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DECEMBER 2010 (PRINTED IN APRIL 2011)

EVERYDAY LIFE IN NORTH CAUCASUS

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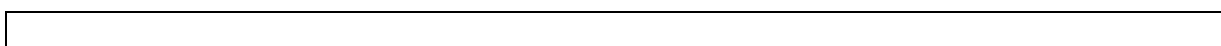
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INTRODUCTION

This study is aimed at viewing North Caucasus, in particular Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan, from the perspective of everyday life of its inhabitants.

The study contains both the information on the general socio-political situation and selected aspects of everyday life in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia. The study covered those aspects of socio-political reality that are of major importance from the point of view of unstable socio-political situation resulting in constant increase in the number of persons applying for refugee status. Better knowledge on everyday life of the region's inhabitants, including both the socio-cultural factors and political and legal ones, can prove useful in processing the applications for refugee status.

The first part discusses the organisation of social life along with clan-specific, political, ethnic and religious divisions that exert enormous impact on everyday life and related power relations. Aggravating conflicts involving religious rhetoric, kidnapping, detention and torture taking place under the banner of struggle against terrorism result in a multitude of ordinary inhabitants of North Caucasus being at risk of religious persecution. Therefore, it is extremely important to learn not only about the principles of religious life, but also everyday factors accelerating islamisation of the region.

The second part broadly describes the issues of combined legal systems – the federal, customary and religious ones and their importance, as well as the degree of their application in everyday life. They influence the attitude of region's inhabitants towards the state, which more and more rarely is the main arbitrator in resolution of disputes and conflicts. Numerous violations of law committed by the representatives of the state make people stop seeking justice in secular courts of law since they regard them as corrupt and subject to political authority. More and more frequently Shari'a law becomes the main frame of reference for common people – in respect to aspects concerning both the social and family life (e.g. polygamy).



The last aspect of everyday life described in this study involves relations between men and women. They are affected not only by traditional behaviour models, but also by politics (e.g. promotion of a vision of a “traditional, moral Chechen woman” by Ramzan Kadyrov) and economic situation. Unemployment and feeling of insecurity cause a number of problems and conflicts inside families, which often result in domestic violence, violations and divorces. All these aspects will be described in this section.



METHODOLOGY

This study was produced primarily on the basis of research and observations made during research travels (as part of doctoral studies in the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Warsaw) to North Caucasus, in particular Dagestan (in 2004-2010), as well as Chechnya and Ingushetia (in 2009-2010). I conducted the research with the use of participant observation method; I have conducted a number of in-depth interviews as well.

A lot of information, apart from factographic data in the strict sense, has been derived from personal experience of everyday life in these three republics, experience confronted with press and historical materials – this experience, however, being inevitably subjective. Some information is approximate, and it is not supported by figures – where possible and necessary, statistical data were quoted – yet they are regarded by me as additional information that does not form a basis for description and analysis. Frequently, statistical data differ from the facts – not only because of accidental and intentional distortions introduced into it, but also due to socio-political reality. For example, what statistics should one use as a basis when examining the percentage of persons with actual higher education in Dagestan if many (most?) diplomas have been bought?

Another problem is constituted by falsifying the number of inhabitants in the general census from which most statistical data come from. These data indicate that population growth in all North Caucasus republics is higher than in Iraq or Saudi Arabia¹, which seems exaggerated even when assuming that indeed many more children are in fact born in Caucasus than in the remaining part of Russia. In so far as falsification of the population number in Chechnya can be explained as a manipulation that is useful for Moscow, for which it is not convenient when the number of casualties suffered in two bloody wars is being revealed, “adding” lost souls in Dagestan and Ingushetia is

¹ See [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=37171](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37171).



clearly a manipulation at a local level. It is because larger population results in increased budget income, on the basis of which the republics, in particular the elites, earn a living.

In October 2010, general census has been carried out in the entire Russia, but the results have not yet been processed and are not available. The fact that the results of the previous census should be regarded as approximate data can be demonstrated just by the fact that additional experts from Rostov on Don have been repeatedly dispatched to North Caucasus to verify the data collected in Caucasian republics. With regard to the foregoing and due to absence of broader sociological research in this field, the data quoted in the sections below will be indicative.



EVERYDAY LIFE PERSPECTIVE



From the point of view of geopolitical transformations, everyday life appears to be a dimension that could constitute only a background for the analysis of political processes. Hence, this perspective is often disregarded in political science. Yet, although important political decisions are indeed rarely made in mountain villages or urban slums, the perspective of everyday life can provide more information about general mood – in particular in societies like the North Caucasian ones. It is here that what is important for people happens often “beyond the State”. For many persons, it is not the State and its representatives that is the main point of reference. These are local authorities to a great extent: charismatic leaders, sheikhs, members of Sufi brotherhoods, as well as mobsters, local warlords or wrestling champions.

By choosing the perspective of everyday life, I express the opinion that observation and participation in everyday life of inhabitants provides much more information on social divisions, conflicts or general mood than detailed analysis of



political processes alone, decisions taken by Kremlin or governments of the Republics, or deep analysis of militant activity or organisational structure of Muslim underground.

Politological and historical analysis is beyond doubt important. Politics undoubtedly exerts enormous influence on everyday life of people, their decisions and choices. However, in this study I will draw attention mainly to political processes and events that have consequences in everyday life of common people.



DAGESTAN, CHECHNYA AND INGUSHETIA – GENERAL INFORMATION

Traditionally, North Caucasus includes seven republics: Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia-Alania, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea, as well as two countries: Krasnodar Krai and Stavropol Krai, which until recently were included in the administrative unit of Russian Southern Federal District. In 2009, under the new division, an administrative unit was created that was called North Caucasian Federal District and it does not include two of the above-mentioned regions located furthest to the west: Adygea and Krasnodar Krai (where Sochi is located).

Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia belong to the most turbulent places in North Caucasus². Currently, the most turbulent situation is in Dagestan and Ingushetia. Admittedly, the number of terrorist attacks in Chechnya has decreased (as compared to 2009), but news about kidnapping, torturing or battery are still frequent. The situation in North Caucasus is changing very dynamically, and it can change at any moment.

The situation in the remaining four units of the North Caucasian Federal District is also far from ideal, but these regions are much more integrated with the rest of the Russian Federation. These are also not the republics from which refugees flow to Europe, including Poland. The most unstable region from among the four above-mentioned ones – not covered by the description – is Kabardino-Balkaria, where recently numerous terrorist attacks have been committed against the agents of defence and law enforcement institutions and persons demonstrating open opposition to “Muslim order”. The number of civil casualties of attacks in 2010 has clearly increased as compared to previous years³. A number of problems arise also in North Ossetia. Although the general socio-political situation in these republics is not as difficult as in Dagestan and Ingushetia, it might change in the nearest future.

² In 2009 and 2010, terrorist attacks within Kabardino-Balkaria escalated. See. <http://kabardino-balkaria.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/178991/>.

³ For more cf.: <http://kabardino-balkaria.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/178991/>.



Dagestan is the largest republic (50,300 km²), followed by Chechnya (16,600 km²), and the smallest one – Ingushetia (ca. 4,300 km²). Lowlands, foothills and high mountains can be found in each of the republics. While Ingushetia and Chechnya are inhabited mainly in lowlands and foothills, in Dagestan many people still live in mountain villages, sometimes located in hardly accessible places far from towns, despite difficult living conditions.

All the republics are densely populated (Dagestan – 2.7 million, Chechnya – ca. 1.1 million), notably in the lowlands. Overpopulation is the largest problem in Ingushetia, which is inhabited by 470,000 people (about 105 persons/km²).

Chechnya and Ingushetia are inhabited mainly by Vainakh peoples (the Ingush and the Chechens). Dagestan is inhabited by approximately thirty⁴ different ethnic groups. The number of Russians and other Slavic nationalities in all three republics is insignificant: it usually does not exceed a few percent of the total population.

According to official indicators, Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia are one of the poorest republics of the Russian Federation. That is what statistics say – everyday observation shows, however, that the standard of living does not differ much from the life in other republics of Russian Federation, but this subject will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter devoted to economic issues.

⁴ This number varies depending on the adopted criterion. In the general census of 1989, the inhabitants of Dagestan declared as many as 102 different ethnic/national affiliations.



DAGESTAN – GENERAL INFORMATION



Dagestan is the largest and most populated republic (2.7 million)⁵ in North Caucasus. In terms of population, it is the third largest autonomous republic of the Russian Federation. The society of Dagestan is young and features high population growth (ca. 11/1,000 inhabitants, and in some regions, e.g. the Tabasaran one, 22/1,000 inhabitants).

Dagestan is the most multi-ethnic republic in the entire Russian Federation, inhabited by several dozen ethnic groups (in the general census of 1989, the inhabitants of Dagestan classified themselves in 102 nationalities). Officially, in the time of the USSR, fourteen “titular nations” were distinguished. These are: Avars (758,000), Dargins (425,000), Kumyks (365,000), Lezgins (336,000), Laks (139,000), Tabasarans (110,000), Chechens (87,000), Azeris (111,000), Russians (120,000), Nogais (38,000), Tats (1,000), Rutuls (24,000), Aguls (23,000), Tsakhurs (8,000)⁶.

⁵ Cf. <http://dagestan.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/10471/>.

⁶ On the basis of general census of 2002. See. <http://dagestan.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/10471/>.



Lezgins live mainly in the southern part of the republic, near the border with Azerbaijan, just like the Tsakhurs, Rutuls and Azeris; the Kumyks historically inhabited the lowlands of the central region whereas the Nogais lived in the steppes of the North Dagestan. The Avars live mainly in the mountains of West Dagestan and the Dargins in the region south of them. The Laks inhabit the central part of the republic and, along with the Chechens, the area near the border with Chechnya. Apart from the fourteen above-mentioned peoples, numerous groups can be distinguished in Dagestan that were attributed to particular ethnic groups in the time of USSR, such as for instance Andi-Tsez peoples that were classified as the Avars, although the languages of these groups do not have much in common. Such manipulations were probably carried out both in order to reduce the already excessive number of ethnic groups within Dagestan and to increase the population number of Avars and hence their influence in the republic. Opposite manipulations were also carried out – e.g. the Rutuls, Tsakhurs and Aguls were separated from the Lezgins to reduce their influence. Until 2006, ethnic groups of Dagestan were proportionally represented in the authorities; later the idea was given up, but the “traditional” share of positions for the representatives of individual ethnicities has been preserved.

The Republic of Dagestan is divided into mountains, foothills and lowlands. Mountains and foothills areas are relatively uniform in terms of nationality whereas towns and many villages in lowlands are usually multi-ethnic. Dagestan is divided into 41 administrative units. The name “Dagestan” is derived from the Turkish and simply means “a mountainous land”, “a land of mountains”.

The Russian language is *lingua franca* of Dagestan. In the mountains, this function is also fulfilled by the language of an ethnic group that has the largest number of inhabitants in the region. The knowledge of local languages in the mountains is quite good – they are the languages of everyday communication (the situation is different in the case of migration to towns in lowlands). It often happens that inhabitants, apart from the language used in their village, also know other languages used in the region. For instance, in the region of Cumada, the inhabitants of the village normally use the languages that are used only in their village or in the neighbouring villages. However, at



school (in lower grades) and in offices they use the Avar language and in Makhachkala the Russian.

The knowledge of Russian is popular in Dagestan because it is used for communication between ethnic groups. Many inhabitants (especially women) in more distant places know Russian only in a passive way, from television, but they are not able to speak it fluently. The knowledge of Russian among middle-aged men and persons travelling to work outside their region is usually quite good.

Makhachkala is the capital of Dagestan; it is located at Caspian Sea, and there is an international seaport and an airport in Kaspiysk located nearby. It is the largest city in the eastern part of North Caucasus.

CHECHNYA – GENERAL INFORMATION



Chechnya is a small autonomous republic of the Russian Federation, and it is inhabited by approximately 1.1 million⁷ people (these data come from the general

⁷ See. <http://chechnya.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/10421/>.



census of 2002, and they are thought to be artificially inflated). However, due to the return of some Chechens from emigration, this number might reflect almost the actual number). The society of Chechnya is young (the average age amounts to 22.7), and these are predominantly women.

Chechnya is currently inhabited virtually only by Chechens (93%). In the time of the USSR, it was inhabited by various peoples of the former USSR, including 30% Russians. The Chechens, along with the Ingush, the Kist people and the Bats people (inhabiting the north-eastern Georgia), are classified as Vainakh people. The term Vainakhs, regarded as “timeless” by the Chechens, was popularised by Soviet linguists in 1920s. The Chechen language belongs to the Vainakh-Dagestani group, and it is closely related to the Ingush.

The name of Chechnya most likely originates from the name of Chechen-Aul – a large Chechen village in lowlands. There is also a theory that this word comes from Persian (from word *sasan* or *sysyn*, which meant “a cast of horse shepherd-warriors“, who gave rise to the dynasty of Sassanids). The Chechens call themselves Nokhchiin (derived probably from Chechen word “ploughmen”); it is a term used formerly by the Chechens inhabiting the mountains (highland Chechens) to define lowland Chechens. Highland Chechens identified themselves with their region and *teyp* (and used its name) to a greater extent than with the entire people.

Grozny, now inhabited mainly by Chechens, is currently the capital city of Chechnya, and it was dominated by the Russians until mid 20th century. Grozny has been completely destroyed during two wars between Chechnya and Russia. When direct warfare operations ceased, an idea was even considered to move the capital to Gudermes, but ultimately it was decided to rebuild the city.

Chechnya is divided into 15 districts: Achkhoy-Martanovsky (64,800), Vedensky, Groznensky (126,900 + the City of Grozny: 210,100), Gudermessky (71,000 + the City of Gudermes: 43,970), Itum-Kalinsky (6,000), Kurchaloyevsky (101,600), Nadterechny (51,700), Naursky (51,100), Nozhay-Yurtovsky (40,500), Shalinsky (20,100), Urus-Martanovsky (61,000 + Urus-Martan 52,400), Shalinsky (68,800 + Shali: 40,300),



Sharoysky (2,200), Shatoysky (13,100), Shelkovskoy (50,200). The major cities are Grozny (250,800), Urus-Martan (52,400), Gudermes (43,970), Argun (42,800)⁸.

INGUSHETIA – GENERAL INFORMATION



Ingushetia is an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation. It is the youngest and smallest republic in North Caucasus (and in the entire Russian Federation). It was established after the collapse of Chechnya-Ingushetia (formerly Chechen-Ingush ASSR) in 1992. Its borders are still not delimited precisely because of unsettled territorial disputes (between Chechnya and Ingushetia over the Sunzhensky District and between North Ossetia-Alania and Ingushetia over several villages in the Prigorodny region). Until 1934, Vladikavkaz was the cultural and administrative centre. Afterwards, following the return from deportation from Central Asia (where the Ingush together with the Chechens were deported for alleged collaboration with the Nazis in 1944), Grozny was established as the centre of the former Chechen-Ingush ASSR. In consequence, the established republic was deprived of capital city. At the beginning, it

⁸ Cf. <http://chechnya.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/10421/>.



was Nazran, the largest city of Ingushetia (although its building development and nature resembles a village). Since 1998, the capital of Ingushetia has been Magas – administrative and governmental centre constructed near Nazran. The name of Magas originates from the name of a mediaeval country of Alans. The Ingush claim to be their descendants (just like the Ossetians anyway). Most Ingush inhabit the lowlands, which are very densely populated. Beside Nazran, the largest cities are: Malgobek (41,800), Nazran (12,500), Karabulak (31,200), Magas (300). Other towns include: Sleptsovskaya (65,000), Ekazhevo (23,000), Troitskaya (21,000), Nesterovskaya (17,000), Kantyshevo (15,000), Surkhakhi (14,000), Sagopshy, (10,000), Yandare (10,000.)⁹.

Ingushetia is currently inhabited primarily by Vainakh peoples (77% are the Ingush and 20% the Chechens¹⁰). The Russians represent slightly over 1% of the population. It is a young society (the average age is approximately 22.2¹¹), and it has a high population growth.

