



# Migrants and Conflicts within the Local Ummah of the Perm Krai: A Playing Card or a Social Actor?

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to demonstrate the role played by newly arriving Muslims in the life of the local Islamic community in the Perm Krai of Russia. This region is characterised by the following important features: the Perm Krai is a permanent Islamic community consisting of local ethnic groups, as well as an Islamic diaspora consisting of various newcomers. There are three kinds of migrants here: labour migrants, students, and those who intend to apply for citizenship. Permanent conflict takes place between the two Muslim communities that occupy this territory. In this case, migrants are accused of attempting to seize power within the local Islamic community. In this paper, the author intends to explore whether there are genuine causes and foundations for local religious conflicts, whether migrants could take over local Islamic communities, and

whether they could change the religious habits of the locals and the status of the Islamic community in the region. The research is based on two series of semi-structured interviews with Islamic leaders, observing participants during official events, and expert interviews. The author examines three indicators of the migrants' growing influence. First, migrant believers prevail during religious services in all mosques within the Kama River region. The second indicator is participation in Islamic social events and projects. The third is the migrants' attempts to establish a special organisation to communicate with the authorities. Today, the migrants play no critical role in the Perm Ummah.

## KEY WORDS

Muslim migrants | Kama River region | diasporas | religious communities | social role

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to demonstrate the role played by newly arriving Muslims in the life of the local Islamic community in the Perm Krai of Russia (the Kama River region). This region is characterised by the following important features. First, there is a permanent Islamic community (Кобищанов 2002). It consists of two parts: local ethnic groups (Tatars, Bashkirs, Slavic converts, etc.) and people born and raised in the North Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. There are 115 local organisations for Muslims registered in the Perm Krai. All local Muslim organisations belong to the Hanafi Madhhab of Sunni Islam.

For local Muslims, faith is actually only a part of their traditional lifestyle and culture. At the same time, local believers perceive Islam as an important part of the Perm Krai's cultural and historical heritage. The rulers of the local communities are confident that the Hanafi Madhhab is the best option for the Ural Muslim population and that any spiritual quest in the Ural region leads to the local madhhab and the local mosque.

It is interesting to note that the local imams are very poorly educated. They are typically self-taught in religious matters and have graduated only from short courses in the Perm Muftiate. They organise their religious activities on the basis of private relations and the principle of spiritual prestige. An imam's personal skills have a great effect on the religious life of each local community (interview with the imam

of the Nizhniy Syp settlement, June 10, 2011), which includes any new community members and innovations.

The Perm Krai also has an Islamic diaspora consisting of various newcomers. Although 2011 marked a peak in internal and external migration, the Perm Krai is still an attractive destination for people from other countries. One part of this stream are the so-called internal migrants from North Caucasus, while the others are newcomers from the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia and Turkey.

Perm Krai also has illegal newcomers who act as a part of the diaspora or ummah. Most migrants tend to settle in Perm and some regional centres (Krasnokamsk, Kungur, Berezniki, Dobryanka, Usolye) to find a job with a good salary. They are typically involved in trade, the timber industry, construction, and road making throughout the whole region. However, there are some places with mono-ethnic migrant settlements (for example Chechen villages in the Karagay and Bolshaya Sosnova districts; Azerbaijani settlements in the villages of Nerdva and Rozhdestvenskoe). Nowadays, these are compact communities with their own cultural and religious spaces.

Muslims from other states are usually included into their own diaspora, so there are some certain national communities with Islamic elements in the Perm Krai. They belong to different madhhabs (Shafi'iyah, Khanbali'iyah) and sometimes to a different branch of Islam – Shiite Islam (Кобищанов 2002). Very often some of them have enough money to support the local ummah and to change some aspects of

religious life. As a rule, Muslim newcomers have a higher level of religious education than Perm Muslims. It is interesting to note that the level of migrants' Islamic education is a sticking point for local religious workers. Most of them are confident that newcomers' religious knowledge is not better than that of the local Muslims. However, the locals seem to harbour a kind of jealousy towards the migrants. Foreign believers are more active in religious life, they take part in a number of sacral holidays, and they are more likely to make donations to mosques and support educational projects.

