad, Kirill stated that “Russia is an Orthodox country with national and religious minorities.”<sup>25</sup>

Obviously, the ROC prefers to interact with a muftiate that shares this idea that Russia is an Orthodox country, even if it does not express it directly (i.e. in public statements), but only implicitly (i.e. through its policy towards the ROC).

## The causes of disintegration of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the European Part of the USSR and Siberia (DUMES)

As mentioned earlier, the history of TsDUM began on September 22, 1788, when the Empress Catherine II’s decree “On the Establishment of the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly” was published. Since then, the organisation has changed its name<sup>26</sup> and seat several times, but the descent of modern TsDUM from OMDS is not disputed by anyone, including its main competitor, the Council of Muftis of Russia.

Measured by the number of registered Muslim communities, TsDUM is the third largest muftiate in Russia, after those of Dagestan and Tatarstan.<sup>27</sup> They are regional spiritual administrations, however, while TsDUM is an all-Russian muftiate comprising Muslim communities of the European part of Russia and Siberia, as well as the Baltic countries.

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, important changes took place in the system of spiritual administrations in both the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and other former Soviet Union republics. Some muftiates ceased to exist and new ones established in some cases on their remains split up into regional muftiates.

TsDUM (while still DUMES) faced a problem with separatism in the 1990s. By 1988, there were 142 officially registered Muslim communities within the

25 “Mitropolit Kirill: Rossiya – pravoslavnyaya, a ne “mnogokonfessional’naya” strana” [Metropolitan Kirill: Russia is an Orthodox, not a “multi-confessional” country], *Pravoslavnoe obozrenie “Radonezh”*, 8 (2002).

26 In 1948, TsDUM was renamed the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European Part of the USSR and Siberia (DUMES). In 1994, when the Supreme Coordination Centre of the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Russia, which in 1998 merged with the Council of Muftis of Russia, was being formed, DUMES was renamed the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia and the European Countries of the CIS (official short name – TsDUM). In October 2000, during another re-registration, its name was changed to the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Russia (TsDUM of Russia). This has remained unchanged.

27 As of mid-2017, the muftiate of Dagestan had the largest number of Muslim communities (2800), followed by DUM RT (1500 communities) and TsDUM (1400 communities). [https://www.riadagestan.ru/news/society/rejting\\_musulmansikh\\_obshchin\\_rossii/](https://www.riadagestan.ru/news/society/rejting_musulmansikh_obshchin_rossii/), accessed 15 January 2019.

DUMES structure.<sup>28</sup> By 1992, the disintegration of DUMES into independent regional spiritual administrations (DUMs) had begun. In August 1992, the Ufa, Kazan, Saratov and Tyumen *muhtasibats*,<sup>29</sup> later renamed muftiates, announced their withdrawal from DUMES. Talgat Tadzhuiddin had been chairman of DUMES since 1980, but over time he had lost credibility with certain believers, including some *muhtasibs* and imams.<sup>30</sup>

When asked what had caused the withdrawal of the muftiates from DUMES and the formation of separate regional ones, my respondents, who had played a key role in the process, singled out the following reasons: 1) the inconvenience of communicating with Ufa to solve current issues (“the geographical factor”),<sup>31</sup> 2) bureaucratization of DUMES apparatus,<sup>32</sup> and 3) the poor management of Muslim communities in the regions.<sup>33</sup> In the national republics, politics also played a significant role. During the sovereignty wave of the early 1990s, the leaders of the national movements in Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and certain other republics realized their need for religious centres of their own, independent of Ufa.<sup>34</sup>

The financial factor (esp. foreign aid) was also important. The celebration in 1989 of the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Islam in Russia and the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly in Ufa was a signifi-

28 TsDUM, in *Islam na territorii byvshei Rossiiskoi imperii* [Islam in the Territories of the Former Russian Empire: Encyclopaedic Lexicon], Vol. I. (Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura, 2006), p. 436.

29 A *muhtasibat* is an administrative unit of a Spiritual Administration of Muslims, uniting the registered Muslim communities within a given territory.

30 One of the most notorious scandals was the conflict in Naberezhnye Chelny in 1992. During the opening of Tauba mosque, some believers protested against stained glass windows, which included crosses and the star of David, in line with a sketch by Tadzhuiddin. Several people tried to dismantle them. In response, Tadzhuiddin publicly struck *muhtasib* Idris Galyautdin with a whip. It is noteworthy that the first constituent congress, which announced the establishment of one of the first independent muftiates, DUM RT, was held on the territory of the Tauba mosque.

31 Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018. Author's field materials.

32 “To get the necessary seal of Mufti T. Tadzhuiddin on the charter of a newly created organisation, walkers from remote regions sometimes had to wait in Ufa for weeks.” (Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.2018. Author's field materials).

33 “After my return from Algeria, where I studied at an Islamic university, I found that the atmosphere at TsDUM was not quite adequate. I would say that I met with complete collapse of the administrative apparatus.” Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.2018. Author's field materials.