The name “Ingush” originates from one of Ingush villages (Ongusht) located currently in North Ossetia-Alania (the current name is Tarskaya). The Ingush call themselves Halhai (“tower-builders”). The Russian and the Ingush are the official languages of Ingushetia. The Ingush language, just like the Chechen, belongs to the Nakh-Dagestani group of Caucasian languages.

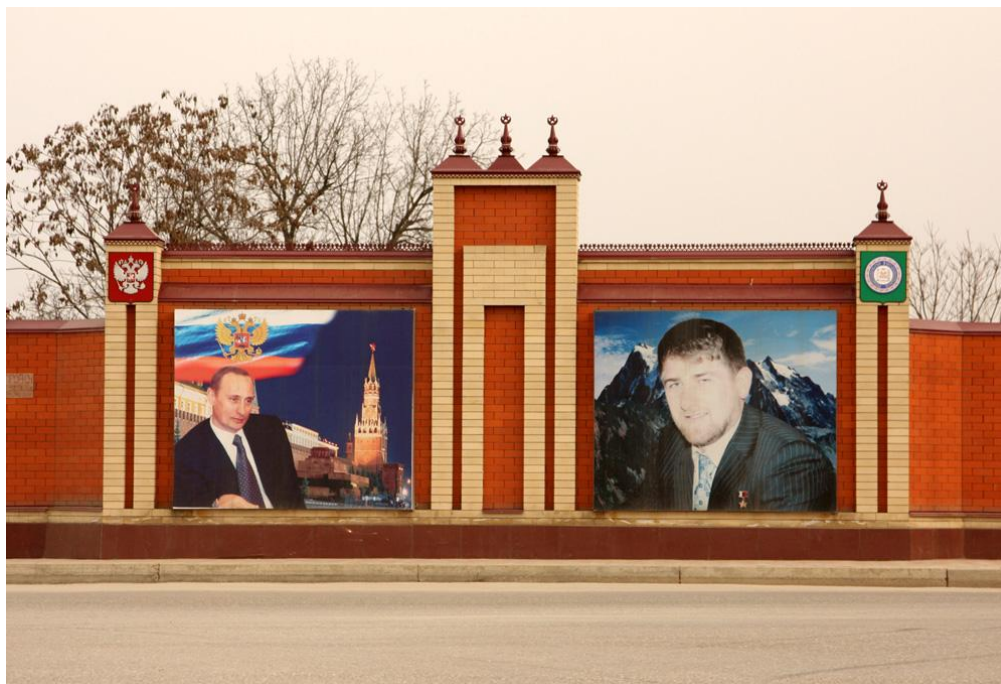
⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ See. <http://wgeo.ru/russia/reg06.shtml>, <http://old.ingushetia.org/ri/ingushetiya/>.

¹¹ See. *Czislennost' i rozmieszczenie naselenija. Itogi vseirossijskoj perepisi naselenija 2002 goda*, Moscow: Federalnaja Służba Gosudarstwiennoj Statistiki, 2004, Vol. 2, p. 116.



POLITICAL SITUATION AND SYMPTOMS THEREOF IN EVERYDAY LIFE



CAUSES OF UNSTABLE SITUATION

Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia are three republics of the Russian Federation in which the situation is most unstable, and there are no indications that it will change in the nearest future. Currently, the largest threat for the stability of the republics of North Caucasus is posed by the armed Islamic underground.

Constant attacks against the military, militia, sometimes officials and persons openly combating Salafi (“Wahhabi”) Islam faction result in a sort of civil war in the form of guerrilla-subversive warfare – currently in particular in Dagestan. It does not destabilise everyday life to a degree that would cause a mass exodus from the republic, but it is still possible that the situation will deteriorate.

The goal of the militants unified by the concept of Caucasian Emirate (Imarat Kavkaz) is to establish an Islamic state on the territory of republics of North Caucasus. Everything points to the fact that their movement is better and better organised.



Although one can have doubts whether all actions carried out by the militants are guided by the same organisation, a reorganisation of the movement and a change in warfare tactics are certainly taking place¹².

The reasons for popularity of armed underground should be sought not only in illegal activities of defence and law enforcement institutions, which often murder innocent people and thus increase the number of (both active and passive) supporters of Islamic underground. Recently, an important reason has been an increase in popularity of the concept of Islamic state and law – perceived by many as the only solution for North Caucasus. Corruption of authorities and discredited idea of democracy, which is commonly regarded as impossible in Caucasian conditions, have resulted in more and more people, in particular the young ones, considering Islam as the only way to live, the only acceptable moral system.

One of the reasons for an increased popularity of Islamic underground, often cited in analyses, though in my opinion overestimated, is the low standard of living, which allegedly makes young people join the militants. A few years ago, a thesis was promoted (mainly in the journalist milieu connected with the authorities) that the underground pays large amounts of money originating in Arab countries and in the West (which, as indicated in the thesis, wants to destroy Russia this way).

Yet, it is hard to speak both of the underground attracting young people to join their ranks by means of dollars and of a catastrophic economic situation. Bad economic situation can be found mainly in the statistics. However, contrary to statistics, observations indicate that the standard of living in North Caucasus does not differ largely from the standard of living in Russia, and it is hard to assume that an alleged poverty might force young people to join the militants. The low standard of living, or absence of prospects when faced with the richness of officials, might at most be one more element contributing to seeking justice in the state of Allah, but it is not a factor of utmost importance.

¹² See. http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/files/europe/192_russia_s_dagestan_conflict_causes.ashx.



The situation in Dagestan and Ingushetia is to such a degree unstable that most inhabitants have already got accustomed to bomb explosions and shootings. However, there are persons that have decided – because of the worsened situation in 2009 and 2010 – to leave, usually for Moscow or relatives in other parts of Russian Federation. The remaining Russians also leave (most have left in 1990s). While they do not experience discrimination in Dagestan, and the reasons for them leaving should be sought in the overall dangerous situation and care for children, in Ingushetia there were terrorist attacks and even murders due to ethnic background (in the time of government of Murat Zazikov, a programme supporting the return of Russians to Ingushetia was organised, but it failed to bring any results, and its main promoter was killed).

The situation in Chechnya, despite superficial improvement and reduction in the number of terrorist attacks and shootings¹³, also remains unstable, which is demonstrated by the recent attack on the family village of Kadyrov (Tsentoroy, October 2010) and militants invading the Chechen parliament in October 2010 as well. Chechen separatists are not the persons responsible for terrorist attacks, like several years earlier. Today the fight takes place under the banner of Islam. It also seems that many militants went “to the mountains” because of desire for vengeance on the defence and law enforcement institutions (and the Islamic slogans were used only for the purpose of achieving this goal).

Whereas it is not likely that an Islamic state will be established within the territory of Chechnya, Dagestan or Ingushetia in the nearest future, the war waged by militants can effectively destabilise the situation and contribute to further isolation of the region. Proceeding islamisation (referred to in the chapter on religious life), migration of intellectuals and Slavic ethnic groups already contributes to the establishment of “an alien enclave” within the Russian Federation¹⁴. It is additionally aggravated by the fact that most inhabitants of the remaining parts of Russia perceive Chechnya, Dagestan or Ingushetia as a sort of “internal abroad regions” – an area located

¹³ See <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/178991/>.

¹⁴ For more on this subject, see: http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PRACE_34.pdf.



in theory within the borders of Russia, but regarded as a dangerous place, not welcoming and not having much to do with Russia. The inhabitants of North Caucasus are perceived as “aliens”, referred to as “the black”, accused of terrorism and drug trafficking, which does not facilitate everyday contacts (it should be added that the inhabitants of Caucasia usually pay back – the same way beat Caucasian skinheads and emigrants from Central Asia¹⁵).

Another cause of unstable situation is a high crime rate – both organised crime and individual criminal acts (murders for vengeance, lynch law, shootings). On the other hand, petty crimes, such as theft on streets, car theft or burglary are relatively rare. They are committed by drug addicts, persons from social margin rather than organised groups.

The highest crime level is currently recorded in Dagestan, where it is most difficult to detect these crimes due to various ethnic-, clan- and business-specific relations at various levels. Crime is nowadays clearly lower when compared to 1990s, but murder, intimidation and abductions still take place in North Caucasus more often than in other regions of Russian Federation. Contract killings are a plague for North Caucasus. They are a part of the political game, a method to get rid of rivals and to gain access to positions. Numerous high-ranking officials have been killed this way, including e.g. the minister of information in Dagestan – Zagir Arukhov.

As a result, a lot of persons holding positions and feeling threatened move around with guards and in bullet-proof cars. When visiting public places, e.g. clubs or restaurants – if there is a politician inside, or a local chief or another person with many enemies – they usually have private guards waiting outside and carrying out additional checks, deciding who is allowed to enter and whether the entering ones have weapons.

In addition, shootings often occur, which is related to the fact that many men in North Caucasus commonly possess guns (sometimes Tasers, which are legal in Russia, sometimes real guns purchased usually on black market without permits). Weapon is

¹⁵ For more on this subject, see: Falkowski M., Kaliszewska I., „Matrioszka w hidżabie. Reportaże z Dagestanu i Czeczenii”, in: *Caucasian Power czyli dlaczego kaukascy dźygici nie boją się rosyjskich skinów*.



also an indication of status, a symbol of manhood. It is used both to protect oneself and to solve everyday disputes, sometimes even quarrels.

Committed crimes are not detected, investigations are often not completed “for lack of evidence or witnesses” since some of the militia and even judges or prosecutors are connected with the criminal world. For instance militia quite often collect extortions from the owners of “saunas”, i.e. brothels.

Due to catastrophic corruption (discussed later on), the officers of the judiciary are bribed. Many victims do not trust them and attempt to seek justice on their own, hence a lot of cases of lynch law and murders. It also often happens that criminals are paid out of prisons or detention or released owing to their acquaintance of persons in relevant structures.

ABDUCTION, BATTERY, TORTURE

They occur within the territory of all three republics. Until recently this crime concerned solely Chechnya, but nowadays it occurs in Dagestan and Ingushetia as frequently. It is usually the defence and law enforcement institutions – both local and federal ones – that are usually responsible for abductions and torture. Detentions are usually carried out in a local department of ROVD (Rayonnoye Oddielenie Vnutriennykh Diel), in militia stations or at UFSB (Upravlenie Federalnoy Sluzhby Bezopasnosti). Information is repeatedly revealed that the persons responsible for detentions and torture are both the local officers and the ones of “Slavic” origin. The tortured persons usually recognised their tormentors owing to their language (which is possible in North Caucasus since most local people usually have strong and identifiable accent) as their eyes were covered. This confirms the thesis that federal and local defence and law enforcement institutions have been cooperating recently.

It is hard to assess the scale of this phenomenon in all three republics since both the families and the persons concerned do not always report it to the local department of ROVD (where the lost ones are usually sought in the first instance), but also to Memorial because they fear that it might cause further persecution. The most detailed



information can be found on the website of Memorial, which collects information about disappearances, abductions and torture on a regular basis¹⁶.

Such issues are quite openly reported by Dagestani media (unlike the Chechen ones) – in *Czernovik* or *Nowoye Dielo* from time to time one can read detailed reports on the course of abduction or even interrogation. In 2010, for instance, newspapers have voiced the case of a young lawyer who was severely beaten in ROVD in Khasavyurt when acting as a lawyer of a young boy who was beaten probably for a petty theft or suspicion thereof. The officials do not admit to having beaten her and still claim it was her who assaulted them. Independent media have described the case broadly – but it is not known if anyone will be held responsible. Nonetheless, there is a chance that local authorities will act in a more legal manner due to fear of consequences and publicity. Media have also quickly described several other incidents of such type, as for instance false-flag terrorist attacks. Three men were kidnapped by the representatives of defence and law enforcement institutions in masks. Their hands were pinioned, and their car was set on fire. However, one managed to get out and escape, and later described the incident. It is probable that media would later publish information about an explosion of a booby-trapped car or a car transporting explosives.

Who is in fact threatened by abduction and persecution? Unfortunately, the answer to this question is not unambiguous. Beyond doubt, the Salafis are the most frequent victims. Wahhabi (although this word means one of movements in Islam, it has gained a negative meaning, and it is almost a synonym of terrorism – this issue is discussed in more detail in the chapter on religious life) activity is prohibited under the law of Dagestan (although it is in breach of freedom of religion guaranteed in the constitution of the RF). However, it is possible that this law will be changed. Nonetheless, a person with a beard, abstaining from alcohol and tobacco may be blacklisted as a person suspected of terrorism. Political games over positions are played in the disguise of “Wahhabism”. The accusation of “Wahhabism” happens to be a good

¹⁶ See <http://www.memo.ru>.



way to get rid of a rival. As a result, sometimes atheists that have many enemies become "Wahhabis".

Persons that were summoned to a police station, to a local department of ROVD or UFSB and threatened persons are exposed to immediate threat. They are usually recorded in registers, and it has often happened that they were the first to die in unknown circumstances.

Maybe some of them have in fact supported the militants, however, a lot of data indicate that they were completely innocent and had nothing to do with the militants. It was commonly admitted that the defence and law enforcement institutions are "improving the statistics of caught militants".

Irrespective of the fact whether militants or alleged terrorists are actually killed during a specific special operation, more and more people in North Caucasus do not believe in positive operations of the services and claim that their business is mainly to kill, manipulate statistics and to extort false testimonies. It is also commonly believed that the regime of anti-terrorist operations of KTO is introduced mainly to kill innocent people and to get more money for that (each hour of an assault is in fact well-paid, and thus it is rumoured that they last longer than needed). Such a state of play demonstrates a complete lack of trust in the State (both in its local and federal dimension) and in the defence and law enforcement institutions.

PERSECUTION OF JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS' ADVOCATES

Persons in fact exposed to the threat of personal persecution include human rights advocates, social activists, lawyers defending the persecuted and tortured persons and journalists. Their activity often menaces the interests of local authorities and defence and law enforcement institutions.

The most difficult situation is in Chechnya, where freedom of speech is hardly conceivable. The media here are under complete control, attempts of independent thinking suppressed, journalists and human rights activists threatened. After



assassination of Natasha Estemirova¹⁷, a number of activists from non-governmental organisations are in fear for their lives and health. They perform their jobs and try not to incur the authorities' displeasure, not to interfere with the matters that could jeopardise their lives and health. Threats and phones to give up a given case are not a rare thing.

There is more freedom of speech in Dagestan, where the media have recently openly criticised the acts of the authorities and defence and law enforcement institutions. The cases of battery, torturing and threats are being described. Relative freedom of speech entails, among others, the deterioration of respect for authorities, which are not able to control the situation in the republic. However, the life and health of journalists working in the media perceived as independent, such as *Czernovik* or *Novoye Dielo*, is also at risk here. Open threats and intimidation are not infrequent. For instance in 2009, leaflets were distributed with a list of names of journalists who had been warned not to defame the authorities and defence and law enforcement institutions. It is probable that the authorities and defence and law enforcement institutions criticised by the journalists were the authors of this black list. So far none of these journalists has suffered, but some of them are considering leaving for Moscow due to fear for their lives.

FORECASTS

Among Russian intellectuals, there have been (so far) bolder and bolder concepts to isolate North Caucasus (or its eastern part – Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia) from the Russian Federation¹⁸. The provided arguments in favour of this idea are as follows: lack of profitability of making payments for the areas that do not provide profits and are a source of problems, as well as too large migration of persons from North Caucasus who are Russian citizens, but they are regarded as “aliens” by the inhabitants of other regions of the Russian Federation. There are also no indications that the situation could change anyhow, because there are no programmes aimed at integration of the inhabitants of North Caucasus with the inhabitants of Russian cities.

¹⁷ See. <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/category/estemirova>.

¹⁸ See <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/174179/>.



Separation of North Caucasus from Russia is currently not taken into account by Kremlin, but the fact alone that such ideas emerge in public discourse (it is not out of question that they are quite popular among the civil population of non-Caucasian part of Russia) is a sign that Kremlin does not exactly know how to integrate this region with the remaining part of Russia.

