

# Islam and Values of Kazakh Culture

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**Abstract**—Unlike Christianity and Buddhism, Islam, being one of the three universal world religions, actively penetrates into people's everyday life. The main reason for this is that in Islam the religion and ideology, philosophy, religious organizations and state bodies are closely interrelated. In order to analyze the state of being of interrelations of religion and civil society in Kazakhstan, it is necessary to study Islam and its relations with spiritual culture of the society. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan the religion is separated from the state, i.e. each performs its own function without interfering into each other's affairs. The right of the citizens of our republic to freedom of thinking and faith is based on the Constitution of the RK, Civil Code, Law "On freedom of faith and religious unions in the Republic of Kazakhstan".

Legislatively secured separation of the mosque and church from the state does not mean that religion has no influence on the latter. The state, consisting of citizens with their own beliefs, including religious ones, cannot be isolated from the influence of religion. Nowadays it is commonly accepted that it is not possible to understand and forecast key social processes without taking into account the religious factor.

**Keywords**—Kazakhstan, Islam, Shamanism, tradition and innovation, fundamentalism, religious culture, spirit worship, tolerance, sectarianism, extremism and civilization.

## I. INTRODUCTION

RELIGION in unobscure form poses a question about the sense and specifics of human history, brings forward the idea of all people, enables a concept of a moral personality and conscience. It serves as a way of regulating and orientation of not only external behavior, but also internal world of people, giving a possibility of hope and belief in the Good, Love and Truth. A modern man who is internally weakly linked with one of the currently existing religions is anxious – either he has to lose trust in his own mind or a trust

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in great prophets, great teachers of the humankind. Irrespective of what will our contemporary will choose, it is clear that religious need is undoubtful. And this is particularly important in the periods of abrupt break of social relations, accompanied by rising uncertainty in future of a man. This is why just after the breakup of the Soviet Union, i.e. after disappointment in the progressive social ideal – “soviet communist future” – people all over followed each other to join different types of religious confessions.

Nowadays in the Western countries, in many temporal Eastern countries, including Kazakhstan, the religion mainly serves as an integrating-control mechanism of civil society. The function of a religion in civil society is to keep the integrity of socio-cultural system, of which it is a part. A number of religious confessions combine religious propagation with economic activities, establishes on the territory of Kazakhstan small private enterprises and firms, promoting development of economy and creation of new workplaces. Mosques conduct charities, render material aid to the most vulnerable groups: handicapped, aged, lonely, and other people. All activity of religious organizations is directed at realization of ideals of peace, tolerance and love towards all human beings regardless of their confessional membership.

Islam is the center of a semantic field of Turkic philosophy. If one is to overcome the Marxist-Soviet thesis that Islam has been imposed to Turks by Arabs, then it is possible to allocate the following aspects of this issue: a) Islam has played a civilizational function in the culture of Turkic people; b) on the basis of Islam the culture of Turkic people in IX-XII centuries blossomed, the Turkic philosophy of this period occupied one of the leading positions in the world philosophical process; c) under conditions of colonial cultures of Turkic people of Russia and China Islam resisted to assimilatory policy of those empires and played ethno preserving function; d) through Arab-language philosophy Turkic people got familiarized with antique philosophic heritage [1]. Not only Islam rendered fateful influence on the spiritual culture of Turkic people, but also, at the same kais enough to recollect in this respect a role of the the Karakhanids state, empire of the Great Moguls, Iran, the the Osmanli state, etc. in upholding Islam.

The Turkic culture as a whole and Turkic philosophy in particular is internally uniform not on the basis of a racial attribute (Turks mainly represent in this respect transitive forms between the Indo-European and Mongoloid races), cultural-economic types (nomads, farmers of oases and river valleys, townspeople), religious beliefs (different directions of Islam, orthodox, Shamanists, Buddhists, etc.), political system (democratic and totalitarian regimes, autonomies and

dependent people, etc... So what unites the views of various Turkic ethnoses in uniform world outlook system? In our opinion, it is a unity of language, historical memory of the heroic past, ethically focused mythology and folklore, i.e. archetypes of spiritual experience. In the modern marginalized consciousnesses of a Turk the irrepressible desire to self-realization sits deeply. Not everything was stated and made yet. Uniqueness of Turkic philosophy is in organic combination of a tradition and openness to innovations, nomadic and settled experiences of mastering the world, sacral, profane and secret, it is characterized by tolerance, love of freedom, primodality of a word and optimism.