It appears that the imam of Kuyeda settlement and the now-deceased mufti of the Cathedral Mosque are more honest in recognising that newcomers from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan read the Koran very well during their religious services (interview with the imam of the Kueda settlement, June 9, 2011; interview with the mufti of the Cathedral Mosque, July 07, 2011). It becomes especially clear when a newcomer starts to play the role of organising routine religious activities. There's also evidence of migrant Muslim communities proactively organising themselves. All workplaces where migrants are involved have special houses or rooms for praying. These prayer spots are open to all believers, but actually most of the visitors are Tajiks and Uzbeks who elect religious workers (imams) from their community. The leaders of these communities are literate Tajiks who have received Islamic education at home.

Imams are elected not only from among permanent inhabitants of the

Perm Krai (who have obtained citizenship), but also by those who have come for a short period. This causes frequent change among religious leaders, who are identified by family circumstances, individual plans, and the laws of the Russian Federation. Obviously that religious affiliation to newcomers is very contextual and can be changed depending on the situation. More often than not, they choose the most-comfortable conditions for religious life and near-religious communication. Imams and other religious leaders organise religious education for children in Uzbek and Tajik diasporas, showing them the ropes of Islam and teaching them to read the Koran.

Rural migrant communities don't use special organisational structures with legal registration, but always have a religious leader for Sabbatical "Namaz" prayers and family rites. They meet for these purposes in one of the local farmhouses and rent big houses for important holidays. One of the members of the collective takes on the role of the spiritual leader and leads prayers during weekdays.

Sometimes, the most-influential leaders are not official migrant imams but Sufi teachers, who have a status within the mosques that's on par with religious leaders. This is due to the influence of North Caucasus Islam connected with a huge network of Sufi orders, which are more powerful in this region. Sufi teachers play the role of the power behind the throne in the local Muslim community; they determine where money goes and oversee Muslims' participation in social events. Migrant religious leaders and Sufi

teachers influence a range of Islamic organisations and the Perm Ummah in general.

Second, there is a permanent conflict between two Muslim communities within this territory. This is related to a situation in the ummah of the Russian Federation. There are some central organisations that lead Muslims in the European part of Russia: the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims (TZDUM), which has existed since Soviet times; the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the European Part of Russia (DUMER), created after the decline of the Soviet Union, and; the Russian Association of Muslim Agreement (RAIS), a contextual organisation created as an alternative to other religious structures (Лебедева 2008). The existence of all these organisations at the same time doesn't contradict the Muslim tradition of having no hierarchy within religious spaces. Membership in the ummah assumes the equality of all believers in theological and routine matters, and only spiritual authority can be more powerful. However, Russian Islam has been seriously influenced by Orthodox traditions in terms of its religious structure. All Islamic organisations wanted to identify mainstream tendencies in the Russian Ummah.

This applies to local religious spaces and has led to divisions in communities, especially in Perm Muslims. In the post-Soviet period, the local Perm Ummah was a weak and ill-structured community with a number of ignorant

religious workers and without a well-educated laity. For Perm muftis and imams, TZDUM was only a formal leader. That's why subgroups within the Islamic community made moves to enhance local religious practices and consolidate the number of believers.

In 1992, a new community was created in the Cathedral Mosque. This new organisation wasn't subordinate to the traditional Perm Muftiate. Ravshan Akhmedov became its head in 1995. He was very effective in organising the mosque's reconstruction and ensuring that regular religious services took place. Mukhametgaly Khuzin was appointed the leader of Perm Muftiate by the head of TZDUM – Talgat Tajuddin – in 1997. This date marked the beginning of the opposition between the two communities. The main sticking points were the principles of ummah management and the main directions of community development.

The increase in the number of migrants was used by both organisations as a reason for activity, but in different ways. The community of the Cathedral Mosque was ready to include all newcomers. New members helped solve some financial problems by building houses for Arabic classes, making repairs, and helping poor believers. At the same time (1999), M. Khuzin inspired the extreme Mejlis (Council) of the Perm region<sup>1</sup> to forbid newcomers from leading any Muslim communities.