Solutions involving the use of force, typical of Putin, have failed and their further continuation may cause the situation to deteriorate¹⁹. It is an optimistic accent that while previously it was mainly independent media and publishers that discussed this problem, now the ideas of solving the conflict without the use of force or to make a compromise with the Salafi-oriented part of the society appear also among the representatives of authorities.

The Republic of Dagestan is a good example. Until recently, any compromise with the Salafis, and all the more with the armed underground, was not taken into consideration. The idea of introducing elements of Shari'a to the republic's legislation, supported by a large part of the society, has also been rejected. Currently, however, the authorities of Dagestan organise meetings where, irrespective of convictions, various persons are allowed to speak – including the ones openly speaking of violations committed by defence and law enforcement institutions – about the lack of respect for authorities and about the need of reaching out to the part of society that wants to abide by the norms of Islam. It is hard to say whether such actions will contribute to the improvement of the situation; a positive element, however, is that due to such meetings there is greater freedom of speech and freedom of media in the republic than several years ago²⁰. Unfortunately, it seems that the authorities of Dagestan are not able to control the operations of defence and law enforcement institutions, which, despite certain openness towards a compromise, gives them little chance of implementing their declarations not to persecute the persons affiliated with the Salafi Islam movement.

¹⁹ See http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PRACE_34.pdf.

²⁰ See <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/174179/>.



To a certain degree, a similar situation can be found in Ingushetia – president Yevkurov, despite efforts, is not able to control the situation in the republic or to control illegal activities of defence and law enforcement institutions, but he allows other concepts and he is open to other ideas. He also enjoys respect of at least a part of the society. A slight improvement of the situation could have been observed in Ingushetia in the last months, which probably resulted from skilful policy exercised by Yevkurov (more detailed data and conclusions are not available yet).

As far as dialogue and public debate on the republic's problems (other than socio-economic problems) are concerned, the worst situation is in Chechnya, where open sympathy with the Salafis or criticising the authorities are not allowed and can have tragic consequences for the persons criticising the authorities. While one can have hope in Dagestan that positive results of dialogue between the authorities, the Salafis and the part of the society that supports the militants can be reached, the Kadyrov's policy in Chechnya resembles the Putin's policy involving the use of force to a greater degree without any prospects for compromise.

The situation in all republics is similar to a certain extent and unstable to a comparable degree, and if it is not improved in the coming years, Kremlin will find it more and more difficult to integrate these republics with the rest of the Russian Federation.



SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION



QUALITY OF LIFE

Economic indicators would suggest that Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya are the poorest republics of the Russian Federation. However, if we take a closer look at their everyday life, the statistics seem difficult to believe. The quality of life in these republics is not noticeably different from that in other regions of the Federation. You could even think that the life of inhabitants in North Caucasus is slightly better²¹.

Also, what confirms the fact that the economic situation and unemployment are not catastrophic is that the Vietnamese and Chinese working in bazaars and construction sites have appeared in all of those Republics (even in the post-war Chechnya).

This may be explained in the following manner: firstly, a number of inhabitants of North Caucasus earn their living in Moscow (some Chechens also work abroad) and

²¹ See: [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=37182](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=37182).



send the money back to their relatives. Secondly, in the North Caucasus the size of the black market is relatively large. A number of enterprises do not pay taxes and employ people illegally. Although this type of employment (such as work on a construction site or in a bazaar) may be quite lucrative, in everyday language it is not referred to as "work" but as "making an extra income". For instance, while I was observing a person filling a questionnaire for the national census in one of the Chechen towns, I was amazed to hear that they "put down" different individuals living in a household as "unemployed" even though they were at work then. What is commonly referred to here as a "job" is a position in the public sector or one in a larger, registered company - as opposed to work in a bazaar or at a construction site.

In addition, large government funded subsidies help to reduce unemployment and contribute to job creation (it is difficult to predict what will happen when the huge budget for Chechnya is reduced²²).

In Dagestan, a number of individuals work in the public sector. However, the salaries of regular teachers and office workers are very low and insufficient to provide for one's family. Many higher rank officers also make their living from accepting bribes.

Economic growth in all of the parts of the Russian Federation is another factor which has contributed to a better quality of life in the recent years. This has also been true for the republics of the North Caucasus. Owing to a very well-developed system of family support, in most cases the poorest persons also receive at least minimal support from their relatives who give them money and use their connections to help them find a job.

What is also important here is their attitude towards the state. In stark contrast to many inhabitants in other parts of Russia who passively expect that "the state should do something for them", such as provide them with work and improve their living

²² The budget for Chechnya is 18 billion roubles. Moscow partly reduced the budget in 2010, which immediately gave rise to builders going on strike as they had not been receiving their wages for 4 months.



conditions, the inhabitants of North Caucasus work hard in their own businesses in the country and outside the republic's borders, investing in their own families and clans.

We should not forget about revenues generated from illegal activities such as bribery, trading in job positions and racketeering.

For instance, one of the "unregistered" sources of income is extortion of payments from businesses, especially from nightclub and discotheque owners (in Dagestan only) as well as from illegal casinos. Some richer government officers also need to pay "taxes" as they are blackmailed by the militants (or by individuals claiming to be militants) who threaten to carry out attacks unless a specific sum of money is paid.

Another source of income is cultivation of illegal plants and drug trade (from Azerbaijan and Central Asia), which is how some crime groups earn a living. The drugs are smuggled into the local market (drug addictions are a serious problem in all of the republics). Some emigrants from the North Caucasus also deal in drugs in large Russian cities.

Anecdotal data also suggest the existence of another "profitable business", namely the so-called "virtual banks" which help a number of companies in Russia in money laundering while performing illegal transactions and making virtual money transfers (I do not have exact data on the scale of this). Instability and the unfavourable image of Caucasus (and especially Dagestan, which is relatively large and multi-ethnic) make this place ideal for such "business" which is difficult to control.

An important element which makes the North Caucasus almost or relatively poverty-free is sponsoring on a wide scale. If in one village there is no natural gas, road, mosque or school, its residents will first seek rich emigrants from one of the regions (sponsoring works particularly well in Dagestan) and try to encourage them to make gifts for the village. Rich individuals tend to agree to do this. In exchange for assistance to the village, they may receive military or political support. A considerable role is also played by the culturally-driven obligation to share one's wealth. Attempts to impress others with one's wealth are perceived in positive terms as long as one shares their



wealth with their clan or *djamaat* (community). If this is the case, it confirms one's membership in the community and the individual is respected as a result (this is usually regardless of the source of income). Also, Islam itself encourages charity and sharing with others within one's means.

Sponsoring is also present in the cultural sphere. An increasing number of people who wish to organise a cultural event (such as the "Village Days", popular throughout Dagestan and gathering emigrants from a village), do not request assistance from individuals in charge of the town's or state budget but they first contact respected local residents instead. They may be "common" wealthy people, business persons as well as individuals involved in crime. Obviously, gifts of all kinds are not granted out in the open and they are neither taxed nor registered.

Relatively good quality of life, comfortable housing and income made by the inhabitants in the North Caucasus have not given rise to the development of public benefit institutions. Although respected local residents may finance construction of a mosque, village school or Madrasah (Islamic secondary school), hospitals are looked after by the towns or regions and therefore the state they are in leaves much to be desired (which will be discussed later)

The republics also face a lack of external investment which is due not so much to (and not only) to the unstable situation, but is also caused by bribery and the fact that the local authorities find it more convenient to receive funding from the federal budget (justifying it with the bad situation in the Republic) ²³ than make efforts to encourage investors to invest and create favourable investment conditions for them. In some spheres, such as construction, where a number of Russian and Turkish companies have been investing their money, Chechnya is performing quite well.

CORRUPTION

An important source of "income" for individuals working in the public sector are revenues generated from bribes and "*otkats*" (shares, extorted money) derived from the

²³ See: <http://ingushetia.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/177235/>.



Moscow's budget allocation. Undoubtedly, it is only some people who have access to this money and they constitute the country's elite or their relatives. Nevertheless, owing to family connections, the money from the budget is eventually divided between the citizens (though this happens in a manner which is different from what Moscow wants).

Bribery in the North Caucasus should be perceived, on the one hand, as a source of income for a number of individuals, especially state officers and others who may access Moscow's budget, and as a factor that may lead to the exclusion of those who do not make profit on it, but are forced to participate. This may also result in demoralisation. The Caucasus inhabitants see corruption as an obstacle on the one hand and as an element which is convenient on the other. Since instead of queuing up in offices, all one needs to do is pay the right sum of money. Bribery is omnipresent and fuels the negative image of all state institutions. The bribes and money extortions are also a source of income for the militia. Regular militia officers are forced to give "otkats" to higher rank individuals and they had to make a special payment to be employed (because the situation has now deteriorated and numerous attacks on militia officers occurred, one may get a position in militia free of charge or for a small fee).

As a result of bribery combined with a lack of stability, the republics are not perceived as an investor-friendly place (with the exception of construction companies in Grozny). Without any doubt, the scale of bribery in North Caucasus is considerably higher than that observed in other parts of the Russian Federation. If bribery "vanished", a number of institutions would probably cease to exist and the inhabitants would not be able to look after their affairs in any other way (it is impossible to get a driving license in Dagestan without giving a bribe because no exams are organised).

Although it is difficult to identify sources of income of some groups, it is at the same time easy to notice that the system excludes a number of individuals who would like to earn their living in an honest way or those who do not have any influential relatives. Many of them decide to leave to work hard in Moscow or other Russian town and provide for their families. Others seek justice in Islam and the state of Allah only.



REBUILDING CHECHNYA



The rebuilding of Grozny is in progress. Despite difficulties with paying out compensations and money for construction of houses (which were paid eventually subject to an approx. 50% of forced tribute), people are increasingly rebuilding their own houses and renovation works are in progress everywhere. Obviously, some renovations are carried out using the money of relatives working in Moscow or abroad. It should, however, be admitted that the republican authorities also make efforts to ensure efficiency of the rebuilding process. What is mainly renovated are roads in Grozny and the Republic. Also, a number of hospitals, schools, delivery rooms as well public administration's buildings have been rebuilt.

Moreover, in Grozny, many construction investments are being implemented at the moment by well-known companies from Moscow and Turkey. Sky scrapers and apartment buildings are being constructed in the centre of the town. A considerable share of money is spent on propaganda-related objectives. We may see portraits of Ahmad and Ramzan Kadyrov in every corner, and pictures of Putin and Medvedev which are just as popular. Special areas in schools feature wall papers with photographs of



Ahmad and Ramzan Kadyrov with children and maxims about family, the nation and children.

In 2010, the museum of Ahmad Kadyrov was opened in the centre of Grozny, and is visited by people from all over Chechnya. Fountains are being built and flowers planted. One might think that in the post-war republic these are details and unnecessary investments. On the other hand, they make the town look more and more friendly. With its neatness and tidiness, it stands out from the neighbouring Dagestan where, despite no open military operations happening, the state fails (or does not make sufficient effort) to deal with such elementary matters as disposal of rubbish or renovation of streets.

HEALTHCARE



Drug addiction. Diseases. In North Caucasus, the quality of healthcare is much lower than in other parts of the Russian Federation. This is due, for example, to shortage of professionals, many of whom left to other parts of the Russian Federation. Another problem is “buying” of diplomas (including medical ones) as well as of medical job positions and the omnipresent bribery. All of this has led to lack of respect for public healthcare in Caucasian communities.



Although healthcare is free in theory, in order to actually be able to use it, you need to pay or be well-connected.

In exchange for a bribe, you may also get a disability certificate. Disability status, disability allowances and pensions are among many ways to gain money from Moscow's budget. The scale of such extortions is relatively big. A publicist on one occasion referred to Dagestan as a “country of the disabled and sports people”²⁴ (indeed wrestling is very popular all over Caucasus, many Russian Federation’s Olympic wrestling champions come from the republics in the North-East Caucasus).

The most numerous cases of illnesses and premature deaths occur in Chechnya. This is the effect of war (stress, neglecting one’s health, hypothermia etc.) and the inhabitants are ill now that the war is over, in the period of relative peace. Also, tuberculosis is quite a frequent disease. Just like in the rest of Russia, people suffering from AIDS are an issue.

In Ingushetia such facilities as hospitals, surgeries, and especially specialist hospitals, have been scarce since the beginning of the Republic, with everything located in Grozny, the capital of Chechen-Ingushetia or in Vladicaucasus. However, the medical infrastructure is being progressively rebuilt.

As a result of catastrophically low level of healthcare, people consult quack-doctors, fortune-tellers etc. The fact that such individuals are popular across Caucasus (and in the whole post-soviet area in general) can be explained by disturbances related to security and predictability of life and of the next day. This is not so much a fad as a reaction to loss of certainty and a belief that ancient and traditional ways work.

In 2009, all activities performed by fortune-tellers and clairvoyants were banned in Chechnya on the grounds that such practices are forbidden by Islam (this concerned fortune-telling mainly, which Islam indeed considers unacceptable). Attention was also drawn to the welfare of society as a whole that might suffer because of individuals practicing “black magic” to harm others. We cannot exclude the possibility that there

²⁴ See: <http://www.sknews.ru/main/25002-korruptsiya-v-dagestane.html>.



was a different reason for this. The authorities found such individuals inconvenient as they knew “too much” about kidnappings, torturing etc. from patients who reported this. The fact that such practices were very popular also meant that state institutions were less respected than before and it is Kadyrov’s intention to restore this respect. In order to replace unofficial practices in Grozny, a Centre for Islamic Medicine was created where some fortune-tellers and quack-doctors found official employment. They give health guidance there, but this time around they are controlled by the state. This Centre is very popular.

It is also in Dagestan where in the recent years individuals considered to be “fortune-tellers” and “wizards” are killed by the most radical groups of reformers. And both in Dagestan and Chechnya many of them continue to pursue their activities. They need to, however, make more effort to hide.

In the North-East Caucasus, such diseases as: typhoid, measles, dysentery, cholera or even malaria are relatively frequent (the latter disease was once a plague in Dagestan; but during the times of Tsars, muddy areas were dried which eliminated the main causes of malaria). The reason for this is heavy contamination of water and malfunctioning water treatment plants. In Makhachkala beaches, there is a permanently placed sign which bans any swimming due to chemical contamination of water. The ban is respected by very few people. The meat sold in bazaars, especially in mountain villages (*auls*), has been produced illegally, which may give rise to a number of diseases.

Many people suffer from tuberculosis in Caucasus. No preventive measures are taken to prevent it. Diseases of the circulatory system and cancer are also quite frequent. The mortality rate of babies is approximately three times the Russian average. Any malformations or children's diseases are diagnosed very late which might have been prevented if diagnosed earlier. The mortality rate of mothers in labour as well as of underage children is also higher than in other parts of Russia. The main reason for this is lack of qualifications among doctors.

The mortality rate of young men is also higher than in other parts of Russia, the main cause being numerous car accidents caused by both recklessness and lack of skill



(driving licenses are bought) or drunk driving (in the worst-case scenario this means that a very large bribe needs to be paid). Fatalistic approach to life also seems to play an important role (“If Allah wants us to die today, then we will die”). Social advertising has started to emerge recently encouraging people to drive reasonably and fasten their seatbelts.

Drug addiction is also an important problem. Drugs seem to be an issue in all Caucasian republics but this problem has mainly affected the post-war society in Chechnya. Drugs are relatively easily available. They are transported from the south of Central Asia and Afghanistan, but in part they are also manufactured in Caucasus. Some 2000 drug addicts are officially registered. However, the local doctors estimate that there might be approximately 20 000²⁵ of them in Chechnya alone. These numbers include many young people (and these are not always individuals fighting in war, which could be explained by post-war trauma) who may come from well-off families.

In 2008, special services in Chechnya started their battle against drug addiction and drug dealers. Also, propaganda action commenced in Ingushetia and Dagestan.