34 Ayslu Yunusova, Danil' Azamatov, *225 let Central'nomu duxovnomu upravleniyu musul'man. Istoricheskie ocherki* [225 years of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia. Historical essays] (Ufa: GUP RB UPK, 2013), p. 342. As for the authorities in the republics, they were often indifferent to the emergence of independent muftiates. This happened, for example, three years after the creation of DUM RT in Tatarstan. At the same time, the authorities retained control over the religious situation. According to the mufti of Tatarstan in 1992-1998. G. Galiullin, it was impossible to build a single mosque without coordination with the Republic authorities. (Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018. Author's field materials).

cant event in strengthening the international authority of DUMES and of Tadzhuiddin personally, who initiated and organised the event.<sup>35</sup> For Muslims abroad, this became a symbol of the recognition of Islam in the Soviet Union. DUMES began to receive financial aid from the countries of the Muslim East. These funds were completely controlled by Tadzhuiddin.<sup>36</sup> The realisation that one could approach sponsors directly, without the mediation of Ufa, also played an important role in the desintegration of DUMES.<sup>37</sup>

For the sake of completeness, one should mention that the personal qualities of mufti Talgat Tadzhuiddin also played a significant role in the rise of separatism.<sup>38</sup> As Valiulla Yakupov has pointed out, “those researchers who believe the split in Tatar Islam associated with Tadzhuiddin’s personality began in 1992 are wrong. There was already a substantial split. In fact, this quarrelsome personality from Tatar Islam had been causing problems from the very beginning of his activities as mufti.”<sup>39</sup>

There were also objective circumstances facilitating the decentralization of DUMES. With the liberalization of public life in the USSR in general and Russia in particular, it became easier to register new religious communities on the ground and create new Muslim religious organisations.<sup>40</sup>

Talgat Tadzhuiddin received suggestions from imams to create regional structures and expand existing powers, giving them the authority to register new communities and approve imams in their regions. He rejected these proposals, however, considering them manifestations of separatism.<sup>41</sup>

Changing political conditions in the USSR in the late 1980s and early 1990s meant the former system of sole management with a strict vertical of power within the muftiate needed to be democratized. DUMES-TsDUM, as represented by its leader, mufti Tadzhuiddin, was not ready for change, however. In fact, TsDUM followed the

35 Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018. Author’s field materials.

36 “... An attempt to maintain strict one-man power and uncontrolled expenditure of large monetary donations from abroad at that time alienated some of the Muslim leaders from him, despite all the loyalty that had been built up to him.” (Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.2018. Author’s field materials).

37 Valiulla Yakupov, *Islam v Tatarstane v 1990-e gody* [Islam in Tatarstan in 1990s] (Kazan: Iman, 2005), pp. 59-60.

38 “As a result of various events that contributed to discrediting TsDUM, during 1992-1998 T. Tadzhuiddin had lost control of most of the religious communities of Muslims in Russia. This was due, in many ways and as already mentioned, to his personal behaviour, his far-from Muslim morality, and innovations he introduced into religion.” (Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.2018. Author’s field materials).

39 Valiulla Yakupov, *Islam v Tatarstane v 1990-e gody* [Islam in Tatarstan in 1990s] (Kazan: Iman, 2005), p. 124.

40 Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.2018. Author’s field research.

41 Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.2018. The proposals for decentralization of DUMES were of various kinds, some quite radical, reducing the muftiate’s activities in Ufa to the role of focal point for the regional spiritual administrations (Ayslu Yunusova, Danil’ Azamatov, *225 let Central’nomu duxovnomu upravleniyu musulman. Istoricheskie ocherki* [225 years of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia. Historical essays] (Ufa: GUP RB UPK, 2013), p. 341).

same strategy as in Soviet times, when the state tightly controlled the activities of religious organisations, including the muftiates. In contrast to the ROC, which had since the late 1980s acted as equal partner of the state, TsDUM found itself unable to build relations of the same quality, even with some regional authorities (including in the national republics), never mind the federal government.

The first independent muftiates were the spiritual boards of the Muslims of the Republic of Bashkortostan and of the Republic of Tatarstan (DUM RB and DUM RT, respectively). They were created quite literally one after another: on August 21, 1992, a constituent congress was held for DUM RB in Ufa, while a similar congress was held in Naberezhnye Chelny on the following day, at which the creation of DUM RT was announced.

According to Gabdulla Galiullin, the decision to create the muftiate in Tatarstan was spontaneous.<sup>42</sup> Leaders of the Bashkir national movement suggested their Tatarstan colleagues create an independent muftiate. The founding documents for DUM RB were used as a model.<sup>43</sup> Delegates to the congress in Ufa travelled by bus to the city of Naberezhnye Chelny in the east of Tatarstan, some 252 km from Ufa. Some 200 delegates attended and the decision to create an independent Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan was unanimous.<sup>44</sup>

It was not long before the new regional muftiates began to question how their activities were being coordinated. As noted above, Muslims in post-Soviet Russia needed a unified federal Muslim organisation to represent their interests with the national leadership. TsDUM was not up to the task. Even large regional muftiates, such as DUM RT, could not address government directly. The issue of creating a unified federal Muslim organisation was therefore raised shortly after establishment of the independent religious administrations in 1992.

On October 21, 1992, the first congress was held of the Coordination Council of the Heads of the Regional Spiritual Administrations of Muslims in the European Part of the Former USSR and Siberia in Kazan. The Council was later renamed the Higher Coordination Centre for the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims (VKTsDUMR), and the mufti of Tatarstan, Gabdulla Galiullin, was elected chairman.<sup>45</sup> At first, VKTsDUMR comprised most of the muftiates independent of DUMES, including those formed after the dissolution of the Spiritu-

42 Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018. Author's field research.

43 Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018.

44 Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018.

