ISLAM IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

OLGA BIBIKOVA. TURKIYE POLICY TOWARDS ETHNO-CONFESSIONAL MINORITIES: THE EXAMPLE OF ALEVI

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Abstract. Turkiye ignores the rights of national and religious minorities. In particular, the article deals with Alevis professing an original doctrine close to Shiism. Since the time of the Ottoman Empire, the authorities have pursued a policy of Islamization (Sunnization), and also took steps to assimilate the non-Turkish population.

In modern Turkiye, data on the ethnic or religious composition of the country are not officially published, although various estimates exist. All Moslem citizens are considered Turks by law, regardless of their ethnic origin or language. The largest ethnic minority, Kurds (approximately 25 per cent of the population), predominantly Moslems, are included in the column "Turks". This also includes Albanians, Bosnians, Crimean Tatars, Circassians, etc., who are descendants of Muslims (*Muhajirs*) who were expelled from the lands lost as a result of the reduction of the territory of the Ottoman Empire. Most assimilated with the dominant population, but some retained their national languages and traditions, including ancient beliefs.

During the Ottoman Empire, the minority status did not take into account the ethnicity of the people, but only their religious affiliation. This status applied only to non-Moslems, who were classified as zimmiyah (arabic)[1]. Officially, only Armenians, Greeks and Jews, i.e. people professing Christianity and Judaism, were considered minorities. After the establishment of the Republic of Turkiye, the issue of minorities in Turkiye was discussed at the Lausanne Conference[2], where it was proposed to define minorities by ethnic, linguistic and religious characteristics. However, the Turkish delegation insisted on the possibility of recognizing only non-Moslems as a minority. Thus, the religious criterion remains an exceptional marker when recognizing a group as a minority. Thus, no Moslem group of other ethnic origin is recognized as a minority. For example, Kurds (from 12 to 15 million people), Arabs (about 1 million people) and Alevites (a confessional community that includes descendants of the inhabitants of Anatolia, Kurds, Turks, Armenians, Pomaks – immigrants from the Balkans, Zaza, etc.) whose number is also estimated at about 12 million people) are considered Turks because they profess Islam.

Among religious communities, the fate of the Alevites attracts attention. It should be noted that the Alevite community is very heterogeneous, since some of its representatives adopted Alevism in order to hide their religion or ethnic origin (for example, Armenians).

The peculiarity of Alevism (or Alevite Islam) comes from its genesis. The Turkic tribes of Central Asia back in the tenth century, as the Turks advanced to the West, gradually converted to Islam. The variety of common types of Islam (Arabic and Persian traditions, i.e. Sunnism and Shiism), their uneven and gradual penetration into earlier belief systems (animism, shamanism) explain some of the features of Turkish Islam. It is in Alevism that the strong presence of syncretism is felt. Due to their rapprochement with Shiism and the syncretic features of their beliefs, Alevites have been considered heretics since the time of the Ottoman Empire, because they did not profess Sunnism, which the majority of the country's population adheres to, and they were systematically discriminated against along with representatives of other non-Moslem minorities.

On June 15, 1826, an uprising of the Janissaries[3], who were dissatisfied with the military reforms carried out by the Sultan took place in Istanbul. As you know, this army consisted of Christian children, first prisoners, and later collected from the subject territories as a kind of tax (devshirme). Dede[4] Haji Veli Bektashi was declared their