The second sticking point was the construction of the Cathedral Mosque,

<sup>1</sup> The Perm region became the Perm Krai in 2005 when Komy-Permyak Autonomous Okrug was united.

as members of the Perm Muftiate had no place to pray. M. Khuzin used heavy-handed methods like encroaching on the building and wrecking the Sabbatical Namaz, but these didn't yield any results. After a long chain of conflicts, the mufti lost access to the mosque, which was then transferred to TZDUM directly by T. Tajuddin.

In the early 2000s, the community of the Cathedral Mosque withdrew from TZDUM and opened a regional office of DUMER. M. Khuzin requested that all Muslim organisations be reregistered under the ruling of the Perm Muftiate (Телеграмма муфтия общине Бардабашки, February 17, 2000).<sup>2</sup> As a result, most small groups of believers became formally connected with the Perm mufti. However, the question of where they would pray remained unsolved because the Cathedral Mosque had been officially handed over to the DUMER community in 2001. M. Khuzin began to collect money for the construction of a new mosque. This was his undoing. In spite of all the finances he collected, construction was not begun and nobody could explain why. At the same time, the heads of some rural communities repeatedly wrote letters to T. Tajuddin about Mufti Khuzin's poor and unprincipled behaviour, including the interdiction against leading the Namaz for local spiritual authorities; abuses (Письмо имам-хатыба Осы А. Н. Мустакимова шейх-уль-исламу); his disregard for believers; ineffectiveness against financial problems; and

his permanent self-presentation (Открытое письмо совета махалля Чернушки Т. Таджуддину, March 21, 2006). This led to the secession of the ummahs of Chernushka, Dobryanka, Barda, Osa, and Zakamsk from the Perm Muftiate to subordination under TZDUM (Дискуссионная записка №3 махалля Добрянки, December 17, 2006). As a result, M. Khuzin was replaced by Mauljudin Mustozyar (interview with the mufti of the Cathedral mosque, July 07, 2011; Декрет ЦДУМ №04-06, January 21, 2006).

In 2006, both Muslim Spiritual Administrations appointed new leaders. In November, Ch. M. Galautdinov was appointed by Ravil' Gainutdin, the head of DUMER, to the position of mufti of the community of the Cathedral Mosque (Декрет ДУМЕР №033-ДУ, November 22, 2006). At the end of the same year, B. M. Tazitdinov became a plenipotentiary representative of TZDUM (Декрет о назначениях ЦДУМ, December 31, 2006). In the wake of these changes, the Perm Muftiate became a very strange organisation without any connection to the central Spiritual Administrations, but with a number of subordinated local communes. The ex-mufti lost the support of high authorities and concentrated on media spots to push his idea that any new religious structures destroy the unity of local Muslims. He accused other religious leaders and members of the Cathedral Mosque community of spreading the ideas of Wahhabism (Скрипов 2011) and false Islam. Using

<sup>2</sup> This document and some subsequent papers (decrees of Muslim organisations, telegrams etc.) were sent only in paper form and have no

references or URLs. They are used as a part of the authors' archive.

his ruling experience, he founded a new all-Russian organisation: the Russian Association of Muslim Agreement (RAIS). Ironically, he seemed to have forgotten his own words about the destructive nature of any new Islamic communities in the Kama River region (Cepreeв 2011).

Thus, Perm Muslims were faced with three independent religious leaders who were involved in planning religious and near-religious activities. This problem was partially solved in 2013. The heads of religious communities accused M. Khuzin of damaging Islam's image, creating conflicts, and behaving in an autocratic matter, so they offered to convene the Regional Conference of Muslims. The Special Majlice of Muslims of the Perm Krai accepted a new statute for the Spiritual Administration, under which the Perm Muftiate once again became subordinate to TZDUM. M. Khuzin was removed from his post as the head of the Perm Muftiate, which he used to hold simultaneously with his position as the head of RAIS.

