

ISLAMIC ISSUES IN EAST ASIA IN THE STUDIES OF EASTERN AND WESTERN SCHOLARS

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Abstract

The article analyzes the history, culture, religious and philosophical teachings and sources of East Asia, the study of the spread and development of Islam in the region. This article summarizes the spread of Islam in East Asia, the adaptation of the Muslim population to the local lifestyle and culture in various historical situations and social processes.

Keywords: The Silk Road, “One Belt One Road”, “Central Asian Islam”, “Eastren Asian Islam”, Goryeosa, The Hān Kitāb, hui.

Introduction

Now the need to address the global social problems facing the world makes it an important task to study the history of the spread of Islam and the tendency of converting it by various nations. In addition to the creative ideas inherent in Islam, the study of the common human values, traditions in the region and the similarities between them, can help to live the ethnic groups in the region with peace and harmony.

Many historical chronicles and travel letters in the archives of China, Korea, and Japan are preserved, along with the works of history, geography and astronomy of medieval Muslim scholars on the spread of Islam in the East Asian region. These sources differ with rich in information about the historical, socio-political, and cultural context related to the dissertation’s theme. Based on them many research works have been carried out on the spread of Islam in East Asia, the formation of Muslim communities among the teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Shintoism which are widely practiced in the region. At the same time, reasons of minority of Muslims in this region and the spread of Islamophobia under the influence of some fanatical groups are considered to be dependent to the difference between religious contradictions and cultural identities. This case implies the need for an objective approach to the history of East Asian and Muslim peoples’ relations.

Material and methods. The methods of comparative-historical, typological, hermeneutic and complex analysis of the literature were used to study the spread of Islam and the formation of Muslim communities in East Asia.

Results. The spread of Islam in East Asia is linked to the ancient Chinese-Arabian trade relations that existed by the sea in the 7th century AD. However, this relationship started long before Islam entered to East Asia. For example, according to the book “Kitab al-tanbih wal-ishraf”, authored by Muslim-Arab historian al-Mas’udi, in the fifth and sixth centuries AD, Chinese ships sailed to the harbors of the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf (Hee-Soo Lee, 2002, p. 57). Another Muslim source in this regard, according to Dinawari’s “Kitab al-Akbar al-Tival”, is that the history of Arab-Chinese trade relations dates back to 636 (A.H. 14). Masudi’s work, “Muruj al-Zahab” also describes how Chinese merchants moved with their commercial goods to several ports in East Arabia, Basra and Oman (al-Mas’udi, 2005, p. 308). Ibn al-Kalbi also provided information on the Chinese trade in Oman markets (Yakubi, 1883, p. 313).

From European and Asian researchers – David G. Atwill, Ildiko Beller-Hann, Zyi Ben-Dor Benite, Gardner Bovingdon, Marshall Broomhall, Wen-Djang Chu, Michael Dillon, Maris Boyd Gillette, Raphael Israeli, Karl W. Luckert and Lee Shujiang, Boris I. Marshak, Abdul Wahid Radhu, Justin John Rudelson, Henry G. Schwarz, Frederick Starr, Cuiyi Wei and Luckert Karl (Luckert, Karl W. and Shujiang Li, 1994, p. 254) have been researching on chosen theme. In their research, they have presented not only the spread of Islam in East Asia, but also the analytical conclusions on the adaptation of Muslim populations to the local lifestyle and culture in various historical situations and social processes.

Contemporary islamic and religious studies scholars have been interested in the study of the spread of Islam and its successes and challenges of muslims in the process of adapting Islam to local conditions. A studying of these researches has shown that first, result of the chronological and geographical spread of Islam and adaptation in various regions, formed such as concepts of “Central Asian Islam” (Wolters, A. 2014, p. 4) and “East Asian Islam” (Hee-Soo Lee, 2002, p. 57-74). Second, the scope of the studies in researched scientific sources on the theme varies in size and volume. For example, the subject of “Islam in China” is one of the most widely researched areas, and this is reflected in the weight of sources and literature. Some of these publications have objectively analyzed the penetration of Islam into China, the formation of Muslim communities, and the adaptation of certain Islamic traditions with local culture (Dillon, M., 1999, p. 75; Mi Shoujiang and You Jia, 2004, p. 205; Israeli, R., 2002, p. 102); another group of them reviewed the problems that Muslims have faced from the earliest history of Islam in China to the present (Atwill, David G., 2005, p. 231).

The history of Islam in the Korean peninsula and Japan is mainly covered by ancient chronicles, travel letters of trippers and intellectuals, various international scientific conferences and journals. At Koryosa, Goryeo dynasty’ chronicle reflected the first relationship between Korean and Muslims; at travel letters described Japanese views about Islam (Misawa, N., & Akçadağ, G., 2007, p. 85-109). In addition, such as articles and thesis – “The Maritime Spread of Islam in Korea and Its Growth” (Hee-Soo Lee, 1994, p. 174), “The Spread of Islamic Culture to the East Asia Before the Era of Modern European Hegemony” (Hee-Soo Lee, 2002, p. 57-74), “Marriages lead women into Islam in Japan” (Lynne Y. Nakano, Staff Writer, 2008, p. 26), “Islam in Japan” (Penn, M., 2008, p. 26) were provided analytical information on the dissertation topic.