45 On 22 February 1993, VKTsDUMR was officially registered with the Ministry of Justice. In the spring of 1994, Gabdulla Galiullin, chairman of the Supreme Coordination Centre of the Spiritual Administrations of Muslims of Russia and then chairman of the DUM of the Republic of Tatarstan, was proclaimed supreme mufti of Russia. According to some experts, however, due to his lack of the leadership qualities required in a mufti at the all-Russian level, Galiullin was unable to become head of the federal alternative to TsDUM. (Interview with A.-V. Niyazov, 31.03.2018. Author's field materials.)

al Administration of the Muslims of the North Caucasus.<sup>46</sup> VKTsDUMR thus became the only muftiate in the history of Russia to include in its structure Muslim religious organisations from the Volga region, the North Caucasus, the Baltic states, the Ukraine, and other regions of the former Russian Empire.

Its history was short, however, and it ceased operations due to disagreement within the leadership.<sup>47</sup> In 1998, two years after the Council of Muftis of Russia had been formed, some of the muftiate-members of VKTsDUMR joined the new organisation, which claimed to be all-Russian (federal).<sup>48</sup>

As VKTsDUMR had grown stronger, TsDUM had begun losing power. Unhappy with Tadzhuiddin's policy, some imams tried to remove him. In October 1994, an extraordinary plenum of TsDUM was held, at which Tadzhuiddin was removed from office. A 30-year-old imam, Zamir Khayrullin, was elected acting chairman. In his speech to the delegates of the congress, Khayrullin noted Tadzhuiddin "is not in a position to lead the spiritual administration because of his moral dissolution and actions contrary to the norms of Islam."<sup>49</sup>

Tadzhuiddin nonetheless managed to regain the post of chairman by administrative means. For the more than ten years since, there have been no serious attempts to remove him from power. Imams dissatisfied with his policy ultimately chose different tactics and registered communities independently of TsDUM or moved to the Council of Muftis of Russia. Whenever a threat to Tadzhuiddin's power arose within TsDUM itself, he cleverly dismissed any imams attempting to challenge his leadership from their posts before they could take decisive action against him.<sup>50</sup>

The phenomenon of Tadzhuiddin cannot be fully understood unless we take into account the clannish structure of Tatar society in the Volga region and the Urals.

In an article by A.L. Salagaev and S.A. Sergeev, "The Regional Elite of the Republic of Tatarstan: Structure and Evolution," the authors consider the features of this clannish structure. Although they are writing about Tatarstan, their conclusions can be applied to other national republics of Russia:

The political elite of Tatarstan ... for a long time could be regarded as typical of the republics of the Russian Federation: rural in origin, a nomenklatura by virtue of their previous activities, with an authoritarian and patriarchal political culture, clannish (*klanovyi*) (i.e., emphasizing personal loyalty), in so far as relationships between its members are concerned, and predominantly monoethnic.<sup>51</sup>

46 Interview with N. Ashirov, 30.01.208. Author's field materials.

47 Interview with G. Galiullin, 31.05.2018. Author's field materials.

48 The Coordination Centre for Muslims of the North Caucasus was established in August 1998, becoming in time the third muftiate of federal significance.

49 "Konflikt vnutri Tsentral'nogo Duhovnogo Upravleniya Musul'man Rossii poluchil novoe razvitiie" [A new episode in the conflict in the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims has begun], <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/buddhism/?act=archive&div=13382>, accessed 15 January 2019.

50 This happened, for example, in 2005, when Muhametgali Khuzin and Farid Salman tried to remove Tadzhuiddin from some of his posts and reduce him to a mere figurehead.

51 Alexander Salagaev, Sergey Sergeev, "Regional'naya elita respublikii Tatarstan: struktura i evolyuciya" [Regional elite of the Republic of Tatarstan: structure and evolution], in *Politia*, 2 (2013), p. 76.

The authors look at this structure in Tatarstan based on the example of the clan of the first president of Tatarstan, Mintimer Shaimiev. The Shaimiev clan, whose history began in the Soviet Union's declining years, the late 1980s, has a complex internal structure of four circles. The first and closest circle is formed by the family, which includes Shaimiev's closest relatives (his wife, sons, nephews, son-in-law, and others). The second and almost equally close circle is formed by friends of the "family." Its most famous member is the current president of Tatarstan, Rustam Minnikhanov, and his family (i.e. Minnikhanov's own first circle). The third circle includes "socially close" people, who, as a rule, include ethnic Tatars with rural roots.<sup>52</sup> Members of the third circle were mainly recruited during the years of Shaimiev's presidency to head city administrations and districts of the republic. Those who worked with Shaimiev over the years and who he knows well also belong here. Finally, the fourth circle consists of officials who owe their promotion under Shaimiev to their business acumen and unconditional personal loyalty. The latter quality is no less significant than the first.<sup>53</sup>

Although Tadzhuiddin's origins are urban, he has also formed his own clan. Here too several circles can be identified, as in the Shaimiev clan. A system of kinship ties connects Tadzhuiddin with many Muslim religious figures, including one of his major opponents – the chairman of the Council of Muslims of Russia, Ravil Gaynutdin, who is married to one of Tadzhuiddin's cousins. "Talгат Tadzhuiddin's preference to be surrounded by relatives has been known for a long time. It is no secret that at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, Tadzhuiddin tried to marry all the promising students at the Bukhara Mir-i 'Arab madrasah to cousins of his, subsequently appointing them imams of the largest mosques."<sup>54</sup> Tadzhuiddin built and strengthened his clan deliberately, and, thanks to marital relations, it included at least one more functionary from the Council of Muftis of Russia, Abdul-Vahed Niyazov, in addition to Gaynutdin.