After Khuzin's removal, the communities belonging to TZDUM and DUMER enjoyed good relations for some time. The heads of two Spiritual Administrations took part in public events together and exchanged congratulations on religious holidays. However, these pleasantries were purely for the sake of external observers. After a short period of ceasefire, the new leaders are now ready to begin a new battle. The head of the TZDUM community is struggling for believers and regularly visits Muslim communes in small towns and rural settlements. He has a low level of education and is

trying to improve his position through close communication with the laity. Today, this imam-khatib – Anvar Ablav – has only one material project: the construction of a new mosque. He relies upon native Muslims – Tatars and Bashkirs – but has the unofficial support of secular authorities.

The other head – the imam of the DUMER community, Il'kham Bibarsov – has very close relative connections with the Muslim elite of the Volga Federal District and a good religious education. He is oriented towards active partnerships with newcomers and regularly visits other Muslim countries. However, he doesn't have the approval of the local authorities and officially oversees just a few communes within the Perm Krai. Perhaps this situation inspires him to make public statements against Anvar Ablav accusing him of splitting the local Ummah.

This small war was complemented in 2016 by the creation of the Union of the Kama River Region Muslims, whose goal was to educate local followers. This union united the leaders of ethnic diasporas who had lost their positions due to neither having serious political programs, nor being supported by the majority of people. This is convenient for the local authorities; it gives them the option of supporting a more loyal leader.

There is an obvious clash between those who work to unite only local Muslims and those who support the intensive integration of migrants. In this situation, migrants are accused of attempting to seize power in the local Islamic community. As such, it's

necessary to analyse the actual potential of migrant groups to change anything in the local religious space.

Are there any real foundations for local religious conflicts? Could migrants take over local Islamic communities, change the religious habits of the locals, and alter the status of the Islamic community in the region? These are the questions the author intends to address in this paper.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

Religious conflict has never been seriously considered as a theory thanks to the secularization approach and the Soviet idea of the disappearance of religion (Fox 2004: 55-56). It was described only as a variant of social conflict. The leading theories of social conflict are applicable in determining the place of religious conflict in the system of social interaction. The psychological definition of conflict – “a collision of trends opposite directed, incompatible with each other, a single episode in consciousness, in the interpersonal interactions or interpersonal relations of individuals or groups of people, connected with negative emotional experiences” (Карпенко 1985: 152) – was coined by L. Coser and his followers. They add to the understanding of conflict a reference to the three universal sticking points: resources, power, and status (Козеп 1996). Obviously, each conflict can be resolved only once both sides learn to coexist closely and make a commitment to successfully settling their differences.

Today, religion represents a social phenomenon with huge potential to cause conflicts (Fox 2004: 58-59). Resources, power, and status form the potential base for conflict, and all three of these factors are strong in religions. There are two main variants in determining religious conflicts. The first is based on the spread of religious elements of conflict among all spheres of social life (Fox 2004: 24) because religion legitimises economic and social distinctions, influences political life, and takes part in organising the composition of ideologies. The second variant of typology is connected with conflict development and the way to resolve conflicts (Nielsen and Fultz 1995).

Different classifications of social conflicts are indicative of the “external,” theatrical role of religious elements in so-called religious conflicts. According to K. Boulding’s theory (Boulding 1962), this kind of conflict can be considered replaceable (an observed occurrence of the latent conflict), which is based on bad knowledge and is false. Within the boundaries of Bisno’s typology (Bisno 1988: 175), which uses the varieties of human perception as the basis for research, religious elements can be found in each type of conflict: the conflict of objectives, enforced with corrupted goals; conflicts where behaviour, reasons, and content are falsely attributed; illusive conflicts, based on communication failure; expressional conflicts with the desire to demonstrate belligerence. Thus, religious conflicts usually exist because of the negative perception of individuals and groups as a result of the situation being corrupted.

The application of classification theories to religious conflicts shows that, actually, these conflicts bear all the same features as non-religious conflicts. Religion itself plays a role only insofar as it divides people's opinions and leads to arguments, which eventually become larger social disputes. Institutional affiliations, social environments, and the subjective perception of religious people in the dispute don't actually change the nature of the conflict itself and how it plays out. As such, religious conflicts usually have nothing to do with religion.