The core world outlook phenomena of Turkic philosophy are defined as immanent spiritual experience of people and a field of dialogue of this culture (Turk-Chinese, Turk-Sogdy, Turk-Arabian and Turk-Slavic syntheses). Except for universal philosophical categories (life, the person, the world, space, time and etc.), in Turkic philosophy there are original world outlook and philosophical universals ("kut", "kanagat", "nesibe", "nysap", "obal" and "sauap", "kiye", "kesir", "el", "aleumet", "kisi", etc.). Translation of those concepts into other languages is possible if context in their use is preserved. The Turkic philosophy, even in its most Islamized forms, has never completely lost touch with its ancient roots. For example, it is not by chance that K.A.Iasau remains the preacher of Sufism which is mentally close to nomadic outlook, in "Diuanii Hikmete" there are many pre-Islamic characters (yerens, chiltens, mugans, aruakhs, progenitors and so on). The idea of harmony of the nature and the person is an end-to-end topic of "Beneficial knowledge" by Zh.Balasaguni. Here it is possible to recollect a mentioning by him of the common Turkic cultural hero – Alp Yer Tonga [2].

Nomadic gnosis, based on orally-sacral knowledge and not recognizing looped, final, frozen condition, is characterized by search of special harmony between the person and the world, as a matter of fact the Turkic philosophy is dialogical and discursive.

In ternary Turkic model of the world a person is an axis of this world. The world is not alienated from the person, it is humanized and is allocated by human qualities. The central concept of Turkic philosophical anthropology is not the borrowed terms "adam", "pende", but "kisi" - a measure of human in the person. As different from "person-deer" (Zh. Balasaguni) the real human being is a carrier of true moral and socio-cultural qualities and aspires to constantly be a human being. Though in the literature there was an image of "the patrimonial person" as the characteristic of a nomad, however concrete socio-cultural analysis of nomadic community of Turkic people denies this calque. Values of freedom, openness, mobility in nomadic society have caused allocation from a community of the following individualized types: batyr, akyn, zhyrau, sal, seri, bakasy, bi, etc.

Some parallels in history: the Scythian thinker of the antiquity, one of "seven wise men of the world" Anarhasis, calling in question the antique views on morality opposes them the high spirituality of nomads (see the Philosophical

heritage of Kazakh people. V.I. Astana, 2005). Orhon-Yenisei written monuments are full of warning about the danger of adopting the customs and stereotypes of behavior of tabgashs (the Chinese). The legendary Korkyt Ata searches the sense of life and wishes to find a way to immortality of the person. Abai calls to be the person. Even from these brief maxims an ethical orientation of Turkic spirituality is evidently observable.

The originality of traditional ethics of Turks is expressed by:

- Syncretism of mind (truth), aesthetics (beauty) and ethics (good);
- A wide circulation of binary oppositions: a life and death, good and evil, joy and grief, a body and soul, sacral and profane, pleasure and self-restriction, etc.;
- Philotheses are given in an ethical frame (for example, 4 beginnings of the world and the person of Zh.Balasaguni);
- Rooting in an inhabitancy and harmony with it;
- Understanding honor and conscience as bases of the doctrine about morality (for example in Shakarim's works);
- The importance of eminence of an origin;
- Concurrence of moral and human qualities;
- Gerontocracy priorities of morality;
- Respect for the woman and reverence of children;
- Allocation of nomadic and patrimonial forms of human solidarity and consent;
- The developed institute of hospitality, etc. [3].