In the North Caucasus, drug addiction is a much more serious problem than alcoholism, which is there, but it typically affects middle-age individuals or members of the elite for whom such goods are within an easy reach. Alcoholism is much less of a problem in the North Caucasus than in other parts of Russia and this is due, among other things, to social ostracism, a ban on drinking alcohol in public areas and the ever-decreasing number of establishments where alcohol is available. This is related not so much with lack of demand but more with the attacks carried out by militants on shops selling alcohol, especially during religious holidays.

The dramatic condition of healthcare as well as the intention to undergo treatment for a specific ailment may encourage some individuals to leave, who, not being able to afford to pay for treatment in other parts of Russia, are driven to Europe to obtain medical aid. I have encountered a person with such a motivation for leaving the

²⁵ See: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/164202/>.



republic. It was, however, an individual who had already been to Poland and undergone treatment for tuberculosis there.



SOCIAL DIVISIONS: DAGESTAN, CHECHNYA, INGUSHETIA



It is not easy to draw clear lines here, especially in everyday life, where personal relations and family, ethnic, national or neighbourhood relations tend to blend. It is difficult to talk about the main social divisions out of the context as different social divisions are relevant when choosing a spouse, in a political debate, when one's matter is being handled by a government office, in a mosque or within one's religious community (religious divisions will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on religious life). Other divisions can be seen during ethnic or religious mobilisation or during important family and state events. As a result of the dynamic political situation, since the collapse of the USSR we have seen many changes within social structures of Caucasian societies in the last 20 years. Although many similarities can be identified across social divisions in all three republics, considerable differences can be noted as well. For instance, whereas clan divisions and identifications are relatively strong in Chechnya and Ingushetia, in Dagestan being part of a specific community (*djamaat*), typically associated with one's native village, is more important.



SOCIAL DIVISIONS – DAGESTAN

Divisions which play the most important role in everyday life in Dagestan are the following:

- *jamaats'* (communities) divisions,
- division of society into laypersons and clergypersons,
- division into the elite/the authorities and the rest of the society,
- ethnic divisions,
- religious divisions: Salafis ↔ Tariqatists,
- divisions within Sufi brotherhoods.

If we look at the multi-ethnic composition of Dagestani society, it would seem that ethnic divisions are the clearest lines of division. It goes without saying that ethnic group membership is important, but its role is not greater than the fact of coming from a particular village, *aul*. For many Dagestani this is what shapes your identity. Even if they were born in Makhachkala or Khasavyurt, when asked about their origin, a Dagestani, will usually mention their family mountain village, although they might have never been there. Also, they frequently declare that they wish their daughter or son to marry a member of the same *jamaat*. Such identity may be referred to as “*jamaat identity*”. In Arabic, the word *jamaat* means a ‘community’ or ‘society’. The word *jamaat* has several meanings. Typically, *jamaat* refers to a community distinguished based on the territory it inhabits (a village may be a *jamaat*) or its ideology (e.g. a Salafi group with a leader). *Jamaat* also refers to a general meeting of a community, which together makes decisions on religious and social matters. A *jamaat* is usually led by an imam²⁶.

²⁶ The term *jamaat* (or: *military jamaat*) also refers to armed groups of radical Muslims. *Jamaat* (spelled with a capital “j”) is also used to talk about informal relations between Muslims living in a larger territory (e.g. the *Jamaat* of Kabardino-Balkaria) who have a common leader. The term *jamaat* used in this meaning will not be discussed any further here.



One of the existing divisions is a division into *jamaats* (it is frequently considered the most important one, although in my view this is a controversial issue). It plays a more important role in rural parts of Dagestan. However, the *jamaat* divisions are also increasingly present in lowlands where small villages have emerged (and still do emerge) and emigrants from particular regions move there.

The division into *jamaats* has its roots in the history of Dagestan. Around the 15th century, *jamaats* became the basic form of organisation of social, economic and political life in Dagestan. *Jamaats* typically consisted of several *tukhums* – clans. *Tukhum* members were usually connected by blood. However, it was often the case that individuals from other groups were accepted or that they moved from one *tukhum* to another. It was assumed that *tukhum* members should live in one location. In this sense, it was a community based on clan membership and living in a particular territory. Each *tukhum* was part of a *jamaat*. *Jamaat* members lived in one town or village and built houses next to each other (it was not rare that the new houses were built on the roofs of the already existing ones). As a result, *auls* formed some sort of fortresses. Also, it was Islam that cemented the *jamaat* community. All men enjoyed the same rights, except for captives and guests. In time, captives were allowed to establish their own *tukhums*. The origins of these clans are still remembered today and there is a division into honourable and ignoble *tukhums*. *Uzdeni*, i.e. ‘the highborn’ (which most Dagestani claim membership of) are usually against marrying individuals from clans that were initiated by Georgian slaves. In towns and cities, this division seems to start fading.

In the past, *jamaats* used to enter into pacts. Free societies or pacts prevailed in the mountains and small states consisting of several *jamaats* were mainly present in lowlands and foothills. As a result of Russia conquering the territory in the 19th century and cooperation between leaders of small states in lowlands, large social variation started to emerge alongside class divisions. To some extent the formerly present equality and communitarism were restored during the times of communism. Especially that Kolkhozes tended to cover the same areas as *jamaats* (there were cases where a Kolkhoz was led by the same individual who organised social life and common prayers



before the revolution ²⁷). It needs to be stressed that highlanders (especially those who were members of less influential clans) actively supported Bolsheviks, who originally promised not to fight against religion.

At the present moment, alliances based on clan membership and ethnicity play an important role in everyday and political life. They should not, however, be overestimated. In the 1990s, ethnic divisions were increasingly present and “National Awakers” appeared as well as a number of national movements, not to mention movements for the liberation of the nation. However, today their importance is less, especially for young people who are growing up in towns and cities. In monoethnic regions, one’s ethnicity is still very important. One’s place of residence and language are a cementing factor. Until 2006, participation in Dagestan's authorities was proportional to the number of representatives of an ethnic group (which is another reason why it was a good idea to also put down the “dead souls” during the 2002 national census). In 2006, the official “ethnic guidelines” (allocation of posts according to ethnicity) were abolished, but “traditionally” participation in authorities is in fact similar. It is also frequently the case that certain posts are filled with individuals of a specific ethnicity²⁸. Moscow tried to intervene in this system to no avail. It should be stressed here that although divisions within authorities also seem to be based on ethnicity, the elite in power forms a clan in its own right. Within this “clan”, people intermarry (regardless of the nationality) and conclude business and political agreements. Notwithstanding their ethnicity, politicians in Dagestan are not usually trusted as they are not perceived as individuals acting for the interests of their own nation. This is why divisions and alliances among people in authority do not have a corresponding equivalent in the society.

This is where the division into those in authority and the rest of the society comes from. The society is tired of bribery (that it is involved in) as well as of continual law

²⁷ See: Bobrownikow W., *Szariackie sudy na sewiernom Kawkazie*, Moscow, 2000.

²⁸ See: [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=34503](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=34503).



breaking by law enforcement institutions (kidnapping, torturing, extortion of money, fraud, bribery).

The clan divisions are also present in the context of elections, especially in rural areas. Obviously, members of a clan will usually support their own candidate but this is not just a token of clan solidarity (the candidate will receive as much support from friends and neighbours) but more of a contract: the votes are cast in exchange of money (usually equivalent to PLN 500-800) or a promise that the matter will be solved or, in the best case scenario, that something will be done for the village. During the pre-election “campaign”, members of other clans are often bribed as well.

In the recent times, the following divisions have grown in importance: divisions into religious and non-religious individuals, as well as a division into supporters of traditional Islam and Salafis.

A number of individuals raised and educated during the times of USSR consider religion to be a private affair and are against any involvement of religious authorities in public matters. Such individuals do not understand and do not want to understand islamisation processes affecting their society. Increasingly, they seem to realize in terror or even with disdain that yet another person in their community has converted to Islam. (There is even a pejorative expression for this which is “*udaritsya w religiyu*”, literally meaning “hit the religion”) and if it is a woman, she is said to have “put on a hijab”. Within the group of people voicing such opinions, we may identify individuals with an outlook similar to communist and those who would ideally like to see changes of the Western-European kind happening. This former group, which was strong during perestroika, now plays an increasingly smaller role in the social and political life of the republic. When the now 50-60 year-olds pass away, their ideals will pass away as well.

There is also a relatively strong division (although it also starts to fade in everyday life) into Salafis and traditional Muslims (for a broader discussion see the part on religious life). Although Salafis are directly associated with militants and discredited in Chechnya and there is no room there for any ideological debate, Salafis in Dagestan are increasingly more confident and open in converting people, trying to attract them



through their knowledge, education and a more reasonable approach (than is the case of Tariqatists) to some principles underlying their faith. Salafis have many staunch enemies among Sufi brotherhoods and those connected with the official Muslim Spiritual Directorate. Declared ideological and political enemies have a common goal in mind, which is the political and social islamisation of the society.

Divisions within Sufi brotherhoods in each of the Republics will be discussed in the Chapter on religious life in the North Caucasus.

SOCIAL DIVISIONS: CHECHNYA AND INGUSHETIA



Teyps, *tukhums* and clans are usually considered to be the basic units of social organisation both in Chechnya and Ingushetia ²⁹. After the collapse of the USSR, the local academics developed *teyp* genealogies, gathered stories and legends of *teyps*. It was common to stress the division of *teyps* into lineages (*gar*), large patriarchal families (*nek*), which were further sub-divided into *ca* and *diozel* (parents and children). The ethnic revival within the whole territory of the USSR was undoubtedly the reason why the role of *teyps* increased in importance (although it was still less important than before

²⁹ See: Sokirianskaia Ekateria, *Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya. A fieldwork report*, Central Asian Survey, 24:4.



the deportations in 1944); everyone started to be interested in their history and reunions were organised.

CHECHNYA

The Chechen society may therefore be divided into *teyps* and *tukhums* (loose confederations of *teyps* for defence from the enemy). The total number of the latter is nine (which is the number of stars in the Chechen coat of arms). These include: Akkiy, Myalkiy, Nokhchmakhkakhoy, Orstkhoy, Terloy, Chantiy, Cheberloy, Sharoy and Shotoy. They comprise the so called “clean” Chechen *teyps*, that is those whose ancestors were Chechens (rather than Dagestani or Georgians). *Tukhums* do not play a very significant role in the Chechen society, so this division has more of a symbolic character with limited impact on everyday life.

Teyps most probably emerged as territorial units that united groups of neighbours living in the same territory who believed that they were descendants of the same ancestor. *Teyps* usually had a legend about their common origin, common territories, a cemetery, sometimes a common mountain and a *teyp* tower.³⁰ Before being conquered by Russia, *teyps* were the main unit within their social and political system. If foreigners wished to settle in the Chechen territory, they could receive permission to set up a separate *teyp*. Their non-Chechen origin was still however remembered (still today, on some occasions, one’s non-Chechen *teyp* origin is brought up in order to discredit the individual). The *teyp*’s role was for instance to defend its members from the invaders. At present about 150 or even up to 170 *teyps* can be identified.

What is the role of *teyps* today? Researchers have not reached any agreement, some of them claiming that they play an important role and stressing that this is an “ancient” and the most important division of the Chechen society. Ideas were put forward (that did not become reality) to base the Chechnya’s political system on the *teyp* structure.

³⁰ See: Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina, (2005) *Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya*. A fieldwork report, Central Asian Survey, 24:4, 453-467.



Others, such as Ekaterina Sokirianskaia, *teyp* researcher from Russia, claim that although in everyday life of Chechnya and Ingushetia, both the term *teyp* and clan are present in common language, in fact they frequently refer to groups of different kinds³¹. Identification of *teyps* is often very informal and declarative. Different individuals attach different levels of significance to them. This statement is confirmed by stories of asylum-seekers coming to Poland, who admit that they learned the history of their *teyp* and place of origin only for the purpose of the interview at the Office for Foreigners in order to make their "chechenness" sound authentic.

Identifications and divisions in everyday life are to a much greater extent shaped by groups of close relatives (patri and matrilineal as well as those who are just related) and religious groups (e.g. Sufi brotherhoods and communities headed by Salafi leaders). Religious structures play a particularly important role in the Vainakh communities of today. In many Chechen and Ingush villages, imams took over the role of a council of elders - they give advice and help solve disputes. Identifications that play a very important role are those related with one's place of origin, as well as neighbourhood ties.

Apart from the *teyp* division, the division into supporters and opponents of president Ramzan Kadyrov seems to play an increasing role in the Chechnya of today. In Chechnya, it is not possible to openly express one's dissatisfaction because of the use of state terror. Any conversations about the president are done in secret with closest friends that one can trust. As a result of an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, this division, though implicit, is still very strong. It is estimated that about 50% of Chechens support president Kadyrov. He has more and more supporters who are ready to cut corners on terror because they are enjoying relative peace and see that the rebuilding of the republic is actually happening. No-one will directly admit that they support the militants. Ramzan Kadyrov promised to kill even those who support "the forest brothers" only "mentally". Each suspicion in relation to any connections with the militants or support may result in being arrested, detained or blackmailed.

³¹ Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina (2005) 'Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya. A fieldwork report', *Central Asian Survey*, 24:4, 453-467.



One however needs to be aware that if you praise the president and appreciate the rebuilding, this alone does not mean that you are advocating support for his policy or that you denounce those who are against Ramzan Kadyrov. Tired of war, people are focussing on rebuilding their personal lives and making money. They are influenced by the media propaganda and frequently do not want to express their views in public, even when abroad.

INGUSHETIA

Ingush *teyps* trace back their history to a common ancestor – Ga, the legendary hero³². In Ingushetia, you speak not so much about *teyps* but usually about surnames (families). Many members of the same *teyp* frequently have the same surnames. Within *teyps*, lineages can sometimes develop and they start other families (subteyps). It is difficult to speak of *teyp* solidarity of any sort that would concern the whole *teyp*. It is usually solidarity at the level of a lineage (*gar*) or sublineage (*nek*).

Lineage solidarity is sometimes referred to as *teyp* solidarity and may be seen during bloody vengeance (discussed later) both in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

In Ingushetia, similarly to Dagestan and Chechnya, religious divisions, such as those into supporters of reformed and “official” Islam, play a very important role. Divisions within brotherhoods also play a significant role. The group which should be mentioned here are the followers of Batal-haji, also known as “batlaks”, who live in the areas surrounding Surkhokhi (for a discussion of this *virid* – Sufi brotherhood see the chapter on religion). There is a strong criminal group within this *virid*, also operating outside Ingushetia, e.g. in Moscow and Petersburg and trading in drugs and gold. The followers of Batal-haji are famous for their wealth and influence (they are actively involved in political life) and constitute a relatively closed group that is sometimes even referred to as a sect. They strictly observe endogamy.

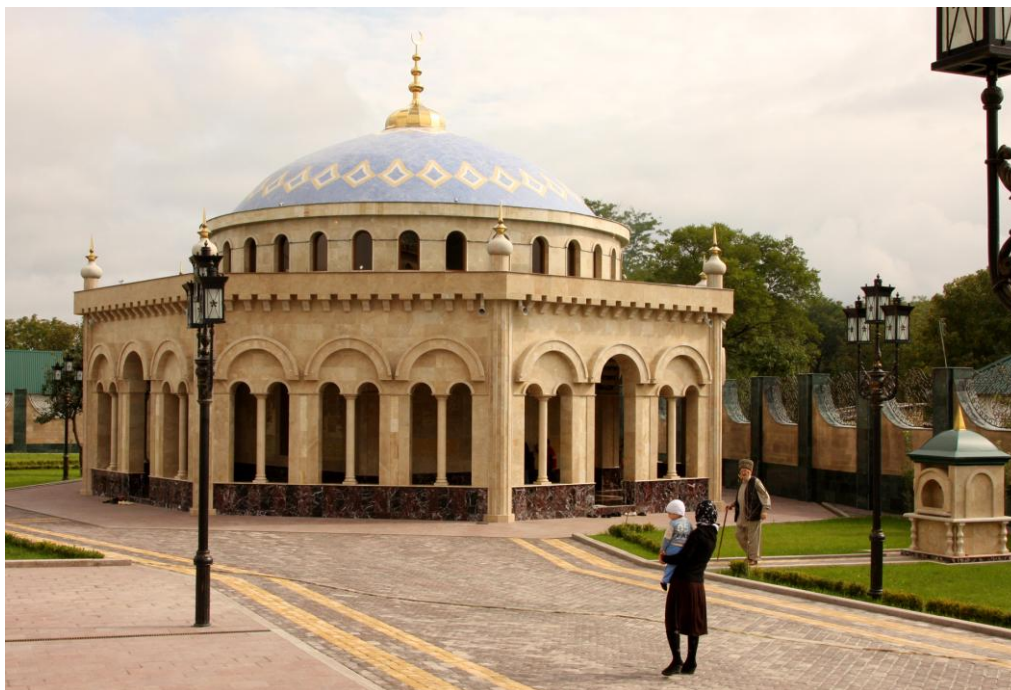
³² See: Sokirianskaia, Ekaterina (2005) 'Families and clans in Ingushetia and Chechnya. A fieldwork report', Central Asian Survey, 24:4, p. 111.