## METHOD

The research is based on two series of semi-structured interviews with Islamic leaders (2011, 2017) (see list of questions in appendix), participants' observation of official events (meeting of the City Duma Council on Interfaith Relations, the Annual Regional Forum "Muslim world"), and experts' interviews with local authorities. All interviews were conducted by the author but have not been published, as the interviewees gave only tentative consent.

## RESULTS

There are two factors that can determine the success of any innovations in the social and religious space. The first and perhaps most important is the specificity of the local Ural Islam. This variant of the Islamic religious system is very specific. Faith is regarded as a part of national tradition, which influences religious practices and social behaviour, engendering, at the same time, a

specific mythology. The religiousness of vernacular believers is often invisible and even contextual, meaning they only show their faith during holidays. We insist that migrant Muslim communities have a high potential to contribute to religious life, which can be independent or connected with their environment. Migrant labourers and potential citizens visibly demonstrate their religiosity and attract a lot of attention from local Muslims, authorities, journalists, and non-Islamic residents.

Some features of the local Muslim communities serve as the basis for the Perm Krai Ummah's conservative position. The first factor is the aloofness of Perm Islamic believers and their spiritual leaders. Most Perm Muslims have no opinion on the opposition between the two Spiritual Administrations or the relevant circumstances involving internal and external migrants. They have a habit of placing confidence in the head of a religious community, especially in a representative of the Perm Muftiate. Believers from rural and small town communes have never heard about the struggle for religious and social power between the followers of TZDUM and DUMER. Even after the replacement of M. Khuzin, imams at the local level said: "We are subordinated to the mufti" (interview with the imam of Chaikovskiy, June 9, 2011). There was only one matter when the ummah of the Sulmash settlement had a conflict with the head of Perm Muftiate and wanted to change its affiliation (interview with the imam of Chaikovskiy, June 9, 2011), but this situation was resolved by preserving the settlement's membership. As a rule,

only highly educated and involved believers refused to visit the mosque in the presence of Mufti Khuzin (interview with the imam of Chaikovskiy, June 9, 2011).

This aloofness is closely connected with the routine life of most local communities. Each imam has to solve a lot of problems: economic matters (warming the mosque, repairing the roof), the construction of new religious buildings, the collection of donations etc. The laity leads a normal life without everyday questions about faith, religious services, and spiritual authorities. Each local commune is usually self-contained and has very weak inter-communal relations. Perm believers respect Muslims from other cities and settlements, but very seldom travel to other districts (interview with the imam of the Nizhniy Syp settlement, June 10, 2011). Occasionally, local Muslims are willing to visit holy places within the Perm Krai (for example the town of Bulgur) or other cities to find sponsorship (for example, some believers from Chaikovskiy helped followers from some villages in the Uinskiy district). Obviously, the system of interactions for Perm Muslims is based on so-called “short relations”, with sympathy and confidence paying a significant role. This system assumes the preservation of long-standing traditions and closeness for all newcomers.

Routine problems give rise to ignorance of the situation in the region and in the country in general. Even imams – who are the local religious elite – lack knowledge about the central Muslim organisations and all of their contradictions. As a rule, religious leaders had

trouble answering questions about the subordination of their communities during their interviews. Only one imam mentioned the new all-Russian Muftiate (RAIS) and added that he had no desire “to tamper with the life of the communities’ heads” (interview with the imam of Chaikovskiy, June 9, 2011). Even after an explanation of existing structures, the heads of local ummahs insisted that they didn’t want to take part in religious business on an all-Russian level (interview with the imam of Chaikovskiy, June 9, 2011). According to Perm spiritual leaders, the attitude of a true Muslim believer is to be patient (interview with the imam of Chaikovskiy, June 9, 2011). This is true for Perm Muslims even in situations when high authorities limit local communities’ religious and social practices. To some extent, this opinion is inspired by the repressive policy of the Soviet power against all religious organisations, and especially against spiritual leaders.