Orally-poetic discourse of the carriers of the Kazakh philosophy and the individualized forms of popular wisdom is inherently dialogical, 'tolgau' and sayings of 'biys' express not only existential conditions (konil kuy) of thinkers, but are always turned to listeners, are focused on mutual understanding that is reached through sacralisation and perfection of the art of a word. It is possible to kill the person, but it is impossible to stop a free verbal stream. In the opinion of many philosophers and culturologists, XXI century can easily become a century of Turkic culture and a civilization which is caused by a set of factors. Firstly, in conditions of globalization the special importance get areas of contact of modern world super civilizations. The Turkic world being located on a joint of four civilizations (Islamic, Orthodox, Chinese, Western) anyhow is influenced by all these cultures and itself renders essential influence on them. Secondly, in the new independent Turkic states in connection with the necessity of revival of cultural roots and entrance to the world civilized community a powerful charge of passionarity is born. Even in the Republic of Turkey this charge is far from being settled, and there is an active work of human spirit going on. Thirdly, traditional values and ideas of Turkic philosophy (tolerance, sacredness of words, an openness, respect for traditions and a susceptibility to innovations, ethical orientedness, affinity to the nature and ecological consciousness and so on) are demanded by a modern world civilization. Fourthly, the state program "Cultural heritage",

including the program of revival of a philosophical heritage, initiated by the President of Kazakhstan, N.A.Nazarbaev, plays an important role in formation of space of dialogue of cultures and civilizations.

As directly related cultures which had impact on Kazakh culture can be mentioned Shamanism and Sufism. Let us make some examples proving that shamanism had absorbed all features typical to the Eastern countries. According to S. Rerick all spiritual doctrine takes their roots from Asia, because Western person values technology higher than spiritual values. Oriental person all his life spends on searching and development of his inner world, on revelation of hidden and vivid parts of his spiritual essence and on actualization and perfection of levels of humanity. In next parts of the article are given semiotic analysis of Kazakhstan' Islam in the context of shamanism and Sufism.

Shaman aims to evoke human's unconscious world. This is the method of search spiritual unity with unlimited inner essence. This method can be considered as a game of shaman. This game semantically may be interpreted in the following way. During his game shaman imitates the role of the creature of the world (imitation of cosmos in individual level), by mystical unity divides good and evil, he transfers harmful qualities, and removes evil. During the game physical body turns into peculiar condition. Many evidences show that shamans have parapsychological abilities. For instance, some shamans could bring out from body harmful bile. They were perfect masters of methods of surgery and hypnotic cure methods. In the condition of ecstasy they could walk barefoot on scorching coal. Similar phenomena can be noticed in the system of yogis and Philippians physicians. One peculiarity part of shamanic game is in usage of music during meditation. Semantic meaning of the kui is based on the principle to restrain death.

We cannot consider Kazakh religious systems as types replacing each other. As usual, in concrete historical periods religious systems occur simultaneously in syncretism. According to forms of spiritual culture one of them becomes dominant. For example semantic analysis of mythical characters can be interpreted as syncretism of two religions. Variety of subconscious mystical figures are supplemented with different images of daemons in Kazakh philosophy. Researches of history and monuments of Kazakh culture mention amongst them the following characters: 1) satan, 2) peri, 3) gin, 4) zheztirnak (a woman with copper nails), 5) sorel (her husband), 6) zhalmauz (witch), 7) albasti (troglydyte), 8) obyr (necrophilia), 9) Montana (changeable jin), 10) shimurin, 11) martu (dangerous for women during childbirth), 12) kirsik, 13) iblis (from Islamic daemons) etc.

From above mentioned list of daemons can be noticed vivid religious syncretism. One of them is the way of sacrifice (tasattik). Words 'kurban' and 'tasattik' derived from Arabic language. However in their realization were implanted initial believe rituals. According to Quran prophet Ibrahim sacrificed a sheep. Ritual 'tasattik' initially aimed to soften destroying impact of social revenge (talion), because principle 'a life for

a life' weakens its communicative opportunities. Blood feud by being transferred into cultural exchange becomes a ritual custom. The ritual aimed to unite participants of a definite symbol. It had symbolic character. Shaman was wise man who knew the meaning of this symbol. Interrelation of shaman system with Islam was indifferent. Based on the struggle with idolatry Islam sussed and blamed genetheoistic believes [4].

However in order to be accepted by people, Islam had to accept their initial world outlook and spiritual core. This process was two-sided. Following semantic analysis of religious images also proves our statements. Tengri and holy aruakhs had gained Muslim content. Sky Tengri became Allah, aruaki turned to pirs, mashaikhes, assistants of the God, ancient daemons transferred into jinns and satans from Islamic daemons). This was really complicated and different sided phenomena. As mixture of two believes can be given many examples from folklore and religious texts. Even shamanism in the extent of Kazakh culture became an element of Islam. Dance of shaman adopted elements from suffian actions; before his rituals shamans made ablution in Islamic way; shaman began his words with prayer to Allah and to prophet Muhammad and His halifs. Diuana with rod in his hand, in a pointed hat, decorated with swan firs was associated in people's consciousness with baksi (shaman). Transfer from native religions to Muslim type in Kazakh culture covers many centuries and it took place in unity and inter supplement.