Due to high level of islamisation in Ingushetia, the role of Sufi brotherhoods (*virids*) has grown in importance in the recent years. Divisions among brotherhoods do not always overlap with clan divisions. Hence the increase in importance of the former may soon damage the clan structure and result in clan divisions playing a less important role in social and political life.



RELIGIOUS LIFE IN NORTH CAUCASUS



Religion plays an important role in everyday life of the inhabitants of North-Eastern Caucasus. Religious revival that took place after the dissolution USSR strictly correlated with processes of national revival. During the decade the processes started to lose significance (which resulted not only from the Kremlin policy, but also from disenchantment with nationalist ideas), or gradually took other forms. Such was the case of North Caucasus. Nationalist ideas and ethnic movements are losing their significance. They less often become the background of conflicts or disputes (with the exception of the unsolved Ingushetia-Ossetia conflict). Meanwhile, the (re)islamisation process, which began after the dissolution of the USSR, persists and increases, albeit in a different form. To a certain extent we deal with the second wave of islamisation here, which includes both the youth and middle-aged people. While in the 1990s, the “Return to religion” was often superficial and was measured by the number of newly built mosques and Koran schools, at present the process covers the majority of areas of social life – starting with family life, marriages, and divorces, through economic and legal matters.



Vast majority of the inhabitants of Ingushetia, Dagestan and Chechnya practice Islam, though the religious divisions and practices differ from one republic to another. What also differs is islamisation history and processes, and religious structures. However, broadly speaking, a common set of features may be identified:

The majority of the inhabitants of three republics are Sunni.

Shia (mostly Azerbaijanis) populate only the south of Dagestan. The division into Shia and Sunni, though significant and politically charged in other parts of the world, is not relevant in North Caucasus. The inhabitants of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia refer to themselves mostly as “just Muslims”, and often are not informed about the divisions which are significant in other Islamic countries.

In every republic a distinction can be made between the so-called “ethnic Muslims” – i.e. persons who identify themselves as such due to their roots and origins, yet do not observe any religious customs in everyday life, excluding more significant festivities and rituals relating to the life of an individual (such as marriage, burial, circumcision etc.). “Ethnic Muslims” prevail among the older and middle generation, which was raised and educated in the USSR times. They learnt in family homes elements of Muslim rituals; however the upbringing in the spirit of atheism and progress resulted in their treating these elements as “outdated” or, at best, a local tradition, folklore.

In every republic Sufi orders have a strong (albeit not equally so) position and influence: Kadiriyya (in Chechnya and Ingushetia) and Nakshbandiyya and Shasiliyya (in Dagestan).

The presence of the Islamic underground. While 2007-2008 were relatively peaceful (with much less terrorist activities), the skilful reorganisation of the resistance by the militants grouped around the idea of *Imarat Kawkaz*³³, and effective propaganda make their supporters grow in number. Although the outbreak of an open conflict is not probable (*inter alia* due to limited financial and personnel opportunities of the

³³ Virtual Islamic State, proclaimed by Dokku Umarov in 2007. The State is to cover all the republics of North Caucasus and a part of the Stavropol Krai and the Krasnodar Krai.



militants), numerous attacks (predominantly in Dagestan) may effectively destabilise the situation in North Caucasus³⁴. The growing popularity of the radical Islam idea along with constant dissatisfaction with the authorities, corruption and persecution by the defence and law enforcement institutions may result in aggravating of the situation in further perspective. It seems, however, that North Caucasus is not in the threat of a revolution or an open war in the nearest future.

A so-called Spiritual Muslim Board (of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia respectively) functions in every republic – a structure rooted in the USSR times, which was established to function as an Islamic counterpart of a Church (one of its objectives was easier control of Islamic structures). The Boards, apart from religious activity, issue approvals for participation in Hajj (a pilgrimage to Mecca), opening of an Islam school, construction of a mosque. Spiritual Muslim Boards as a rule cooperate with the authorities (in Chechnya even closely so). Their representatives would often fall prey to militants attacks due to antisalafi/antiwahhabi propaganda. Spiritual Muslim Boards are respected only by those parts of the society they represent or support. For example, the Spiritual Muslim Board in Dagestan actively cooperates with the *Murids* (students) of the sheikh Said-efendi. The students are also strongly present in the organisation structures.

In all republics we deal with vigorous bottom-up islamisation (in the case of Chechnya it is partially supported by the authorities; however this is a secondary process or authorities' response to the bottom-up processes).

The division into so-called traditionalists and reformers functions in all three republics. The former are closer to religious practices which are inspired also by local traditions that penetrated into Islam in isolation from the Islamic world. They reject the idea of the "renewal" of Islam and going back to sources, which opposes them to the reformers.

Groups of reformers/Salafis (called "Wahhabis" by media and unjustly compared to terrorists) operate in the entire North-Easter Caucasus – due to persecution by the

³⁴ See: Bobrownikow W., Szariackie sudy na sewiernom Kawkazie, Moscow, 2000. M. Falkowski, M. Marszewski: http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PRACE_34.pdf.



authorities it is hard to estimate their numbers. They are most active in the Dagestan area, where they are most numerous and where the authorities are unable to forbid their activity (as was the case several years ago). Both groups have been discussed further below.

SUFISM AND SALAFISM

In the post-USSR Islam two trends are distinguished: traditional (called Tariquatist or Sufi) and reformist called Salafi or “Wahhabi”.

The notion of “traditional Islam” has been coined by Soviet ethnographers in relation to religious practices in former USSR, which were a mixture of rites of Sufi brotherhoods with local traditions and pagan beliefs. The term “Wahhabism” might have been coined by the Soviet academics and we may owe it to their need of classification. It seems that the term, popularised in media, has gathered negative connotations in time³⁵.

The use of the “Wahhabism” term at present differs greatly from its primary meaning (hence throughout the article, it will only be used in inverted commas). “Wahhabism” refers in Islam to the trend which calls for living in compliance with the principles of faith from the times of the prophet Muhammad. In the former USSR the term “Wahhabi” is used as a counterpart of terms “a terrorist” or “a fundamentalist”. Persons who are associating themselves with the ideas of reformist Islam refer to themselves as Salafi or reformers, or “*yedinobozhnitsy*” (those who believe in one God”), *jamaatskie*, real Muslims, or just Salafi.

SALAFI

The movement may be described in North Caucasus as a reformist one, which aims at a radical reform of local Islam, rejecting pagan beliefs and rites. This is a kind of modernism in a way different from the understanding of modernism in the West. It is

³⁵ More on the subject see Mariusz Marszewski:
<http://www.etnologia.pl/swiat/teksty/srodkowoazjatycki-wahhabizm.php>.



also a movement which may be called fundamentalism as it calls to the return to the sources, or foundations, of Islam.

Although the warriors refer to Salafi trend of Islam and really may (albeit do not have to) be recruited from persons with Salafi views, those two groups should not be treated as equivalent. Many Salafis do not support terrorist methods, considering them harmful to all Muslims. There should be no doubts, though, that a part of Salafis support the militants (or helps them, providing food or hiding them), believing in better future in an Islamic State which they postulate.

The most characteristic opinions of the North Caucasus Salafi are:

- strict adherence to the monotheism;
- rejecting and condemning the veneration of sheikhs and holy places (the so-called *ziyarats*). Veneration of sheikhs is the main reproach of the Salafi toward Tariqatists. The Salafis believe sheikhs found their authority on a lie, as there cannot be any intermediaries between Allah and people. They also claim sheikhs sin by cooperating with authorities;
- Salafis advocate purging Islam from later influences, which originate in local traditions, such as recollections of the dead, lavish wedding and burying receptions, observing non-Islamic feasts such as *Novruz Bayram*;
- advocating strict observance of Sharia principles;
- advocating equality of all Muslims, regardless of their ethnic origins, property status (this slogan attracts to a great extent both persons from urban agglomerations functioning in multiethnic communities and persons from less respected, “impure” families or *teyps*).
- praise of studies. Salafis believe that Islam is not contrary or hostile to science, nor do they condemn Darwin or genetics (which some of the Tariqatists do, as they represent and understand the world in mystical terms), they do not renounce scientific explanations. They try to make their version of Islam



acceptable for educated people.

The following Salafi groups may be distinguished in North Caucasus:

→ poor Salafis – salafism is a hope for the future for them, a way of escape from difficult situation, a protest against new order, dominance of influential families. Salafism helps them renounce such rituals and traditions as: expensive weddings, paying *kalim*, generous dowries. This type of Salafism is popular for example in *jaamats* (communities) of upper Dagestan and often (albeit not always) contribute to the dissolution of a community. Even if the relationships between the two groups are “correct”, lack of participation in common rituals results in lack of strong relationships between them (it is a paradox that a common factor which brings the two groups together is the hatred toward the authorities);

→ rich Salafis – are usually closed communities, which by their own work and initiative found their place in market economy conditions. Through Salafism, they could “separate” from the world, and, strictly speaking, “not share the money they earned” with authorities or criminals. They also escaped from the power of religious authorities. For instance, in one of the towns of middle Dagestan (Gubden), the inhabitants did not agree to building of a road, as they believed it would bring “moral corruption” and, most of all, delinquency, from the city). The reformist trend, which praises living according to the principles of faith, is also their way of living and defending children from “moral corruption”;

→ educated Salafis – including people educated in former USSR times. Many of them are former atheists, who considered the Islam practiced by their grandparents a set of strange, incomprehensible principles. They also considered representatives of Muslim “clergy” uneducated and, as such, not an authority. Salafism, which advocates direct contact with God and does not request to observe “incomprehensible” rituals, being subjected to sheikhs, was the only acceptable paradigm. Many among their numbers wanted to convert through understanding, which was not an option in the mystical Islam of Sufi orders. It is



worth pointing out at this point, that while educated persons are numerous among the Salafis, the same cannot be said of the militants. Information about the alleged numbers of educated people, even with the Ph.D. degree, among the militants, is often present in the press or on the web pages of militants. This results from the lingering myth of Yasin Rasulov, who was really an educated person, grabbed by the ideals of fighting for the faith.³⁶ It should be pointed out, though, that even if such persons as Rasulov exist, at present there may be many doubts as to the “elitist” origins of the “forest brothers”.

THE SUFI ORDERS

Sufism is a mystical-philosophical trend of Islam, which seeks union with and knowledge of God. This state has been achieved by sheikhs, called *murshids* or *ustazis*. In order to become a sheikh, one should receive an *ijazah* (a blessing and permission to teach in the name of the order) from another sheikh. Several Dagestani sheikhs are reproached of being self-proclaimed just because they cannot prove receiving the blessing from any other sheikh. Still, they may be respected by the locals.

The Sufi orders in Dagestan are called *tariqa*. In Chechnya a *virid* (branch) or *toba* (repentance – i.e. the act of repentance the *murids* perform in front of the sheikh as they become his students) are more common. The *tariqa* means “a path” leading to God, which consists of many stages, leading to a spiritual perfection.

Each order has its sheikh, also called *murshid* or *ustaz* (teacher). This person may be living or dead. In the case of Dagestan, contrarily to Chechnya, we deal mostly with living sheikhs. A *murid* considers a sheikh inerrant, accepts his authority, is directly submitted to him. A sheikh sets tasks for *murids* (e.g. a daily prayer) which they attempt to fulfil. Depending on the order, *murids* visit their teacher more or less regularly. Providing knowledge (by the sheikh) to *murids* happens during many years of learning.

³⁶ See: <http://chernovik.net/news/411/CHERNOVIK/2010/10/15/11138>.



The so-called *zikr* is widely practiced in orders – both in the form of wild, ecstatic dance, as in the case of the Kadiriyya order, and quiet, as the one popular with the Nakhshbandiyya order.

The Sufi orders' structures and character are different from one another in every republic. It will be discussed further in the part devoted to the characteristics of Islam in every republic.

ISLAMISATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE



What are the characteristic features of islamisation in everyday life? How is Islam relevant to the youth and the middle-aged? The present chapter will be devoted to those aspects of the new wave of islamisation, which seems crucial from the everyday life



perspective, which is different and unequivocal, does not succumb to strict, schematic classifications.

Theoretically speaking, Sufism and Salafism may be distinguished in North Caucasus. Meanwhile, at the level of everyday life, this division functions only to a moderate extent. Undoubtedly, many Dagestani, Chechnya, or Ingusheti Muslims belong to, or sympathise with, the Sufi orders³⁷. The majority of Muslims in the three republics calls themselves “just Muslims” – they are neither members of orders, nor declared Salafis, often they are simply unaware of the differences and similarities between the two.

It is worth pointing out at this stage, that, although at the political level, Salafites and traditional Muslims are declared enemies, they share goals at the level of everyday life³⁸. The supporters of both movements aim at gradual islamisation of social life of North Caucasian societies. While, however, the supporters of traditional Islam are supported (or, in the worst case, tolerated, by the authorities), Salafis are often persecuted and cannot act officially without subjecting themselves to danger.

Within the last few years several clear indications of bottom-up islamisation of North Caucasian societies may be observed. These are:

- decisive increase in religiousness of the youth, “Islam en vogue” so to speak;
- gradual conversion of middle-aged people;
- growing popularity of Islamic education (only in Dagestan there are ca. 16 Islamic universities³⁹);
- popularity of DVDs and CDs with broadcasts and movies about Islam;

³⁷ Sufism is a mystical strand of Islam focusing on gaining knowledge through means other than reason, where students (*murids*) are helped by a sheikh. In Dagestan sheikhs are contemporary, living persons, while in Chechnya and Ingushetia, where the Kadiriyya order is popular, there are no living sheikhs.

³⁸ More information in: Falkowski M., Kaliszewska I. „Islamization of the socio-political life in Dagestan”, in: *Islam in the North Caucasus*, ed. A. Zelkina (in progress).

³⁹ According to the data of Shamil Shichalijev of the Dagestani Academy of Science.



→ billboards encouraging to convert, quit smoking and drinking, pray.

Selected aspects and manifestations of islamisation at the everyday level have been presented below.

Young people try to live according to the principles of Islam. They start to regularly go to mosques, and encourage others to do so. They declare abstinence and do not bribe. Islam became a way of living to them, a new moral framework, sometimes different than the one proposed by their parents.

We might even say that Islam becomes fashionable. There are different reasons, why young people turn to religion. Not many of them were raised in the spirit of deep faith⁴⁰. Some of the interviewees converted themselves under the influence of their peers, who encouraged them to pray, others visited mosques and took part in Koran lessons out of curiosity. Others sought sense of life in religion as a result of an important or tragic event in life (persecution by the authorities or death of a relative). Some felt that they belong to the Muslim community after a visit to central Russia, seeing Islam as the core of their identity.