The fact that Gaynutdin is part of Tadzhuiddin's clan had allowed some experts to argue that the confrontation between these two religious figures is a sham.<sup>55</sup>

If we apply the typology of religious leaders used in the sociology of religion, Tadzhuiddin belongs to the category of religious leaders with both hereditary charisma and the charisma of office. He possesses hereditary charisma as a *murid* of Sufi

52 According to the authors, "rural origins and agricultural education remain the *conditio sine qua non* for admission to this circle," (Alexander Salagaev, Sergey Sergeev, "Regional'naya elita respublik Tatarstan: struktura i evolyuciya" [Regional elite of the Republic of Tatarstan: structure and evolution], in *Politia*, 2 (2013), p. 79)

53 Alexander Salagaev, Sergey Sergeev, "Regional'naya elita respublik Tatarstan: struktura i evolyuciya" [Regional elite of the Republic of Tatarstan: structure and evolution], in *Politia*, 2 (2013), pp. 78-79.

54 "Talгат Tadzhuiddin poluchil podderzhku plenuma TsDUM i naznachil muftiem Bashkortostana svoego syna" [Talгат Tadzhuiddin receives the support of TsDUM plenum and appoints his son mufti of Bashkortostan], <https://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=204010>, accessed 15 January 2019.

55 Interview with M. Khuzin, 04.12.2017. Author's field materials.



sheikhs and the *ijazah* and knowledge he acquired from them. His charisma of office is due to his being head of a Muslim religious organisation – the muftiate.

These two charismas can conflict with each other. For example, after the creation of a unified Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Republic of Tatarstan in 1998, Farid Salman refused to recognize the decision or abandon attempts to retain the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Tatarstan (DUM T), which had existed before uniting with the jurisdiction of TsDUM. Tadzhuiddin provided Salman, who was actually representing the interests of TsDUM, little support, however, preferring to cooperate with the newly created DUM of the Republic of Tatarstan, headed by his former student Gusman Iskhakov.<sup>56</sup>

This example shows that a clan leader's decisions are not necessarily based on formal logic. In the event of a rupture of business relations and conflict with religious figures subordinate to him, the development of further relations with these people depended on whether they had been his students or not. In the first case, he would continue to maintain relations, in the second, there would be an almost complete break. So, for example, Tadzhuiddin stopped communications with his former deputies, Muhametgali Khuzin and Albir Krganov, after their dismissal from TsDUM. At the same time, Tadzhuiddin did not break off relations with his former students who headed up muftiates that separated from TsDUM. This applies to such muftis as R. Gaynutdin and G. Galiullin, amongst others.

## TsDUM as the muftiate of Holy Rus'

Throughout his service as head of DUMES and then TsDUM, Tadzhuiddin has unconditionally supported the government.<sup>57</sup> As the Kazan publicist, Ruslan Aysin, rightly points out "The entire ideological construction of the Ufa muftiate rests on the pillars of following the policy of the country's leaders no matter what they do. Talgat Tadzhuiddin is unique in that he is ready to support any initiatives of the authorities whatsoever, even if they infringe on the rights of the Muslim population."<sup>58</sup>

56 According to F. Salman, when he asked Tadzhuiddin why he had not supported him against those trying to eliminate TsDUM's influence, Tadzhuiddin replied: "What could I do to my students?" (Interview with F. Salman, 01.06. 2018. Author's field materials).

57 "It (TsDUM – R.B.) is the legal successor of the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly created by Catherine II. TsDUM and its subdivisions (RDUMs) are the bulwark of traditional Islam – non-politicized, moderate, tolerant and calm, expressing full loyalty to the state and its laws" (Ayslu Yunusova, Danil' Azamatov, *225 let Central'nomu duxovnomu upravleniyu musul'man. Istoricheskie ocherki* [225 years of the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Russia. Historical essays] (Ufa: GUP RB UPK, 2013), p. 359).

58 Ruslan Aysin, "Chto stoit za ocherednym predlozheniem Talgata Tadzhuiddina?" [What is behind the next suggestion of Talgat Tadzhuiddin?], <http://poistine.org/chto-stoit-za-ocherednym-predlozheniem-talgata-tadzhuiddina#.WNYSNFWGMqM>, accessed 15 January 2019.

Other muftiates also demonstrate loyalty to the present political regime, of course, not least among them TsDUM's main competitor, the Council of Muftis of Russia. What distinguishes TsDUM from the latter is the nature of its relations with the ROC and its view on the place and role of Islam in contemporary Russian society.

The essence of TsDUM leadership's position is that Islam is the religion of certain ethnic minorities in Russia (Tatars, Bashkirs, the peoples of the North Caucasus, and migrants from the Central Asia), while Orthodoxy is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the country's population, with all the ensuing consequences.<sup>59</sup> Back in 2003, in an interview to Internet portal Credo.ru, Tadzhuiddin said:

His Holiness (Patriarch Alexy II – R.B.) and I have known each other for almost twenty-five years; we meet and discuss various issues. We have an arrangement: everyone sows in their own kitchen garden (*ogorod*) ... Imagine, someone comes into your kitchen garden, borrows five to ten square meters and plants radishes, and you wanted to plant onions there. How will this be perceived? That's why we do not carry out any missionary activity among non-Muslims at all.<sup>60</sup>

It appears to be important to the ROC that TsDUM follow the principle that "everyone sows in their own kitchen garden" for the following reasons. The major concern here appears not to be that some ethnic Russians may convert to Islam. This should not be an issue in itself. The larger concern for the ROC seems to be, first and foremost, that the adoption of Islam by Russians undermines the idea of an indissoluble connection between Russian ethnicity and Orthodoxy.