There were written many works considered about Islam and its formation in the territory of Kazakhstan, about 1.5 billiards. But let us consider some issues connected with features of Islamic civilization.

There are numerous of different myths and perverted comprehensions about Islamic civilization. The west which used technological changes in the beginning of the new epoch (industrial society, market, industrial revolution) beneficially turned into key world power and aspired to supremacy all over the world. Efficient repulse westernization met only from Oriental religions. Particularly Islamic religion suffered more than Chinese and Japanese religions from Christian expansion. In the end of the XIXth century after crusade there were no independent Muslim countries, except Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. But it is worth to mention that any of those colonized countries rejected Islamic belief. Even Russia which conducted very powerful cultural expansion could not destroy even one of the formed Islamic ethno cultural system. Acceptance of the Christianity by native ethnos of Siberia was connected with the change of the ancient traditional religion.

In the middle-aged Muslim empires policy of forced conversion to Muslim from Christianity was not conducted on purpose, because according to the basic rules of Islam a man must convert to Islam on his own will [5].

To this point can be raised question: Does it exist fundamentalism and particularity? Of course, it wouldn't be right to say that it doesn't exist. Fundamentalism is a product of a marginal society where traditional culture got into crisis and which couldn't adjust to new historical conditions. this

manifestation can be noticed in Iran, Afghanistan, and Egypt. In these countries phenomena of fundamentalism emerges in the result of struggle to the Western expansion. Fundamentalism is an aspire to preserve cultural features in the framework of the ancient forms. Islamic particularity is also related with exaggerated images of the Western myths. By Islamic religion all people are regardless of origin, nationality, belief are creatures created by mercy of the God. Even followers of Abraham religions are not enemies for Muslims. As al-Farabi said 'they are citizens of the city of the lost'.

Other world and national religions are titled with the names of their founders or by the names of the society (Christianity – Jesus Christ, Buddhism – Gautama Shakhia-Muni Buddha, Zoroastrianism – Zarathustra, Confucianism – Confucius). But Islam is different. It is destined for all people.

According to new Law Articles about religion, to acts and contracts about human rights which was accepted in 2011 in Constitution of Republic of Kazakhstan, liberty of the confidence of the established citizens would be guaranteed, citizens without citizenships could adhere to any religions single or with someone else, and also they have the rights to participate or not to participate in religious actions, no pressure in relation to religious affiliation would exist and religious associations separated from the state. After the totalitarian regime, this law gave a full freedom to citizens to be informed in relation to religion. Since sixteen years of adoption of the law, the number of religious organizations and associations in the country started to increase in a geometric progression. Nowadays only in Almaty there are about 240 religious associations, 150 of them belong to Protestant branch of Christianity, more than 40 are Muslims, 16 of them belong to Russian Orthodox Church, 6 of them are Catholic branch and 3 of them belong to different branches of Judaism [6]. Before this case among local population there were no such difficult questions about relationship between traditional religions of the country. But inhabitants' opinions on actions of the new directions of religions aren't identical. According to the last social researches among youth, 45,4 % of participants of this survey answered that they were against to change a religion, 35,9% of them are not against, 18,6% of them answered that they didn't care. To question like, if someone harmed your religious feeling, 13,4% of participants answered that they were ready to be protected with a gun in hands, 17,8% would complain to organizations of human rights, 8,7% would address to court, 20,5 % would ask for help from their nation or from representative of religion. 11,6% will address to police, 1,5% will try to leave the country, 21,1% will behave like there was nothing. And also the youth of Kazakhstan defining its uniqueness, gave the preference to civil signs, they have determined themselves as the citizens of Kazakhstan (54%). 44,1% of respondents evaluated positively the religion influence to society, 11,3% evaluated negatively. Majority of participants to the survey are the indifferent believers (I believe in religion, but I don't interfere in the religious life), 10,8% are "the active believers"

(I adhere to religion, I am the member of a religious community and I keep religious traditions), 9,8% respect religious belief, 9,2% although they are not believers they keep religious traditions, 3,4% are indifferent to religious problems, 0,4% are "the atheists" [7].