Many young people convert and educate by means of audiovisual materials. The most important source of knowledge about Islam for the young people are materials in the digital form (DVDs, films in cellular phones, the Internet). The young believers openly admit, that they rarely use books – they gain religious knowledge mostly from materials copied from their peers or sent by cell phones (this type of communication prevails over the spoken one⁴¹). These are mostly materials accessible from numerous web portals on Islam in Russian, and on DVD discs sold in Islam shops.

The circulating materials do not have a distinguished Salafi or Sufi character (apart from the materials by ideologists fighting with Wahhabism, sermons of particular sheikhs or ideological authorities of militants), as well as a range of Islam shops and web

⁴⁰ Although Islam survived the USSR times, and secret teaching was practiced throughout, it covered only a small part of the society.

⁴¹ In many instances the interviewees referred us to electronic sources rather than answered questions themselves.



pages. In cities, persons with clear ideological preferences (e.g. members of Sufi orders) divide shops into “Wahhabi” and “ours”, but the difference is not so clear for the rest of the society. The majority of the customers are the seekers, who do not know much about religion, and shop for cosmetics, recently popular “Islam” medicines, calendars with Mecca, rosaries, “amulets” for drivers. Such persons do not usually have knowledge of ideological differences between Salafis and Sufis. Nor do they feel concerned by those differences, as they seek in the faith the response to questions that torment them, a way to live in difficult times. Divisions and alliances at the level of religious structures are not relevant to them.

The type of literature and DVDs sold in both types of shops are also equivalent to a large extent. While the Salafi shops do not offer literature on Sufism and sheikhs, and “traditional” do not offer sermons by Bagautdin Kebedow⁴², or Said Buriatski, their offer indicates that sellers buy at the same wholesalers. In a range of shops no literature (or DVDs) of distinctly Sufi or “Wahhabi” character are offered, but guidebooks translated from the Arab prevail: “How to perform *namaz*?” (“How to pray?”), “How to be a good wife?”, pirate copies of such discs as “Comprehending Allah”, “Wonders of Koran”, etc.

Religiosity of the youth is manifested in different ways – from ardent and increasingly aware involvement in religious practices, abstinence, to wearing Islamic clothes daily, using Islamic medicines and cosmetics. For part of the youth, Islam is a way to live, gives answers to the question of how to live in a globalising world. For others it is just an element of identity, which is at present unrelated to any significant change of a lifestyle.

In many cases the increasing religious involvement of young people results in conflicts with their parents raised in the USSR times. The parents do not understand the motivation of the children and fear their joining “Wahhabis”. More and more visible presence of Islam in the media and in everyday life results in the growing respect of young people by the middle generation, contributing to its gradual islamisation.

⁴² Bagautdin-Muhammad Kebedov (born 1945 in Wiedieno in Chechnya) – an ideologist of Wahhabism / Salafism active in 1990s, the leader of North-Caucasian radicals.



The Islamic lifestyle or the “fashionable Islam” is partly a response to lack of trust and support in the State, lack of perspectives in the world where corruption and connections prevail. Turning to Islam may also be explained by the need of guidelines for living in the reality considered unjust and immoral.

At the level of everyday practices, Islamic symbols and norms slowly enter the life of so-called “ethnic Muslims”. Middle-aged people, often declared atheists, who recently converted, are joked about that “when they understood communism will not be back, they turned to Islam”. Islam undoubtedly started to fill the gap in their lives which communism and spent national or liberation ideas had left.

People who have been raised in the spirit of internationalism are also attracted by the universality of Islam, which is a common feature of the identity of the majority of Dagestani nations, a unifying, and supra-national religion. The generation raised in the communist regime needs a holistic, consistent system of values, which Islam provides, contrarily to nationalisms of Dagestani ethnic groups.⁴³ What is a paradox, then, is that the young generation, not the older one, spreads the idea of religiosity in North Caucasus – cases of converting parents or even grandparents by grandchildren, for whom Islam is the only way to live, are numerous.

⁴³ More on the subject see Falkowski M., Kaliszewska I., „Islamization of the socio-political life in Dagestan”, in: *Islam in the North Caucasus*, ed. A. Zelkina (in progress).



There are following reasons for bottom-up islamisation⁴⁴:

- Unstable social and political situation, lack of perspectives for the young people, lack of authorities, negative perception of the inhabitants of Caucasus by other inhabitants of Russia. In the case of the middle generation, a sense of ideological vacuum, lack of guidelines how to live;
- For the youth, local religious leaders, or even Sufi sheikhs, have become authorities. In matters of religion, parents or grandparents rarely fulfil this role, as they gained knowledge about Islam in an extent limited by the Soviet State. Often the young generation converts parents and even grandparents, teaches them the principles of faith, the ways of praying;
- The Islam en vogue is clearly observed among the young.⁴⁵ The young openly speak about their religious beliefs, openly convert, and are not ashamed of their

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*



faith, which they consider an element of their local or Caucasian identity, which sets them apart from Slavic nations. This is significant, as the migrants from Caucasus are referred to in Moscow as “the black”, and are second-class citizens;

→ The Salafi leaders attract the youth with their religious knowledge and (or mostly) nonconformist attitude. Also the militants became for many people idols of the type of Che Guevara – though they do not intend to fight, they support (in Chechnya, due to persecutions, discreetly) militants in their fight with the State and the militia. Regarding films from attacks on army headquarters, bombings and other “actions” is a popular pastime of the local youth.

Growing islamisation of North Caucasus is particularly visible in Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagestan.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN DIFFERENT REPUBLICS

Regardless of a number of common characteristics, Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia have each undergone the islamisation process differently. Some aspects of religious life and religious divisions have therefore a different character and impact in these three republics. Some elements of religious life characteristic for each of the republics are presented below.

DAGESTAN

Contrary to Chechnya and Ingushetia where Islam rooted itself quite recently, the beginnings of Islam in Dagestan date back to 7th century, when the Arabs brought it to the South of Dagestan. Around 12th c. the impacts of Christianity from Georgia could be observed (a small orthodox church built by Georgian missionaries in Shamilsky district in Dagestan has survived until our times). In the 12th c. Sufism permeated to Dagestan, the first brotherhoods were created (in Derbent) and the first local *sheikhs* appeared. Sufism grounded itself in Dagestan at the turn of 18th and 19th century.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*



Before the Russian conquest, the majority of inhabitants of Dagestan were living in fairly egalitarian mountainous communities (*jamaats*), while the rest of Dagestani in feudal mini-states based on the alliances of *jamaats*. Islam had a great influence on *jamaats*, cementing them and forming the basis of their social life. The situation changed after the Bolsheviks had come into power – Islam went underground but a number of brotherhoods were still active and the Arabic language and Koran were secretly taught.

Since 2000 a significant growth of religiousness has been observed in Dagestan (after its rise following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its gradual decline before 2000). More and more persons go on pilgrimage to Mekka (the largest number of pilgrims from the Russian Federation come from Dagestan).

According to the research by the Russian sociologist Enver Kisriyev, the Avars and the Dargins belong to the most religious peoples practicing most of the religious rites. The inhabitants of the South – Lezgins, Rutuls – are less religious. Two extreme attitudes may be observed among Laks. Many of them are ardent atheists but there are also many *Salafis*, especially from the school of the "scholastic Salafism" (Laks, next to Lezgins, are one of the most educated ethnic groups in Dagestan).

Sufism always had a significant influence on religious life at the local level. The brotherhoods which function in Dagestan are Nakshbandiyya, Shasiliyyah and Kadiriyya. The largest is the Nakshbandiyya brotherhood whose number of members is estimated at twenty thousand (mainly Avars, Azeris, Dargins, Kumyks, Lezgins, Laks and Tabasarans). The second largest brotherhood is Shasiliyya which has around ten thousand members (Avars, Dargins, Kumyks) and Kadiriyya (Akin Chechens and scarce Andi-Tsez peoples). However, it is hard to precisely estimate the number of its members because these brotherhoods are closed to the uninitiated and it is difficult to state how many persons actually do fulfil the tasks of the Murids (disciples) and how many of them have only visited their sheikh once.

Some of the better known Dagestani sheikhs (and *tariqats* in which they teach):



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- Said Efendi Acayev of Chirkey (from the village of Chirkey) – an Avar (born in 1937), lives in the village of Chirkey. He used to be a shepherd. He teaches in the name of Shasiliyya and Nakshbandiyya *tariqats*. He has the largest number of *murids* (approx. 10 thousand) and is one of the most prominent Dagestani sheikhs;
- Muhammed-Mukhtar Babatov – a Kumyk (born in 1954) who lives in Kyakhulay (a settlement in the Makhachkala district) where he is the Imam of the local mosque. He has approx. three thousand *murids*. He teaches in the name of Nakshbandiyya *tariqat*;
- Sirajuddin Israfilov – a Tabasaran (born in 1954), he lives in a settlement of Khurik in Tabasaran district, where he is the Imam of the Juma-mosque. He has around five thousand *murids* in many districts of South Dagestan. He teaches in the name of Nakshbandiyya *tariqat*. Sheikh Sirajuddin is a charismatic figure – apart from teaching *murids* he also founded an Islamic university in Derbent and is active in the field of politics. In addition, he operates a gas station and constructs hotels. Many accuse him of being a self-appointed leader;
- Gadji-Muhammed Gadjiyev – a Dargin (born in 1956) in the settlement of Kayakent in Kayakentsky district. He lives in the Paraul village in Karabudakhkentsky district. He teaches in the name of Nakshbandiyya *tariqat*. He teaches approx. three thousand *murids*;
- Murtazali Karachayev – a Kumyk (born in 1949) in Tarki village, where he lives until this day. A dean of Imam Shafia Dagestani Islamic University in Makhachkala; around 500 *murids*. He teaches in the name of Nakshbandiyya *tariqat*;
- Badrudin Kadyrov – an Avar (born in 1919) in Botlikh where he has lived until this day. He has approx. 3 thousand *murids* in the Upper Dagestan; he teaches in the name of Shaziliyya *tariqat*;
- Arsanali Gamzatov – a Kumyk (born in 1956) who currently lives in Buinaksk where he is a dean of the Islamic University in Buinaksk. He has approx. a thousand



murids. He teaches in the name of Shaziliyya *tariqat* covering also some elements of Nakshbandiyya *tariqat*;

→ Kunta-haji Kisheyev (died in 1867) – His followers may be found in Khasavyurtovsky, Botlikhsky and Novolaksky districts (mostly Akin Chechens and Andi-Tsez peoples).



In Dagestan a number of pilgrimage sites function (the so-called *ziyarats*) which are regularly visited by Dagestani people (tours of these sites are even organised by tourist offices). These are mainly the graves of sheikhs, sages or other persons considered to be saint. Almost every village has its saint – sometimes his grave is situated in a separate place, sometimes it is simply a grave in the cemetery. Recently a number of these graves has been renovated – the initiatives were most often funded by rich men originating from a given region.

The contemporary Dagestani Sufism is said to be connected with politics⁴⁶. One can for instance observe the influence of sheikhs upon elections or on various politicians, etc. Undoubtedly, at the local level, sheikhs can influence public opinion and lobby in favour of voting for one candidate or another. Undoubtedly, the *murids* of

⁴⁶ See. http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PRACE_34.pdf.



Sheikh Said-Efendi dominate also in the structures of official clergy and in this way they can shape opinions and have a stronger impact on people, as well as lobby in favour of their interests in the media. In my opinion, however, the role of Sufism in higher-level politics is overrated.

No doubt that in the 1990s these structures were strongly embroiled in politics. "Traditional" clergy felt threatened by Salafis (who at that times recruited mostly from the intelligentsia), who were criticising them for their "pagan" habits and lack of education. The *tariqats'* followers, in turn, stressed the extremist activity of Salafis, spread anti-Wahhabi propaganda and were content with the authorities' persecuting the Salafis.

At the moment, however, the Tariqatists are not able, apart from the local level, to influence the politicians' decisions, similarly to the official Islamic clergy directorate (DUMD) which the authorities no longer consider as influential, seeing that the number of Salafis grows and the aggressive anti-Wahhabi propaganda preached by the Tariqatists has an opposite effect.

Because the Salafis have grown in numbers, the official clergy have changed the tone and meaning of their statements. My research has shown that persons who only two years ago were ready to compare a "Wahhabi" or "Salafi" to a devil or terrorist, can say today that "there is nothing of this sort in the Wahhabism itself".

There are proposals to repeal the law, introduced in September 1999, which prohibits "all Wahhabi and other extremist activity". There is a number of persons who support the abolishment of this law, not only because this law is contrary to the Constitution of the Russian Federation but rather because the steady growth of the Salafi movement cannot be stopped at the moment and some say – though still not many – that maybe it is better to start a dialogue. First attempts at a dialogue have already been noted and the process will possibly be continued.

A debate on introducing the elements of *Shari'a* into the law of the Republic of Dagestan is currently ongoing in this country. More and more often these issues are



discussed in the public sphere. Salafis are increasingly allowed to voice their opinion. The changes occurring in the republic, the scale of violence and the lack of any mechanisms to prevent it have caused the situation to get out of the authorities' control. Slowly, the local elites have begun to understand that without a dialogue with Salafis no order can be established in the republic.

CHECHNYA

The beginnings of Islam in Chechnya date back to 15th century. At that time Islam arrived to Chechnya from Dagestan. It spread over the lowlands in the beginning of 18th c. to cover the entire territory at the turn of 18th and 19th century. The expansion of Islam was closely related to fights with the coloniser. It was Sheikh Mansur from the Nakshbandiyya brotherhood who first used Islamic discourse to fight with the Tsarist Russia. Islam rooted in Chechnya as late as 19th c., because of, *inter alia*, Imam Shamil who similarly to Sheikh Mansur based the fight with Russia on the attempt of building an Islamic state which would be able to oppose the invader. Then a number of Chechen *adats* (customary laws) were eradicated by *Shari'a*. After the defeat of Shamil in the middle of 19th c. a new social and religious movement emerged in Chechnya. It was led by the sheikh of Kadiiriyya *tariqat* – Kunta-haji who called for the end to blood-shed and war, for ceasing fights, because they were destroying the nation. He believed that a man should be selfless, free from jealousy, compassionate, ready to sacrifice and treat all Muslims as brothers.

The members of the brotherhood were called Zikrists. Although the teachings of Kunta-haji were so peaceful, the Russians were afraid of the new movement gaining popularity and arrested Kunta-haji, prohibiting also performing *zikr*. Soon after Kunta-haji died in Russian prison. As a result the members of the brotherhood, initially of peaceful disposition, became fierce opponents of the Tsar. However, the initial opponents of Tsarat, the members of the Nakshbandiyya from which Imam Shamil had originated, began to collaborate with the Tsarist authorities for material gain.

During the revolution the Kadiiriyya brotherhood initially supported the Bolsheviks (they promised to return the land and non-prosecution of Islamic believers).



When it turned out in the 1920s that the Bolsheviks were leading anti-religious policy, the uprisings began (ending in defeat) against the strengthening Soviet power.

At times of Soviet Union the persecution impacted in general on both brotherhoods. All mosques were closed and the practice of *zikr* was forbidden. The members of *virids* went underground to continue their activity. The brotherhoods played a great role during the deportation in 1944.

In the 1990s the *virids* became more active and they became a player in the political game (for example, Dudayev surrounded himself with the members of the most numerous brotherhood Kadiriyya in order to gain their support but was opposed e.g. by followers of Deni Arsanov).

In the last years due to Ramzan Kadyrov the religious practices of the Kadiriyya brotherhood (to which the president and his family belong) were elevated to the rank of the Chechen-wide practice. The collective *zikr* ceremonies are performed during larger events (such as the anniversary of Ahman Kadyrov's death). The cases of performing *zikr* in public offices have also been known (e.g. for an underage cousin of Ramzan who crushed in a car received from him⁴⁷).

Currently although the activity of other brotherhoods is not being restricted, it is hard to talk about an equal treatment of all *virids*.