The principle that "everyone sows in their own kitchen garden" finds expression not just in a mutual commitment to refrain from missionary work, but also entails non-interference in the ROC's policy, unless it directly affects communities under the jurisdiction of TsDUM. So, for example, the *de facto* compulsory introduction of "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" in certain Russian regions with a predominantly Russian population does not give rise to objections from TsDUM, even though it leads to Muslim students being discriminated against. Moreover, on the principle that "everyone sows in their own kitchen garden," Tadzhuiddin and TsDUM do not interfere in the religious affairs of other Muslim peoples (e.g. in the North Caucasus). All of which gives researchers reason to talk of the ethnocentricity of TsDUM.

In 2003, Tadzhuiddin proposed renaming TsDUM the Islamic Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Holy Rus'.<sup>61</sup> This initiative was perceived as a

59 James Warhola, "Coexistence or Confrontation? The Politics of Interaction Between Orthodoxy and Islam in Putin's Russia: Culture, Institutions, and Leadership", in *Religion, State, and Society*, 6, no. 4 (2008), p. 345.

60 "Talgat Tadzhuiddin, Verhovny mufti TsDUM: 'U nas s Ego Svyateishestvom ugovor – kazhdy seet v svoem ogorode'" [Talgat Tadzhuiddin, Grand Mufti of TsDUM: "We have an arrangement with His Holiness – everyone sows in his own kitchen garden"], <https://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=authority&cid=6>, accessed 15 January 2019.

61 "ITsDUM Svyatoj Rusi ob'yavil jihad SShA" [TsDUM of Holy Rus' announces jihad on US], <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/violence-incident/2003/04/d254/>, accessed 15 January 2019. Rus' is the historical name of Russia.

manifestation of unparalleled loyalty to the ROC, as the name “*Svyataya Rus*” is strongly associated in modern Russian language with Orthodox Christianity.<sup>62</sup> Tadzhuiddin also suggested he should be called the Grand Mufti of Holy Rus’.<sup>63</sup> At the time the initiative was not supported by the authorities or other members of TsDUM. It was, however, re-voiced the following year by Tadzhuiddin’s associates, Farid Salman and Muhametgali Khuzin, the leaders of regional DUMs.<sup>64</sup>

At first glance, the proposed rebranding looks like a demonstration of Tadzhuiddin’s and TsDUM’s loyalty towards the ROC. In my opinion, however, one should not underestimate Tadzhuiddin or treat his actions as purely irrational, as some Muslim authors do. Tadzhuiddin is an experienced strategist and there is more behind the change of the signboard than just a desire to demonstrate loyalty to the ROC.

The language used by Tadzhuiddin in his speeches requires separate study. It may be that he consciously achieves his effect by mixing Islamic and Orthodox sociolects. So, for example, commenting on a previous announcement by him of *jihad* against the US, Tadzhuiddin said:

I do not disavow my words, because the written *fatwa* on declaring a holy war against the antichrist of the world – the US and its allies – was accepted not only by me, but by the whole board of muftis of the Central Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Holy Rus’. The only people outraged by the decision were those who receive a salary in “greenbacks,” the rest all supported it ...<sup>65</sup>

As this short passage clearly shows, the Islamic term “*fatwa*” adjoins the “holy war against the Antichrist”<sup>66</sup> and the old slang word “greenbacks” (i.e. US dollars).

Tadzhuiddin’s use of the “Holy Rus’” construct may be misleading. In order to clarify it, let us compare what he and Patriarch Kirill understand by “Holy Rus’.”

For Tadzhuiddin, Holy Rus’ (*Svyataya Rus*) is a caliphate where Muslims peacefully coexist with Orthodox, but under conditions set by the latter, i.e. as younger brothers: “Every person, whatever religion and faith he practices and even

62 See for example: Fyodor Gayda, “Chto znachit Svyataya Rus?” [What does the term “Holy Rus’” mean?], <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/63409.html>, accessed 15 January 2019.

63 “ITsDUM Svyatoj Rusi ob’yavil jihad SSHa” [TsDUM of Holy Rus’ announces jihad on US], <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/violence-incitement/2003/04/d254/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

64 “Talgat Tadzhuiddin – verhovny mufti Svyatoi Rusi?” [Talgat Tadzhuiddin – Grand mufti of Holy Rus’?], <http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/intraconfessional/muslim/2004/08/d2600/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

65 “ITsDUM Svyatoj Rusi ob’yavil jihad SSHa” [TsDUM of Holy Rus’ announces jihad on US], <https://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/violence-incitement/2003/04/d254/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

66 It is worth remembering that for many Orthodox people the prophet Muhammad is a servant of the Antichrist. Very popular with modern Orthodox missionaries is Maxim Grek’s *Dva slova protiv Mahometa* [Two words against Mahomet] ([https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Maksim\\_Grek/magomet/](https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Maksim_Grek/magomet/), accessed 15 January 2019). On the subject of the mixture of Christian apocalyptic terminology and Islamic jihadist rhetoric, see: “Talgat Tadzhuiddin, Uzhe dve nedeli Antixrist mira voyuet, podnyav golovu, zaraza” [Talgat Tadzhuiddin: “For two weeks now the Antichrist of the world has been fighting, raising his head, spreading pestilence”], *Konservator*, 11 April 2003.

if he does not believe at all, is vicegerent of God on Earth and must fulfil his mission. When we are together, this is the caliphate. We call this caliphate Holy Rus’.”<sup>67</sup>

Patriarch Kirill gave a fairly clear formulation of what “Svyataya Rus’” is in an interview with a prominent Russian presenter and journalist, Dmitry Kiselyov, on *Russia 2*, a state TV channel, on November 21, 2009:

I think Russia is not a “where”, but first of all a “what.” Russia is a system of values, a civilizational concept. When we say “Holy Rus’”, we mean a very specific idea: the idea of the dominance of the spiritual over the material, the idea of the dominance of a high moral ideal. Strictly speaking, the people occupying the vast Eurasian space that today constitutes the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church were brought up in this tradition.