Although the tolerance level of these researches in society is high, they don't deny the possibility of religious conflicts and due to religious relations they notice the need to improve the civil legal culture. According to the data of mass media, it is possible to notice that activity of new religions disturbs inhabitants of our country. It is not difficult to notice that the traditional religions of our Republic as Islam and Orthodoxy look with fear to the spread of new religions. If at the beginning of independence after the totalitarian regime, restriction of religious belief was evaluated as a violation of democratic standards, now it is clear that, some religious directions don't correspond to democratic principles, they even don't consider Human Rights. The power which takes into account this banned religious organizations in the extremist directions. In the young states which were emerged from the Soviet system, where atheism was official ideology, citizens had little knowledge about religion and about the real essence of religion. That is why there have appeared "borrowed" religions which interpreted the difficulties of the head of the state and who had a "brilliant" appearance. Those years when the economy limped, the spiritual wealth started to be forgotten, these new religious directions through the humanitarian, charitable and financial supports were pulling the unprotected segments of the population in their nets. On the other hand, the state which needed external investments was closing eyes to actions of missionaries. At that time together with external financial investments, foreign missionaries also started to arrive. There is no doubt that in a certain level, their actions harm the state and the stability of society. President N. Nazarbayev wrote about it in his book "Tarikh tolkininda": "We should not forget that we always join to the world's largest religious traditions. Although it is not the base of our today's unity, but it is one of sources of the beginnings. The twentieth century is the era of unexpected contradictions, one of them - a nation that has no religion to be part of today's world religious progress which rarely becomes a prey to another state. Such states present consciously or without thinking their religious values as an example to other states" [8]. There are big doubts that values which are alien to a national spiritual world will have a positive impact on the progressive development of society.

## II. CONCLUSION

All religious processes that take place in today's society are not the same. Scientists estimate the impact of new religions in society: "Arrival in Kazakhstan religious faiths previously unknown to our society can be referred to the consequences of globalization which intentionally or not intentionally harms the cultural uniqueness of Kazakhstan citizens" [9]. At this time we can unwittingly remember the idea of British

historian Arnold Toynbee, that Western civilization has ceased to affect the economic and political sphere, now remained the cultural sphere. And also these opinions of aforementioned authors make a person think: "The strength of the planetary hegemony is also noticeable from the inside of globalization, now it gives an insight as a strategic resource, as a battlefield and as arms type" [10]. XXI century is the century of information and information technologies, that's why ideological formats overlook the first ranks as the main means of subjection of the enemy. No disputes we can say that religion is one the strongest ideologies. Certainly, we know that in the era of globalization we cannot stay away from the global processes. Now we can tell that, the Republic of Kazakhstan established the political and economic base of the national security. That's why now it is necessary to pay attention especially to information, cultural and spiritual aspects of our independence. In terms of religion it is best to stick to a consistent and fully weighed policy. The main guarantee of stable development of the state is stability in society. That's why in our times though citizenship is the main unique sign for the secular state; we should not forget that the religion also has strong influence on social processes. The constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan not only declared humane and democratic principles, but also comprehensively provided mechanisms of implementation of their social life in all spheres [11]. From this point of view the head of state said «A freedom of conscience which is defined as one of the advantages of our Constitution, it is not just a soulless law-governed position, it means to recognize its big role at more important social institutes. Certainly, democratic states do not have the rights to introduce religious rules forcibly. It is today's firm decision of the leadership of Kazakhstan. » However, the aspiration of the new directions of religion to introduce the religious knowledge and concepts upset inhabitants of the Republic. According to the monitoring center carried out by the center of humanitarian researches in the ethno confessional sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on the question how can you express your opinion about the distribution of new cults of religion, 24,6% of respondents answered that new cults of religion will cause significant harm to the culture of Kazakhstan, 21% answered that it is not necessary to do any artificial interferences, people have to be free to choose their religious faith. However it is hard to say that at a free choice people will want one certain religion. During a conversation with "active missionaries" in the city streets, it became clear that even their level of knowledge about religions which they promote is very low, and knowledge about other religions in general isn't present. It is not a secret that leaders of new religious associations carry out works with representatives of the Kazakh people. In most cases there are experiences of appointment as a head of the new churches from the Kazakhs. We can attribute to the ranks of these churches: the Church of "Holy Spirit", Evangelical Christian centers as "Faith", "Iman," etc. Christian literature is printed and published in Kazakh language. As a poll showed earlier, majority of respondents gave a negative assessment or