The Salafi Islam does not exist in the public debate. The reformers named wahhabis are persecuted and equalled with militants. They often do not reveal their beliefs and it happens that they are afraid to show off the external features attributed to "wahhabis" such as wearing a beard but not moustache or rolled up trousers⁴⁸. Because such external "features" were a cause to arrest or control of a person. An interesting thing is that although the authorities describe *salafis* as satans or devils, among the Ramzan's cadre many followers of this movement may be found who may normally

⁴⁷ See: I. Raubisko: Proper 'traditional' versus dangerous 'new'. Religious ideology and idiosyncratic Islamic practices in post-soviet Chechenya., JASO-online N.S. Vol. I, no. 1 ISSN: 2040-1876 2009.

⁴⁸ Further information in: I. Raubisko: Proper 'traditional' versus dangerous 'new'. Religious ideology and idiosyncratic Islamic practices in post-soviet Chechenya., JASO-online N.S. Vol. I, no. 1 2009.



admit to being *salafis*, wear beards and shave their moustache. Their belonging to government forces makes them untouchable.

Many Chechens, especially those who converted to Islam after the collapse of the Soviet Union do not identify themselves with any brotherhoods. They call themselves “plain Muslims”, they pray and respect the most fundamental religious principles.

The most numerous brotherhoods in Chechnya are the followers of Kunta-haji, Chimirzoyev, Wishajin, Deni Arsanov. Below you will find a short characteristic of each of them:

→ The followers of Kunta-haji. According to estimate data, approx. 60% of Chechens belongs to Kadiriya brotherhood, and strictly speaking to its fraction established by Kunta-haji. The disciples of Kunta-haji believe that he is a saint. Religious hymns are sung to venerate him. Many believe that Kunta-haji is alive (his tomb was not found) and he will return to this world when the time comes. The tomb of the mother of sheikh Kunta-haji, Chedi, is surrounded with veneration. Thousands of pilgrims from the entire Republic and outside of it make pilgrimages to her grave. In the last years the grave was renovated and became the main pilgrimage destination in Chechnya.

In Chechnya there are no living sheikhs – it is caused, e.g. by Soviet persecution and deportation. The *virids* are simply led by spiritual leaders. In different villages, a given brotherhood is led by a *turkh* – a person responsible for organising worship, practicing *zikr*, arranging meetings.

A loud *zikr* by Kadiriyya brotherhood (contrary to a silent one practiced by the Nakshbandiyya brotherhood) is sometimes referred to as the Chechen *zikr* (as the majority of Kunta-haji followers in Caucasia are Chechens. *Zikr* was also popularised in the media during the Russian-Chechen wars and mistaken for a war dance).

The *zikr* itself symbolises the circling of angels around the throne of Allah. The *zikr* starts with walking round a circle which then turns into a quick counter



clockwise run. One has to comply with appropriate rules, be able to control one's breath and perform rhythmic movements. In breaks between subsequent phases religious hymns are chanted and prayers read in Arabic and Chechen language.

→ the followers of Chim Mirza The *wird* was established after the end of Caucasian War in the middle of 19th century. Its founder was Chim Mirza. He was propagating a modest ascetic life and hard work. He condemned the theft of cattle popular among Chechens and stealing from infidels (he deemed it to be even worse). Its members were initially the poor inhabitants of East Chechnya who most suffered during the Caucasian War. The Chim Mirza followers use a drum during *zikr*. The women in this brotherhood practice *zikr* along with the men.

The Chim Mirza followers live in Eastern Chechnya and they are known for leading modest lives (supposedly they do not even have rugs in their homes).

→ The followers of Vis-haji. This *virid* stems from the Kunta-haji *virid*. It emerged in the 1950s among people deported to Kazakhstan. The followers of Vis-haji use drum and violin during their *zikr*. Sometimes they also wear white *papahas* – this is why they are sometimes called *byeloshapochniks*. The men and women celebrate *zikr* together. The founder of the brotherhood Vis-haji Zagiyeu strongly stressed the importance of work, believing that it is performed in the name of Allah and for the family. He also recommended a strong endogamy – women from a given *virid* could only marry the men from this *virid*. Vis-haji supported polygamy and he encouraged marrying widows. He also believed that the newlyweds should be supported by the entire community. Moreover, he abolished the obligation to pay a bride-price (*kalim*) which burdened families.

→ The followers of Deni Arsanov. The Nakshbandiya *virid*. It was founded by sheikh Deni Arsanow and his son Baudin in 1910. The tomb of both sheikhs is a pilgrimage destination today and is situated in Urus-Martan. The followers of Deni Arsanov inhabit mainly the Urus-Martanovsky, Sunzhensky and Achkhoy-Martanovsky districts. Deni and Baudin Arsanov gained fame and respect because of their prophecies on the future of the Chechen nation. The members of the



brotherhood officiate a silent *zikr* (such as other members of Nakshbandiyya) and they believe that the sheikhs of the Nakshbandiyya *tariqat* can predict weather.

→ The followers of Bamat-Girey. The founders of the brotherhood were brothers Bamat Girey-haji and Ali Mitayev. The brotherhood was established in the beginning of 20th century. They celebrate a very impetuous *zikr*, nodding their heads and sinking into the state of ecstasy. The followers of Bamat-Girey inhabit Vedensky, Shalinsky, Gudermessky, Kurchaloyevsky districts and Grozny.

INGUSHETIA

The inhabitants of Ingushetia are predominantly Sunni Muslims of the Shafi'a school. A small fraction of the population professes Orthodox Christianity. The Ingush converted to Islam very late. Until the 12th century, the pagan beliefs had been predominant in Ingushetia which, later on, during Georgia's glorious times, began to merge with the Christian influences from Georgia (the Georgian missionaries arrived on the lands of the North Caucasus). Christianity did not take hold in Ingushetia (the Georgian influences and missions grew weaker and weaker at the time of the decline of the Georgian state) and the pagan beliefs remained predominant.

Nowadays, Sufism plays a major role and is a very important element of the social life in the republic. There are four Kadiiriyya *virids* in the republic (*virid* is a branch of a Sufi brotherhood) and one Naqshbandiyya (The members of some brotherhoods are very active politically):

→ The followers of Kunta-Haji. More than 80% of all the members of all the brotherhoods belong to this *virid*. In every village or community, similarly to the situation in Chechnya, a *zikr* is conducted by a *turkh* (leader). The unity of the brotherhood is highlighted and the mutual help between the *murids* is underlined. The brotherhood membership is very important, often as important as the clan affiliation. The followers of Kunta-Haji do not acknowledge the authority of other sheikhs apart from Kunta-Haji himself and do not call their



names during the prayers. There are a few thousand followers of Kunta-Haji in Ingushetia;

→ The followers of Batal-Haji form a very important and influential *virđ* in Ingushetia. At the same time it is a very closed and conservative *virđ*, having roughly 10 thousand members. They live in the Nazran, Sunzhensky and Malgobek regions. The centre of the Batal-Haji brotherhood is in the village of Surhohi. This *virđ* was founded by the *murid* of Kunta-Haji, Batal-Haji Belohoroyev. Today this *virđ* is headed by his grandsons. There is a monument of sheikh Batal-Haji in the village of Surkhohi. The followers of Batal-Haji identify themselves with their *virđ* so much that their *virđ* affiliation is stronger than their ethnic affiliation. They perform a different *zikr* than the followers of Kunta-Haji – it is a louder *zikr* with handclapping, but without dancing in a circle. Women are forbidden to marry men not belonging to their *virđ*. Furthermore, they do not use dishes from which strangers had eaten. The followers of Batal-Haji are known for their wealth. They are also accused of criminal activities. They are said to be responsible for several assassinations related to the bloody family vengeance. Some believe that the followers of Batal-Haji are also involved in drug and gold trafficking from the Far East. It is the most mysterious *virđ* and there are many rumours and jokes circulating about it. The followers of Batal-Haji have a strong influence over the political and economic life in the republic;

→ The followers of Bamat-Girey. The Kadiriyah *tariqat* brotherhood was founded in Chechnya, and its founders were brothers Bamat-Girey-Khadji and Ali Mitayev. In Ingushetia, the brotherhood has several hundred members. They celebrate a very impetuous *zikr*, nodding their heads and sinking into the state of ecstasy. You can read more on this topic in the paragraph about Chechnya;

→ The followers of Hussein-Haji. They are also called Haji-murs. It is a small brotherhood having several hundred followers, founded by the sheikh Hussein-Haji Kardanov; they are in conflict with the followers of Batal-Haji;



→ The followers of Deni Arsanov. It is a Naqshbandiyya *virḍ*, founded by a Chechen sheikh, Deni Arsanov. They live mainly in the flatlands of Ingushetia and represent approximately 10% of all the members of the Sufi brotherhoods in Ingushetia. At the time of Dzhokhar Dudayev, they supported the solution of preserving the Checheno-Ingush Republic. They celebrate a quiet *zikr*, and they always carry a rosary with them. A more detailed description is enclosed in the paragraph about Chechnya.

Radical Islam reached Ingushetia only during the Chechen War. It was not as popular as in Dagestan or in Chechnya, there were not many local ideologists either. Very many people in Ingushetia do not belong to any brotherhood, they call themselves “plain Muslims”, and they pray and respect the most fundamental religious rules. Recently, many young people have been turning to Salafism. They were not persecuted at first, as it was harder than anywhere else to distinguish them from the rest of strong believers. But with time, the defence and law enforcement institutions started to round people up in mosques and houses of prayer. Even though there are many fervent Muslims in Ingushetia, round-ups of “improperly clothed” people started to be more and more frequent and women wearing hijabs would arouse suspicion.

At present, the cases of kidnapping are quite frequent, and people accused of radicalism, sometimes having nothing in common with the militants, fall victim to those acts. It leads to the situation in which more and more people abhor the defence and law enforcement institutions, sometime even supporting the militants, not having pity over an assassinated militiaman or an FSB officer.



FEDERAL, CUSTOMARY AND RELIGIOUS LAWS IN EVERYDAY LIFE



The customary, religious and federal laws interweave in the public life in Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia. And which one prevails depends on the context of the socio-political situation and of the social group.

By way of simplification, we can say that in family matters, such as marriage, divorce, division of the estate, people more often refer to the law of Shari'a. And when it comes to the criminal matters, such as assassination, or unintentional causing of somebody's death, the inhabitants of the north-eastern Caucasus apply the *adat* rules. Mostly I refer to the tradition of bloody vengeance and to the rite of reconciliation related to the latter. In both cases the federal law can be applied which is, in theory, superior to the other laws. But in practice the federal law constitutes merely one of several legal orders having significance in everyday life.

While pondering over the question which legal order is superior, we have to take into account the political situation and the historical context, bearing in mind at the



same time the Soviet era, which had an immense impact on respecting the Shari'a and adat rules, as well as on observing the state law.

If we look at the Shari'a law from a historical perspective, then we can see that the Shari'a law on the territories of the North Caucasus has the longest tradition in Dagestan, which was Islamised the earliest. In Chechnya and Ingushetia, where Islam became rooted much later (the details concerning the process of islamisation are enclosed in the chapter related to religion), the norms of behaviour based on the *adat* law are far better preserved.

On one hand, if we focus on the Soviet era, then we can see how big influence did the deporting of the Chechens and the Ingush into exile to Kazakhstan in 1944 have on the functioning of the selected Shari'a norms in everyday life. Even though the religious law appeared in Chechnya much earlier, it was only during the exile to Kazakhstan that the practice of polygamy did appear in the Chechen society, alien before to the Vainakh community.

But on the other hand, if we look at the situation after the collapse of the USSR, including the Chechen War, then it appears clearly that during that time, various norms of the religious and social life were subject to deep transformations and redefinitions – some laws reappeared, some became legitimised in everyday life, and others sank into oblivion.

The attitude of the society and of the authorities towards the elements of the religious law in socio-political life is of utter importance from today's perspective. The most "aggressive" policy with regard to the tradition and religion is applied in Chechnya where sometimes, on the state level (especially when it is convenient for those in power), the traditional law prevails over the federal law.

THE FEDERAL LAW

What meaning does the federal law have in everyday life? Is it applied and to what extent? What is the attitude of ordinary people towards it?



The division of the north-Caucasian societies into the secular and religious fractions (described in the chapter concerning the social divisions) partly translated into the approach towards the federal and religious laws. Those for whom the ideal state would be a secular, democratic republic or those who see the ideal state in the form of an empire similar to the Soviet state underline the importance of the state law, deploring that the state law is not observed in the Caucasus. They fear the introduction of the Shari'a norms into everyday life and its official legalization. Those people, accounting for a minority within the present societies in the north-eastern Caucasus, underline that they want to live "according to the Constitution" (and not Shari'a), and that it means for them a life in a secular state, according to the secular laws.

On the other hand there is a group of religious people lobbying for the introduction of the Shari'a norms which, in their opinion, might help to "heal the society". They do not see any problem in the fact that some of those laws contradict the federal law, as they perceive the Islamic law as superior. This discrepancy is more and more visible in the socio-political life of the republics in the North Caucasus.

The statements by Ramzan Kadyrov constitute a good example of the typical attitude towards the federal law at the local political level. On one hand, Kadyrov emphasizes the importance of respecting the state law, i.e. the law of the Russian Federation, which Chechnya constitutes a part of (the President Kadyrov underlines and praises this belonging on every occasion). On the other hand, while speaking about the importance of Islam and of the Chechen tradition, Kadyrov emphasises that he is a Muslim and a Chechen. And those statements are not mere populism. The local *adats* – such as the tradition of bloody vengeance and the responsibility born by the parents for the acts committed by their (adult) children – are introduced in everyday life. Kadyrov officially declared on many occasions that the houses of the militants would be burned down, what has been and is still an ongoing practice in today's Chechnya. The parents and the relatives of the militants (or of the people recognized as militants by the defence and law enforcement institutions) are held responsible. Similarly, the Shari'a elements (or more precisely the Shari'a as understood in a local manner) are becoming binding orders introduced in everyday life – such as the injunction to wear the hijab by women



in the public buildings or the injunction to wear skirts by women, both of which contradict the federal laws. Even though those orders do not have a legally binding status, from an everyday life perspective it does not matter. For the simple fact that not respecting the orders or the “suggestions” of the authorities will be punished – in case of not wearing the hijab, the woman would not be allowed to enter the building, and in case of not wearing a skirt or in case of an “indecent” outfit – the woman would be admonished by the “guardians of morality” or would have her outfit stained with the paint from a paintball gun. There is obviously no evidence that those acts were not the acts of pure vandalism. What counts is that on the declaration level, Kadyrov backs up such acts and most probably even encourages them.

The Chechen Republic, being officially within the framework of the Russian Federation, remains in fact outside of the Russian legal order⁴⁹. The Ingush and Dagestani politicians speak less daringly than Ramzan Kadyrov about legal matters. It does not mean however that the federal law is observed on the territory of those republics.

In the North Caucasus we can hardly speak about clear legal orders and about the direct transposition of the written law into the social life.

We can even venture a statement that in the North Caucasus the law is not a value per se or the aim in itself⁵⁰ – it is rather a means to achieve that aim, a means in the fight for power.

An example of this kind of legal solution is the introduction of the zone of antiterrorist operation (the Russian acronym – KTO), defined in the Russian legislation in 1998 in the Act on counter-terrorism. Even though the war in Chechnya could easily qualify for the introduction of the state of emergency, in order to avoid the international consequences and the necessity to abide by the predefined procedures, the activities led

⁴⁹ See: http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PUNKT_WIDZENIA_13.pdf.

⁵⁰ See: <http://www.ej.ru/?a=note&id=8612>.



there since 1999 (the Second Chechen War) were called “the antiterrorist operation”. This name encompassed all the possible means and manners which could lead to the arrest of the terrorists and to avoid the terrorist attacks in order to minimise the risk for the civil population. The mere zone of the operation defines the territory on which the activities are carried out⁵¹. During the Second Chechen War, until 2009, the zone of antiterrorist operation spread throughout the entire territory of Chechnya. In Dagestan and Ingushetia, this regime has been introduced in different areas and at different times. The lawless zones were created in which the operations aimed at arresting terrorists were carried out within a span of a few hours, days or even months (and in case of Chechnya – within a few years). The inhabitants of the KTO zone had the access to their own village hindered, their IDs were controlled on many occasions, they were searched sometimes, or forced to give a bribe. We can perceive the KTOs as the zones of legal lawlessness, unlimited in time and content, where all the methods might be introduced and applied⁵².