This aloofness and unwillingness to potentially create additional problems influences the attitude toward outsiders. Many locals believe newcomers have no right to live in the Kama River region. As such, these people call migrants by pejorative names like “azer” or “churka.” Perm residents are sure that outsiders have no spiritual authority in principle. This is the case with newcomers from within Russia, too. One migrant wanted to build a new mosque in Chaikovskiy, an initiative that was interpreted as an attempt to create an alternative Muslim community. Local Muslims successfully prohibited this construction even though

they themselves didn't have enough places to pray. The imam of Chaikovskiy's long-standing community said he and his followers believed in strictly controlling all newcomers and making them accept special sanctions. Local Muslims feel a closer connection with the followers of other religions who were born in the area than they do with Muslim outsiders, which is why they deny those outsiders the chance to be spiritual leaders. The most-popular explanation of such an attitude is the statement that a newcomer imam can inspire displeasure among the believers of native nationalities (interview with the imam of the Kueda settlement, June 9, 2011). The heads of local communities are ready to invite outsiders to read the Koran only in the case of a force majeure (the illness or absence of the local imam) (interview with the imam of the Barda settlement, June 18, 2011).

As such, local Islam appears to be a long-standing but aloof institution that is oriented towards natives and against outsiders. It supports innovations only under pressure from external factors. Obviously, the issue here is not about special religious contradictions. Nobody among the migrants actually aims to take real power or destroy traditional religious life. But by denying them, local imams keep their religious status, so-called resources, and formal power, all of which could potentially be expropriated by outsiders, according to Coser's theory.

The vigorous religious practices of the migrants (both foreign and domestic) contrast sharply with the behaviour of non-practising local Muslims. It looks like newcomers are ready to

change local Islamic practices, or at least add some innovations. However, we can see that there are many factors that influence this process.

Some changes in religious life connected to migrants do actually take place. Muslim migrants visit the Sabbatical Namaz cheerfully. They prevail during religious services in all the mosques of the Kama River region, while the local Islamic tradition permits making Namaz (Islamic daily prayers) at home. The lack of believers at religious services in some settlements is connected with the absence of newcomers (interview with the imam of the Kueda settlement, June 9, 2011). Migrants attend mosques on days other than Friday and sometimes make generous financial contributions. Traditionally, the Sabbatical service includes a sermon in the Tatar or Bashkir languages, because there are few natives who know Arabic very well. However, some newcomers who only speak Russian also attend Namaz. As such, Russian is the most-effective language of international communication in local mosques.

Muslim newcomers bring new elements to near-religious life. The most-popular innovations are new Islamic fashions and the changing of the religious calendar. These external revisions are, however, immaterial for local Islam and its religious workers. The imams of the Perm Krai insisted that all variations in believers' appearance or the mosque's interior have only pragmatic causes and are not connected with any great reforms in religious behavior. For example, one change was the substitution of the namazlyck (a

special mat for praying) for big modern carpets. The now-deceased mufti of the Cathedral Mosque said the carpets were more comfortable and useful. He described their religious importance as like candy wrappers, in that they didn't affect the substance of the religion itself (interview with the mufti of the Cathedral mosque, July 7, 2011). Efforts to maintain and expand the local ummah are more important than preserving old-fashioned rules. As such, we can see a lot of religious elements in local disputes (Busno), but other things have become the basis of both the conflicts and the ways they get resolved.

Sometimes newcomers try to use the religious practices of other madhhabs during Namaz. Local believers pronounce "Amen" calmly, but migrants want to do it very loudly, thus destroying the customary atmosphere of the service. In such cases, religious workers make a caveat or inform new members that all believers must follow the long-standing traditions of the Ural (interview with the imam of the Kueda settlement, June 9, 2011). A similar issue arose in the Cathedral Mosque; Muslim migrants insisted on creating a separate entrance to the building for women but allowing them to pray in the same room. Local religious activists rejected this idea because the Cathedral Mosque was a cultural heritage site that couldn't be rebuilt, and because it was traditional for women to pray behind a curtain.