are indifferent to such facts. Although the amount of Kazakhs who entered into other religions is very small, the collapse of nation and the strengthening of this tendency disturbs very much. And also these branches well planned how to attract young people to the new religion. As the youth is the future of our country, we mustn't look indifferently at this problem. That's why we think to reduce religious agitation works between minors, at schools and other places close to educational institutions. The state and society should give particular attention on psychological health of citizens. Because the majority of young people because of interest, and because of the relationship, because of the lack of attention from family and relatives, that is due to psychological problems in the transitional age, they follow new religions. Therefore, we should pay more attention to education and spiritual development at schools and in other educational institutions. The future of Kazakhstan is in hands of young people who are not poisoned by religious ideas which don't correspond to our national interests and at comprehensively educated youth. Unfortunately under the pretext of values of democracy, liberalism and pluralism, religious beliefs started intrude into our country from other places. After Christopher Columbus discovered America, along with the colonial policy they carried out the policy of Christianization of local people. Total of that are known to all of us. Now although the methods and forms of this policy have changed the content remains the same. During the forced and violent acquaintance of Christianity in that era, the majority of the accepted people on a historical wave disappeared as in sand water. It is difficult to say about take-off of the others. If you think about the future of our country and nation, it is necessary to think about this circumstance. "People deprived of their religion is also separated from the national dignity, it is known that denationalized people lose their faith and the heart. ... A superior nation under the pretext of an exchange of civilizations, distribution of knowledge and sciences, sometimes open, sometimes closed they introduce their religion and language". Religion is inseparable part of the culture of the nation. It is an axiom [12]. However, exaggerating the role of religion in the development of society does not always lead to good. At the beginning of the XX century the Kazakh intellectuals well understood it and that's why paid much attention to a secular form of the country. "On the one hand the national intellectuals put statehood, culture, language and education of its people higher than religion. They did not want the national consciousness to be under the influence of religious clericalism. On the other hand they knew that a distance from the Turkic and Muslim civilizations, meant denationalization and the road to the deprivation of original features [13]. At that time the appeared movement of a dzhadidizm at the advanced representatives of the Muslim people of Russia wasn't limited only to dogmatism, but also paid attention to creative thinking of the person, to spiritual search, to connection of elements of religious and secular culture. Even people with a profound knowledge of religion have paid much attention to

development of science, which made it possible to explore the environment. Therefore, the religious and the secular states do not resist each other; on the contrary they supplement each other. Unfortunately, they do not make a compromise not only adherents of various religions, but also adherents of one religion. For example, we say that 70 % of inhabitants of the Republic adhere to religion Islam. However, it is no secret that in recent times disagreements between the Muslim societies become complicated. In most cases it occurs because of a lack and unilateral religious knowledge, and also because of misunderstanding of features of Islam in customs of the local people. During the distribution of Islam, local customs and Islam passed through a process of mutual adaptation. Among the old traditions and customs remained not contradictory to the basic Islamic rules. Norms of Shariah were included into charters of the Kazakh khans, during sentencing judges relied on the Hanafi sects. The imperial Russian Empire introduced various rules of management of the Kazakh people, in social life it separated from the Islamic norms from the management of state. The Soviet board narrowed as much as it is possible religious space. The official ideology interpreted religion as an incompatible process. In this case, it was impossible to investigate religion as a social process from the objective point of view. Now in foreign countries (especially in the Arab countries) among young people who have received religious education there are groups which are inclined to estimate and explain Islam in Kazakhstan from the point of view of traditions of those countries. In certain cases such their behaviors lead to misunderstanding. That's why, in the education system it is important to teach the culture of communication, to respect your opponent, even if you do not share his views. Liberalism, democracy and tolerance should serve not only to abstract ideas, but also to a certain citizen and to the future of our country.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The article was prepared on the work performed as part of the grant funding for research RK for 2012-2014. «The tradition of tolerance in Islam».

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