A year later, Kirill outlined the range of territories included in his notion of “Holy Rus’”:

... it is very important that today relations between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus be built in such a way that our one common historical community, our participation (*soprichastnost*) in a united Holy Rus’, is fully taken into account.<sup>68</sup>

As A. Verkhovsky rightly notes, this is a classical formulation of ethnocultural nationalism in which “participation in” (*prichastnost*) the Russian Orthodox Church is the key cultural sign determining the nation. Formal belonging to the church is not required, as the influence of the cultural tradition generated by the church is sufficient and the Patriarch uses the somewhat vague notion of “participation in” on purpose.<sup>69</sup>

At first glance, there is no fundamental contradiction between the interpretations of the concept of “Holy Rus’” given by Tadzhuiddin and Kirill. They both speak of spirituality. The use of the concept of “caliphate,” which has a negative connotation in Russian society (especially among Orthodox believers), however, devalues or renders it caricatural in connection with Holy Rus’. It is no accident that anti-clerical authors criticize the ROC for being willing to build an Orthodox “caliphate” in Russia.<sup>70</sup>

67 “Tadzhuiddin anonsiroval khalifat – ‘Svyataya Rus’” [Tadzhuiddin announces caliphate – “Holy Rus’”], <https://islamnews.ru/news-tadzhuiddin-anonsiroval-xalifat-svyataya-rus>, accessed 15 January 2019.

68 “Obrashhenie Svyateishego Patriarha Kirilla k zhitelyam Pskova” [Appeal of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to the inhabitants of Pskov], <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1253614.html>, accessed 15 January 2019.

69 Alexander Verkhovsky, “Nacionalism rukovodstva Russkoi pravoslavnoy tserkvi v pervom desyatiletii XXI veka” [The nationalism among hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church in the first decade of the XXI century], in *Pravoslavnaya tserkov pri novom patriarhe* [The Russian Orthodox Church Under the New Patriarch], (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2012), p. 148.

70 The view of a popular Russian blogger Nikolay Podosokorsky is noteworthy, namely that “Russians will be offered a unifying anti-Western ideology, according to which Islam and the special ‘Russian Orthodoxy’ are the two pillars on which Russia rests. Further, we will be convinced from the TV screens that there must necessarily be an Orthodox temple and a mosque in the capital of each region. At the next stage, they will conclude that the unity of the nation requires these religions to unite into one state-forming religion and consolidate its status in the basic law of the country; Putin in particular has long talked about the similarity of

Tadzhuddin's announcement in 2003 of *jihad* against the United States can be attributed to the same category of inappropriately used terminology. As with the caliphate, the Islamic concept of *jihad* was being deployed in a completely different context to heighten effect.

There is some feeling Tadzhuddin deliberately chose this tactic. Expressed in modern youth slang, Tadzhuddin is "trolling" both his competitors on the Council of Muftis of Russia and the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, when he speaks of Holy Rus' as an Orthodox caliphate or of a *jihad* against the Antichrist. To use a more archaic terminology, Tadzhuddin is playing the role of holy fool (*yurodiviy*).

There is now and then in Tadzhuddin's statements something like what Mikhail Bakhtin called "words with loopholes":

A loophole is the possibility of changing the last, final meaning of a word. If a word leaves such a loophole, then this must inevitably affect its structure. This possible other meaning, that is, the loophole that has been left, accompanies the word like a shadow. In its meaning, the word with the loophole should be the last word and pretends to be so, but is in fact only the penultimate word and is followed by a conditional, not a full stop.<sup>71</sup>

In the days of Holy Rus', holy fools were allowed much more leeway than the rest of the people. They could express things to the Tsar that others did not dare.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, not only were they not subjected to execution for this, they were often showered with favours, instead. Having put on the mask of holy fool, Tadzhuddin in effect gained immunity from prosecution by the state and from criticism by believers. If a holy fool oversteps the mark and says something excessive, the authorities simply spread their hands: "Well, what else should one expect of him?" From the outside he may seem to be talking nonsense, but this nonsense contains something the authorities and the ROC want to hear from Tadzhuddin.<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, in expressing his

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Orthodoxy and Islam. If Kadyrov (the head of Chechnya. – R.B.) does indeed replace Putin as president, then Patriarch Kirill can become an 'Orthodox Ayatollah' – of course, only until he is replaced by a mufti of more radical views." (Nikolay Podosokorsky, "RPTs kak orudie islamizacii Rossii" [ROC as an instrument of Islamization of Russia], <https://surmasite.wordpress.com/2015/12/06/%D1%80%D0%BF%D1%86-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%BA-%D0%BE%D1%80%D1%83%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%B8%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B0%D1%86%D0%B8%D0%B8-%D1%80%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%81%D0%B8%D0%B8/>, accessed 15 January 2019).

71 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* [Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetry] (Moscow: Russkie slovari: Yazyki slavyanskoi kul'tury, 2002), pp. 259-260.

72 For more on the phenomenon of holy foolishness, see: Alexander M. Pančenko, *Smeh v Drevnej Rusi* [Laughter in ancient Russia] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984); Per-Arne Bodin, *Language, canonization and holy foolishness* (Stockholm: Stockholm Universitet, 2009).