Some local Islamic leaders suggest that financing the mosque is a way of gaining leadership. But, of course, newcomers must contribute financially to groups they want to participate in. It

is also critical to underscore that the migrant community is not united. Each diaspora has its own ambitions. Chechens and Dagestani people prefer mono-ethnic communication and make profitable business ventures. They are ready to intervene in the management of Muslim communities only when there are commercial interests involved. Chechens were very active in the Perm Muftiate during Khuzin's rule because they had one common business. After Anvar Ablayev's order, they accused him of "irtidad" (apostasy) and called him a "murtad" (renegade) because Ablayev had no truck with them. The local authorities preferred not to be involved in this conflict.

However, in general, diasporas exist separately, especially those that don't confess the Khanifi'ya madhhab. As such, their influence on the social space of the Perm Krai is not significant. There aren't many believers of the Hanbal or Shafi'ya madhhabs in the West Ural region.

The second way to gain influence is to participate in Islamic social events and projects, like religious holidays or charity initiatives. The administration of the Perm Krai organises only two major events for Muslims: the celebration of Eid al-Adha (Kurban-bairam) and the annual inter-regional forum "The Muslim World" (since 2009). The second event includes a range of activities such as a table-top sale, scientific round tables, and the worship of Muslim relics. Though both migrants and locals say their Islamic values are the most important thing, most are in fact more interested in the commercial aspect of these events (fairs, popular non-

religious holidays etc.). As such, this aspect of Islamic life has become, in many ways, declarative for both groups. Religion only serves as window dressing for people to lobby for their own interests. This is the case for both local believers and newcomers. In this situation, the institutional affiliation of the believer becomes formal. The social status of an individual is more heavily influenced by their economic position than their religious one. And subjective perception of religious people is more vulnerable to pressure from economic and political circumstances.

Thus, it can be argued that the religious conflict in the Perm Ummah has nothing to do with religion and is in fact only a kind of social conflict. As such, it is reasonable not to highlight this situation as special subject matter for the modern theory of conflict.

## CONCLUSION

The author suggests that partnering with the local Muslim Spiritual Administrations is the most-effective way for migrants to influence local religious communities. In these departments, migrants sometimes occupy the positions of imams; they often study at the region's two Muslim colleges and help build new mosques by providing both money and labour.

Today, migrants play no critical role in the inner life of the regional ummah. Local Muslims outnumber and sometimes dislike them, and the local authorities prefer to cooperate with the Spiritual Administrations. Migrant believers are, at the moment, only a

source of money for the ummah, an argument in favour of constructing new mosques, and a potential source of support during regular conflicts between Spiritual Administrations. They are a playing card used by the heads of Spiritual Administrations and the local authorities.

Thus it can be argued that the features of religious community and religion as a part of society don't actually play into the interaction between local believers and newcomers. Although Islam and the principles of Islamic society are very important for each Muslim, in the modern, multi-confessional world, they are often less important than economic, political, and ethnic conditions and circumstances. Religious traditions and prescriptions are relegated to the background and often become only private business.

At the same time, religion as a system of social consolidation appears relevant when it comes to social choices for individuals and groups. As for local Islamic communities and migrants, using religious "tools" – terms and arguments – helps them find common language and maintain an image of fidelity to traditional Islamic teachings. Currently, migrant communities cannot be very effective actors in the new social space, but they nevertheless play their own game to keep their identity as Muslims.

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## APPENDIX

### LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR MUSLIM LEADERS

#### Life background

When and where were you born?

What was the parenting system in your family?

Were your parents practising Muslims?

Who influenced your outlook when you were young? Who influences your view of life today?

What is your education?

Do you have any non-Muslim friends?

Who has helped you keep your folk tradition and religious background?

For how long have you lived in the Perm region? What attracted you to this region?

### **Strategy of religious behaviour**

Do you have any religious education? Where would you like to receive an education?

What do you think about religious education abroad?

What is your role in the local ummah?

What does your membership of the ummah mean to you?

Must your relatives and friends become Muslims if they are not already?

How can you help your friends become Muslim?

Are there any fake Muslims?