In the first years of independence, Uzbekistan started its economic relations with the outside world in cooperation with East Asian countries. The history of relations between the two countries, which now has a reliable and important partnership, goes back to the distant past, the Great Silk Road. Significant events and information that testify to the multilateral friendship and mutual respect between the peoples of the two regions are preserved in historical sources. “One Belt – One Way”, designed to develop and maintain the spirit of the ancient Silk Road, also calls for the pursuit of regional economic cooperation, and scientific research that promotes cooperation among various civilizations. “Our historical and cultural heritage, similarity of goals and objectives, and common aspirations allow us to look to the future with confidence”. From this point of view, as the practical importance of the Great Silk Road grows, the spread of religious beliefs, in particular the role of Islam in the development of inter-regional cultural ties, is one of the pressing issues of our day.

During the years of independence Uzbekistan has done a great deal of work in this area. In particular, researches have been completed on the history, religious beliefs and culture of East Asia, especially, ancient China, Korea and Japan (Nizametdinov N., 2006, p. 135); relations between East Asian and Central Asian peoples and ancient countries (Xodjaev A., 2007, p. 145; Xodjaev A. 2013, p. 201); historical and modern relations between the peoples of Korea and Central Asia (Karimova N., 2013, p. 148). In turn, the study of the history of the spread of Islam in East Asia, the formation of the first Islamic communities and the adaptation of Muslim peoples to the cultural environment of the region is developing as one of the new directions of religious studies in Uzbekistan (Ernazarov, O., 2021, p. 90-98).

Discussion

It should be noted that research on the spread of Islam in East Asia has focused on the following aspects:

- the historical, social, cultural and religious environment on the eve of the entry of Islam into East Asia;
- the process of spreading Islam in China and its adaptation to the local environment;
- issues of education in the context of the adaptation of Muslims in China to the local culture;
- the history and stages of the first relations between the Korean and Muslim peoples;
- the formation of Islamic communities in Korea and their assimilation into the culture of the country;
- the spread of Islam in Japan and its features;
- the influence of syncretic views on the development of knowledge about Islam in Japan.

The following conclusions have been drawn from scientific research on the spread of Islam in East Asia and its regional characteristics.

1. East Asia is historically a region of interconnected and culturally distinct groups of states and it reflects the religious beliefs, history and culture of the Chinese, Korean and Japanese peoples as the basis of civilization in this region. During the period when the countries of the region entered into a close neighborly relationship, the international spirit was of paramount importance and cultural harmony was sought. In addition to these positive cultural

developments, the countries of the region have focused on using the unifying power and thinking of local religious beliefs to ensure political stability within their countries and prevent foreign monopolies in foreign trade.

2. During the rule of the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties, Muslim communities emerged in different parts of China. During this time, Muslim communities in the country were formed on land by the Great Silk Road and by the sea, which historically has been described as the “spice path”. Intense economic, political, military, architectural and crafts activities in China in the 9th-16th centuries led to an increase in the number of Muslims and the emergence of a new ethnic group, “hui”.

3. Adaptation of Muslims to independent and distinct state policies during the Tan, Sun, Yuan and Min Empires gave rise to new legal concepts related to the regulation of their daily lives and the compilation of books “Han Kitab” that combined the common aspects of Islam and Confucianism.

4. The spread of Islam in Korea took place in three stages. The history and communities of the early Muslims' interactions with the Korean peninsula were recorded on the history and geography of Muslim scholars' works who lived from 9th to 16th centuries. The induction conclusion of medieval Muslim sources and events in the Korean chronicles can be obtained by summarizing indigenous views on the penetration of Islam into the Korean peninsula, early Muslim settlements, and participation in public life.

5. Under the rule of the Unified Silla and Koryo kingdoms, Muslims of high social and economic status in Korea were forced to abandon the traditional costumes, customs and rituals that had been pursued under the assimilation policy of the Choson Empire. Neo-Confucianism, which had a dominant position in society greatly influenced the involvement of Muslims in the policy of cultural assimilation. In the Middle Ages, the acculturation of Muslims to Korea in exchange for forcing them to embrace two distinct cultures in a single race helped enrich the Islamic culture and local traditions in the region.

6. The history and peculiarities of the spread of Islam in Japan have been periodically investigated into four stages – Before World War I, the interval between the two world wars, the post-World War II oil crisis and the post-September 11, 2001. The period between the two world wars is marked by significant realities in Japanese-Muslim relations. During this period, first of all, the Japanese imperial government was active in formalizing relations with the Muslim world. In turn, Muslims, especially Turks, have broadly covered Japanese intellectuals' visits to the Islamic world.

7. As Japanese people gain more knowledge about Islam and converting it also influenced the notions of Shintoism. At the same time, the understanding of Islam through Confucian concepts in the lives of Chinese Muslims has become a natural phenomenon for Japanese intellectuals by comparing Islam's differences with East Asian religious and philosophical teachings.

Conclusion

As a general conclusion that today, Muslims in the East Asian region are underrepresented and the spread of Islamophobia under the influence of some Protestant groups is not related to religious differences or cultural differences; but as a result of the cultural isolation or assimilation policy of empires that dominated the region at different times, ignorance of the history of the relationship between East Asian and Muslim peoples remains a key factor. In this regard, it is hoped that the future of the Muslim world's relations with the countries of East Asia will be not only in terms of economic benefits, but also in the spirit of tolerance at the core of Islam and local religious beliefs.

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