73 It seems that another mufti, chairman of the North-Caucasian muftiate Berdyev is trying to copy this strategy. In August 2016, he shocked the Russian public with speeches in defence of female circumcision, which has supposedly spread in the North Caucasus. In December 2016, he proposed blowing the Yeltsin Centre in Yekaterinburg up "to hell". ("Glava Koordinacionnogo centra musul'man Severnogo Kavkaza predlagat vzorvat' «Yeltsin-centr»" [The head of the Coordination Centre of the Muslims of the North Caucasus proposes blowing up the "Yeltsin Centre"], <https://echo.msk.ru/news/1892084-echo.html>, accessed 15 January 2019).

ideas, Tadzhuddin is also demonstrating the ridiculousness of the images he is crafting in support of his apparent theme. If Holy Rus' is a caliphate for which the apparently "insane" Muslim mufti is fighting, then do Orthodox people really need it? 'Caliphate' and 'jihad' are both loophole-words. Turning their semantic meaning inside out, Tadzhuddin reserves the right of final interpretation of what he has said.

Recognition of the Patriarch's supremacy is also evident in some of his symbolic gestures. In December 1999, at a reception, Tadzhuddin kissed the hand of Patriarch Alexy II. He continued this form of behaviour with his successor, Kirill. According to Orthodox etiquette, this is recognition of the supremacy of the owner of the kissed hand. The only one in Russia allowed not to kiss the hand of the Patriarch was the Monarch: the clergy had to kiss his hand as of one appointed by God.

In fact, Tadzhuddin behaves towards the Patriarch as though he were himself a metropolitan of one of the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church, which for some reason enjoys some autonomy. Such unprecedented loyalty is not ignored by the ROC: "Most Orthodox authors regard TsDUM as the most loyal Muslim religious organisation in relation to the ROC... TsDUM, guided by mufti Tadzhuddin, holds the position of principal ally of the ROC and almost always supports its position."<sup>74</sup>

This strategy in relation to the ROC cannot but draw criticism from Muslims. Few Muslims can take a positive view of their leader occupying a deliberately subordinate position to the ROC and drawing ridicule, with his statements, not only on himself, but also on Islam. The strategy has nonetheless proven effective, in the sense that, thanks to it, Tadzhuddin enjoys the support of the authorities and the ROC and, despite sometimes harsh criticism, has succeeded in maintaining both his position and his influence. Where the mufti is chosen not by believers, but by the authorities, such a strategy is justified. The question is only: is it for the short or the long term?

The only possible counterweight to Tadzhuddin's power in the Muslim community would be Muslim religious figures with authority based on deep knowledge of Islamic theology, that is, world-class theologians. Such people simply do not exist in the modern Russian ummah, however, even in the structure of TsDUM's main competitor – the Council of Muftis of Russia.

As a result, the Council of Muftis of Russia bases its criticism of TsDUM on secular rather than theological principles. The main accusations against Tadzhuddin are not theological, but secular. They are like how a manager of a corporation reproaches another manager for inefficiency.<sup>75</sup> According to Damir Mukhetdin-

74 Alexander Verkhovskiy, "Publichny'e otnosheniya pravoslavnykh i musul'manskikh organizatsij na federal'nom urovne" [Public relations of Orthodox and Muslim organisations at the federal level], in *Islam v Rossii: Vzglyad iz regionov* [Islam in Russia: A View from the Regions], A. V. Malashenko (ed.) (Moscow: Aspekt Press, 2007), p. 141.

75 Compare, for example, what chairman Umar Idrisov considered the merits of the Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of the Nizhny Novgorod region, which he headed: "The All-Russian forum showed that DUMNO [the DUM of the Nizhny Novgorod region –

ov, one of the main ideologists of DUM RF, the leadership of TsDUM is made up of an obsolete type of representatives of Soviet Islam with no place in modern Russia.<sup>76</sup>

In the early stages of its existence (late 1990s), it was possible to characterize the Council of Muftis of Russia's position on TsDUM as follows: There is a central organisation (TsDUM) and regional organisations, which are more suitable for representing Muslims on the ground, for example, in Moscow. This strategy subsequently changed. In the 2000s, the Council of Muftis was already acting as an all-Russian muftiate, challenging the influence of TsDUM.

After the announcement in 2003 of *jihad* against the United States, the Council of Muftis of Russia made an official statement trying to declare Tadzhuddin a *kafir*. The collective "*fatwa*" issued by the Council of Muftis contained the following statement:

To recognize the activities of Talgat Tadzhuddin, who has appropriated a prophetic mission, as apostasy from the foundations of Islam; to declare the impossibility of Talgat Tadzhuddin holding the post of spiritual leader in Muslim organisations in Russia; to recognise that Talgat Tadzhuddin's statement declaring military *jihad* against the US has no theological, nor legal, nor moral force for Russian Muslims; to declare that from now on no Muslim has the right to perform joint prayer with Talgat Tadzhuddin or follow any instructions and advice from him.<sup>77</sup>

Tadzhuddin was thereby excluded from the matrix of Islam. His reaction to this *fatwa* was illustrative of his personality and is worth describing here. Not only did he not embark on a theological discussion on the content of the *fatwa* and *jihad* issues, he compared the actions of the Council of Muftis to those of a janitor manoeuvring to get a fellow janitor fired. In other words, Tadzhuddin made it clear that he and his opponent Gaynutdin were just janitors and the issue of their professional suitability could only be decided by higher (federal) authorities.