Do you consider yourself to be a true Muslim?

### **Social position and role in the ummah**

Must Muslims help poor people?

Must Muslims take part in public works in the mosque?

What are your duties in the mosque?

What is the main problem in your community?

Is there any difference between local Muslims and newcomers?

What is the age structure of your community?

How often do you and your like-minded acquaintances visit other regions?

Do you have any conflicts in your community? What are the causes of these conflicts?

What is the role of migrants in your community?

Do you know of any central Muslim organisations?

Do you know anything about the conflict in the Perm Ummah?

## Migranti i sukobi u lokalnoj umi permskog regiona: Pioni ili stvarni društveni akteri?

SVETLANA VLADIMIROVNA RIAZANOVA<sup>1</sup>

### REZIME

U permskom regionu postoji stabilna muslimanska zajednica koju čine mesne muslimanske etničke grupe i migranti. Za lokalne muslimane vera je deo tradicionalnog načina života i kulture. U postsovjetskom periodu, lokalna permska uma je oslabljena i to zbog prisustva velikog broja verski nepismenih vernika i nedostatka obrazovanih veroučitelja. Migranti su u ovom periodu formirali svoj sociokulturni prostor koji karakteriše prisustvo raznih međlisa, dostupnost dovoljnih sredstava za podršku lokalnoj umi i visok nivo verskih znanja vernika. U nizu slučajeva ulogu nastavnika u njima imaju sufijski učitelji.

Jedna od specifičnosti muslimanske zajednice u Permu jeste neprestani sukob između dve lokalne verske uprave u regionu. Ovaj raskol u zajednici izazvan je prisustvom nekoliko centralizovanih muslimanskih organizacija u Ruskoj Federaciji. Obe mesne organizacije od 1992. godine su u stalnoj konfrontaciji. Kamen spoticanja među njima bio je u principima kontrole lokalne ume i izbora pravca njenog razvoja. Permski muslimani bili su primorani da se suoče sa tri nezavisne verske vođe koji su zastupali različite aspekte religioznih i verskih aktivnosti. To je rezultiralo pojavom protivurečnosti između onih koji su bili orijentisani prema konsolidaciji lokalnih muslimana i onih koji su bili zainteresovani za intenzivnu integraciju migranata u lokalnu zajednicu.

Imajući u vidu trenutnu situaciju, posebno je aktuelna analiza potencijala grupa migranata za promene u životu lokalne ume.

Podaci iz istraživanja, koji su predmet ovog teksta, zasnivaju se na dve serije polu-strukturisanih intervjua sa muslimanskim liderima (2011. i 2017.) uključujući zapažanja tokom zvaničnih verskih događaja i ekspertskih intervjua sa lokalnim vlastima. Identifikovana su dva faktora koja bi mogla da odrede uspešnost inovacija u verskom prostoru. Prvi faktor se odnosi na specifičnost lokalnog uralskog islama u kojem se vera doživljava kao deo nacionalne tradicije. Religioznost tradicionalnog vernika vrlo često je nevidljiva i kontekstualna. Lokalna verzija islama izgleda kao zatvoreni, stabilan sistem, fokusiran na stanovnike regiona i suprotstavljen strancima. Zbog toga se inovacije realizuju samo pod pritiskom spoljnih faktora. Verske prakse migranata u tom pogledu stvaraju oštar kontrast.

Migranti su voljni da izmene ustaljene verske prakse islama i da uvedu inovacije u bogoslužnju, finansiranju i nezavisnosti u odnosu na lokalnu vlast. Međutim, migranti ne igraju kritičnu ulogu u unutrašnjem životu regionalne ume. Lokalni muslimani koji ih svojom brojnošću premašuju i ponekad ne vole, imaju veliku podršku lokalnih sekularnih vlasti. Religiozni migranti deluju samo kao izvor novca za umu, kao argument za izgradnju džamija i kao potencijalna snaga u tekućem sukobu lokalnih verskih vođa.

### KLJUČNE REČI

muslimani – migranti | permski region | dijaspora | religijske zajednice | društvena uloga

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