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R.B.] meets all the requirements of the present day and is a competitive organisation capable of carrying out fruitful daily activities and organising all-Russian events" (Umar Idrisov, "Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man Nizhnego Novgoroda i Nizhegorodskoj oblasti (DUMNO) i islamskie obshhiny Nizhegorodchiny v ramkax evropeiskoj chasti Rossii" [The Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Nizhny Novgorod and the Nizhny Novgorod Region (DUMNO) and the Islamic communities of Nizhny Novgorod within the European part of Russia], <http://www.idmedina.ru/books/islamic/?415>, accessed 15 January 2019). These words were published in May 2008. At the end of the same year, Idrisov was removed from his post by a more successful manager, his disciple D. Mukhetdinov.

76 "Sovetu muftiev 20 let!" [Council of Muftis turns 20!], <https://www.muslim.ru/articles/269/15782/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

77 "Sovet muftiev Rossii priznal deyatel'nost' Talgata Tadzhuddina 'otstupnichestvom ot osnov Islama'" [The Council of Muftis of Russia calls the activities of Talgat Tadzhuddin "apostasy from the principles of Islam"], <http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/intraconfessional/muslim/2003/04/d284/>, accessed 15 January 2019.

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To summarize, I would like to note certain key features of TsDUM's strategy in matters of interaction with the state and the ROC:

1) *Complete loyalty to the state.* Support for initiatives of the state authorities, even if not supported by a significant number of Muslims (e.g. the acceptability of Muslim women not wearing the *hijab*,<sup>78</sup> approval of the Russian armed forces' participation in the civil war in Syria,<sup>79</sup> etc.).

2) *Recognition of the supremacy (seniority) of the Russian Orthodox Church over TsDUM.* Expressed both through the coordination of actions with the ROC on such matters as the construction of mosques, etc., and in symbolic gestures (kissing the hand of the Patriarch, etc.).

3) *Ethnocentricity.* Most Russian citizens are divided into two major groups: Slavic peoples (ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians), who number 113 million, and Turkic peoples, who traditionally confess Islam (mostly ethnic Tatars, Bashkirs) and number 7.5 million. In intra-Islamic and interreligious relations, TsDUM strictly follows the principle of ethnocentricity. TsDUM, following the principle that "everyone sows in their own kitchen garden (*ogorod*)," exerts its influence mainly over Tatars. It not only expressly refrains from missionary activity among non-Muslims, but even condemns ethnic Russians who convert to Islam.

The creation in the mid-1990s of the Council of Muftis as a new muftiate of federal significance has neither lead to the liquidation of TsDUM nor undermined the position of Tadzhuiddin as the first-choice partner of the ROC. Even strong opponents of the Council of Muftis note that the tripolar system<sup>80</sup> of Russian muftiates has marked a certain stage in the development of the Muslim community of Russia. In the eyes of the dominant political regime in Russia and the ROC, Tadzhuiddin, with his predictable loyal policy following changes in the national leadership's political line, looks the more reliable partner. In such authoritarian structures, however, much depends on the person of the leader. When Tadzhuiddin finally leaves, as inevitably he must, the organisation, in which personal loyalty plays a major role, may cease to function, which may in turn lead to TsDUM falling apart.

78 "The *hijab* is a veil covering the entire face, which was, according to Islam, prescribed only for the spouses of the Prophet Muhammad. Here it is just a scarf. Up to the age of majority, Muslim girls do not need to cover their heads, while of women Islam requires rules of propriety, expressed simply by covering their body appropriately." ("Verhovny mufti RF: Musul'mankam ne trebuetsya nosit' hijab v shkole" [Supreme Mufti of RF: Muslim women do not need to wear the hijab in schools], <http://kavpolit.com/articles/hijab-13907/>, accessed 15 January 2019).

79 "Verhovny mufti Rossii podderzhal voennuyu operaciyu v Sirii" [Russia's Supreme Mufti supports military operation in Syria], <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2670201>, accessed 15 January 2019.

80 The role of the third force has been played at different times by federal muftiates like the Russian Association of Islamic Consensus (RAIS) and the Spiritual Assembly of the Muslims of Russia (DSMR) and by regional muftiates like those of Chechnya and Dagestan.



## Centralna duhovna uprava muslimana Rusije (CDUM) i njena strategija podređenog partnerstva u dijalogu sa Ruskom pravoslavnom crkvom

### Sažetak

U uvjetima konkurencije sa drugim saveznim muftijstvima, CDUM namjerno usmjerava pažnju na razvoj odnosa sa Ruskom pravoslavnom crkvom (RPC). U članku se analizira strategija koju provode CDUM i njen muftija Talgat Tadžuddin prema RPC. Prema mišljenju autora, iako Talgat Tadžuddin vodi politiku istrajne lojalnosti Ruskoj pravoslavnoj crkvi, neki njegovi potezi ukazuju na to da on igra neku svoju igru. Za razliku od mnogih istraživača i stručnjaka koji smatraju Tadžuddinove poteze iracionalnim, ovdje autor tvrdi da je Tadžuddin, zapravo, vješt strateg koji promišljeno nosi masku *jurodivog*. Autor, također, daje i kratak pregled historije CDUM-a od 1990-ih do 2000-ih, ispitujući, između ostalog, razloge koji su u osnovi procesa raspada muftijstva koji je počeo 1992.

**Ključne riječi:** Islam u Rusiji, Centralna duhovna uprava muslimana Rusije (CDUM), Orenburška muslimanska duhovna skupština (OMDS), muftijstvo, muftija.