The judiciary. In the north-Caucasian republics, the judiciary is exercised by the republican and federal courts. Without entering into the details of the division of the judicial bodies into constitutional, amicable or arbitration courts (there are some minor differences within the organization of the judiciary in every republic, but they do not matter from the perspective of the present study), I will focus on the social perception of the judiciary, as well as on the practices and strategies undertaken (or not undertaken) by the inhabitants regarding the judiciary.

In the North Caucasus, the courts are not believed to be independent and apolitical. From the perspective of an average citizen, to pursue one’s rights in courts does not have any sense and requires a lot of money for bribes for the prosecutors and judges, as well as a lot of time etc. It results that in case of any problems, including legal problems, an average citizen will – in the first place – try to sort things out through

⁵¹ See: http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/docs/law_980725.htm (“About the fight against terrorism” 1998: Article 3).

⁵² From the materials by Ieva Raubisko and http://www.fas.org/irp/world/russia/docs/law_980725.htm.



bribery or connections. Many crimes are not even reported, and different clans agree between themselves the amount to be paid by the family of the culprit to the family of the victim. The culprit (even in case of a murder) does not bear criminal responsibility.

In Chechnya, the reason for some people to turn to the courts is also such that if the case is not examined by the republican or federal court, then it might be directed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. It also happens that such persons are being intimidated. But in the majority of cases they win the case and receive quite a big compensation. That is why many people lodge an appeal against a sentence, appealing to a higher court, mainly in order to be able to prove before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg that the local judiciary does not function properly, is biased and is subordinated to the local authorities. There are many nongovernmental organizations, like Memorial, which help in lodging an appeal. Not all the cases of torture and intimidation are being reported, for fear of further persecutions. Often the information revealed before the courts or the human rights organizations are only those about the cases of kidnapping or murders. The cases of torture are often hidden away on the basis of cultural grounds, as the torture (especially that the cases of rape also take place) brings dishonour to the man. In order to regain his self-esteem, the man tries to avenge himself in some way on his torturers.

Some families, in which somebody has been kidnapped or tortured, try to seek, on their own, a way to reach their relatives, before they turn to the court or – at least – an organization like Memorial. Most often, the connections within the defence and law enforcement institutions, or the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB), are being used in the first place. It often happens that money or – even more often – a phone call to somebody of a higher rank lead to the release or buyout of an arrested person. It is difficult to estimate the number of such persons. In Chechnya, people terrorized by the Ramzan Kadyrov's regime, do not always report when their relatives go missing for fear of further persecutions for the rest of the family. In Dagestan on the other hand, where the activity of Memorial is limited (Materi Dagestana is another organization of that type active there), people lack this kind of competences to



undertake any action. I know myself of cases when a murder was not reported at all because of the lack of skills and because of the disbelief in any positive result.

In cases of kidnapping, torture and even assassination, the inquiries are not even opened or they are closed very quickly for “the lack of witnesses and evidence”.

Quite often a tortured person “pleads guilty” which is the reason for dropping the case. We can hardly speak of any statistical data – the basis for this kind of study and estimate are the field experiences and the statements of the persons whose loved ones were killed during tortures or who have been tortured themselves.

Here is a story of Zaripat, a twenty-four-year-old woman from Makhachkala, whose husband had been killed in March 2010.⁵³ She had received a phone call from the local department of ROVD summoning her to appear immediately at the militia station. After a lengthy interrogation, the woman was forced to sign the protocol stating that her husband had been involved in militants’ organizations even though he had nothing in common with the activities of that type. However, the woman was informed that, in case of refusing to sign the document, she would have problems. She had signed the document. After a few hours spent at the militia station, the dead body of her husband was handed over to her. She was informed that her husband had been killed as a result of a detonation of an explosive device. She was told to bury the body as quickly as possible. In the Muslim culture, the funerals usually take place on the very same day as the demise, before the sunset. The militiamen did not mean to respect the religious norms but to hide the marks of torture. The body had marks of heavy beating and cut wounds. The inquiry was most probably not even opened.

The woman did not turn to the court as she believed that any contact with the authorities would be senseless. She was certain that the accusations against her husband were false and she had a proof to confirm that he had not been killed as a result of a detonation of an explosive device. However, she did not take any action in order to pursue her rights. She did not report the case to any organization for human rights; she

⁵³ From personal studies, the names have been changed.



did not even know any and did not believe they could have helped. She did not have any idea how to pursue her rights in courts.

The militants in the North Caucasus are being killed “with no court judgment or inquiry”. Everything is in accordance with “the law” if the “evidence” gathered during the inquiry is sufficient to claim that the person was a militant. Eventually their bodies are usually bought out by the family members.

While browsing through the statistics regarding murders and kidnapping (on the Memorial webpage), we can see various scenarios. When the family of Zaur⁵⁴ realised that Zaur had not come back home, they sent immediately a telegram to the public prosecutor’s office in Dagestan and to the investigative services attached to the public prosecutor’s office of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Dagestan⁵⁵. They also informed the Centre for Human Rights “Memorial”. Four days later, the body of Zaur was found by the shepherds. The corpse had marks of torture and gunshots. The investigation regarding this case is just about to be opened.

We have to take into consideration the fact that those persons who turned to Memorial had competences and the information whom to address in such cases. It is nevertheless very difficult to estimate the extent of this phenomenon – because it is not clear how many cases there are similar to the one of Zaripat’s husband.

CUSTOMARY LAW

Adat is a word of Arabic origin meaning customary law, “an unwritten custom”. It is a word that had been adopted for defining all customary laws, as opposed to Shari’a – the Islamic law. Norms of *adat* differed amongst one another in all regions; every *tukhum*, and even every *teyp*, had its own *adat* rules⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ See: <http://www.memo.ru/hr/hotpoints/caucas1/index.htm>.

⁵⁵ See: Следственное управление Следственного комитета при прокуратуре РФ по Республике Дагестан.

⁵⁶ See: A. W. Komarow, *Adaty i sudoproizvodstvo po nim*, Makhachkala 2009.



Common features that can be enumerated are the following:

- *adat* rules were orders regulating the life of a given community, similar to a moral code;
- they regulated standards of behaviour and etiquette;
- they guarded common interests;
- *adat* was based on a precedence and later on the provisions of customary law codes. *Adat* rules were all the time adapted to the reality;
- they were based on decisions of a rural court or the entire *jamaat*. Agreements between parties, the so-called *maslihat*, were also common⁵⁷;
- *adat* rules were usually conveyed orally.

At the beginning, the inhabitants of Caucasus adjusted the Shari'a to their own *adats*, that is they overlooked those Shari'a laws that were unknown to them⁵⁸. *Adat* rules were more important in mountainous areas of Chechnya than in the lowlands where Shari'a became instilled faster.

Today, one of the elements of the customary law which is most often mentioned and is most associated with the customary law is the custom of blood feud as well as the custom of *maslihat*, i.e. reconciliation, that is related to it. Before the instatement of Soviet authority, among more popular *adats* in force were the "expulsion from the village community", killing women guilty of bringing shame on *tukhum* as well as the custom which functions until today - the kidnapping of fiancées. In contemporary times, the kidnapping usually takes place on the basis of a mutual agreement and is a culturally enrooted way of bypassing the expensive ceremony related to matchmaking. Due to the fact that this rite is contradictory to the Shari'a, it is more and more often criticised. In

⁵⁷ See: Karolina Podrucka, article on the website: www.kaukaz.net.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.



Chechnya, where after the war the kidnapping of women has become a plague, authorities are trying to limit it by imposing penalties.

The custom of blood feud consists in a collective responsibility of the entire clan/*teyp* for a murder. According to the custom, relatives of the victim can kill the murderer or, if he/she is dead or has escaped, someone from the murderer's closest family. The blood feud is considered as the heaviest burden that can fall upon a family or a clan, irrespective of the side of the conflict. Acts of blood feud are performed regardless of court judgements, which undoubtedly undermines the authority of the State and its courts.

On the other hand, however, it seems that in many cases this custom boils down to an institution which helps in reconciling the conflicted clans, that is the institution of *maslihat*. It is estimated that in Chechnya even up to 99% of unintentional homicides such as deaths in a car accident or accidents related to imprudent weapon handling are forgiven in the ceremony of reconciliation. In this sense, the custom of blood feud – although considered almost barbaric when seen from the outside – gains a very significant social dimension that cannot be achieved by a judgement of the federal law. Even though the institution of *maslihat* has a very positive social meaning, it undermines the authority of the State, which ceases to be the most important arbiter in such cases.

The custom of blood feud, deeply rooted in Vainakh tradition, has survived even throughout the Soviet era. It is particularly strong among Chechens and Ingush. It is also present in Dagestan, however in this republic the individual responsibility, related to Shari'a, is much more stressed.

NAMUS

The moral code of Dagestan was *namus*: one of the first, unwritten sources of law. It consisted of "a complex set of moral and ethical laws, rules and decisions regulating behaviour, preferences and manners"⁵⁹ in the everyday life of Dagestani people.

⁵⁹ See: R. Magomedow, *Wiekovye cennosti Dagestana*.



The word *namus* comes from Arabic and means "veneration" and "honour". The sense of the word can also be translated as "the law of nature". Each highlander of Dagestan treated *namus* as his/her moral ideal which determined their behaviour. Breaching of *namus* left a stain on one's honour and meant spiritual death, death in the society, which was considered worse than the physical death. *Namus* shaped one's character⁶⁰. Today, Dagestanis rarely refer to *namus* – however a set of rules, especially issues connected with honour and veneration, are still very important and are all the time stressed in the Dagestan society. In light of fast dissemination of Islam amongst Caucasian highlanders, Shari'a norms have gradually replaced ancient *adats*, including the *namus* moral code.

Many local *adats* still exist in everyday life – they are, however, so deeply rooted in the daily lives of people that no one analyses their origin or wonders whether that rule or another came from *adat* or Shari'a. Nevertheless, quick dissemination of Shari'a results in the fact that some of the past norms and *adats* are challenged and substituted with new, usually Islamic counterparts.

ISLAMIC LAW

The term Shari'a simply means Islamic law. Koran is one of the sources of Shari'a. Apart from Koran, the sources of Shari'a are: *sunna*, *kiyas* – making conclusions by analogy (it is applied when answers cannot be found in either Koran or *sunna*) and *ijma* – an unanimous agreement of scholars or the whole community concerning a given issue that cannot be solved on the basis of the previous three sources of law⁶¹.

Historically, the Shari'a law became best established in Dagestan (it did not mean, of course, the abandonment of local *adats*). Some of its norms endured the Soviet times and, although they were not directly called a religious law, they functioned in the daily life of communities. The renaissance of Shari'a in North Caucasus came along with the religious revival in the 1990s, war in Chechnya and increased influence of the reformist

⁶⁰ On the basis of Karolina Podrucka, www.kaukaz.net.

⁶¹ On the basis of: Danecki J., *Podstawowe wiadomości o Islamie*, vol. 1 and 2, Warsaw, 2002.



Islam. Now it seems that a re-establishment of Shari'a in the North-South Caucasus has taken place. Shari'a norms are becoming more and more popular among the inhabitants of Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia as the basis of legal and moral interpretation. Details of the Islamic law are being discussed on various websites, forums, etc.⁶² In August 2010, a Shari'a court was established in Petersburg. Its foundation caused an uproar. The founder, although he stressed the advisory nature of the institution, was sued. He was, however, granted the right to provide advisory services in accordance with a court judgement (the nature of the court's activity is officially described as "consultancy for Muslims").

Authorities of individual republics differ significantly in their positions towards the Shari'a. On numerous occasions, the president of Chechnya has underlined that he is "first and foremost a Muslim" and that he supports and partially introduces the Shari'a. In Ingushetia, certain legal norms of Shari'a (such as polygamy) were in force in the times of president Ruslan Aushev. The current president – Yevkurov – although not such a strong supporter of Shari'a as Aushev, does not preclude such a possibility. He admits that at present there are many Shari'a courts on the territory of Ingushetia which issue opinions, for example in cases concerning family life. People address these courts mainly in cases of fights, quarrels, divorces or division of land after the divorce. It is estimated that 80% of cases are eventually submitted to such courts. They may issue recommendations, however many persons respect the decisions of such courts and follow the instructions of Imams and other experts in Islamic law and place the judgements of Shari'a courts before the judgements of republican courts⁶³.

Up until recently, the Dagestan authorities have rejected the possibility of introducing religious norms into republican legislation, stating that religion is an individual matter of every human being. Gradually, however, as a result of pressure both from the Spiritual Board of Dagestan's Muslims as well as from the general public, Muslim, religious holidays are being announced as national holidays and more and more

⁶² See: e.g. www.islam.ru.

⁶³ See: <http://www.ingushetiya.ru/article/11.html>.



religious programmes are being broadcast in the republican media. Dagestani politicians have probably noticed that the grassroots islamisation is so advanced that the only way of regaining the lost social authority would be to open up for dialogue with the religious part of the society, including the Salafi movement.

For the last 10 years, elements of Shari'a have been introduced at the local level, independently from the position of national authorities. A good example here are the religious courts which formally do not exist but which, in fact, operate and are institutions which people in mountain villages address more often than the republican courts.

One of the examples of introducing Shari'a in North Caucasus that is often quoted is the crushing of the Dagestan's Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi enclaves in the Buynaksky District in 1999⁶⁴. In 1998, local Salafis proclaimed the establishment of the so-called "free Islam territory", which was controlled by paramilitary groups (similarly to militia they set up road checkpoints which decided who to let in or not). The case of this enclave is, of course, quite extreme. It ceased to exist with the outbreak of the second Chechen war.

Today, there are many enclaves in Dagestan which function according to the Shari'a; however they do not do it openly in order not to meet the fate of Karamakhi and Chabanmakhi.

Below, an example of ways of functioning and introducing of Shari'a norms at the local level in mountainous Dagestan is presented.

SHARI'A AULS

Introducing elements of Shari'a in Dagestan's *jamaats* (communities) as well as in Chechen and Ingush villages is becoming more and more frequent. It mainly consists in prohibiting the sale (and often the use) of alcohol and cigarettes, gambling, prostitution and sometimes requiring women to wear *hijabs*.

⁶⁴ Cf. http://www.osw.waw.pl/sites/default/files/PRACE_34.pdf.



The decision on introducing the Shari'a (or, more precisely, selected norms of Islamic law) is usually taken by the entire *jamaat* or village. It is connected not only with the wish of living according to the Islam but also, and maybe most of all, it constitutes an answer of the local community to the ineffectiveness of the State which is not capable of stopping the spread of crime, drug addiction and other social problems. "The project of alternative stabilisation", as referred to by Dmitri Makarov⁶⁵, is an attempt on arranging social life in such a way as to provide its participants with the sense of safety and order. "Shari'a communities" are also an attempt on creating a social space of clear rules of social coexistence and sufficiently strong control in order to protect the youth, at least partly, from the spread of undesirable social behaviours (such as drug addiction, prostitution or "misconduct" of girls). According to Makarov, Shari'a structures partially replaced the previously existing Party Committees (the so-called *partkoms*).

The norms of Islamic law are introduced both in communities classified as "traditional" and "Wahhabi" (irrespective of how it is sanctioned on the level of public discourse, such a division is completely senseless in everyday life because in many *auls* there are both supporters and opponents of both movements who are friends and who pray together in one mosque). Followers of the "pure" Islam (as Salafis refer to themselves) prefer not to display their viewpoint to strangers in fear for their and their families' life and safety. Unfortunately, kidnappings and arrests of such persons by the law enforcement entities are not uncommon (this subject, however, would require a separate description).

Inhabitants of Shari'a *auls* do not have separatist claims, they do not force their views onto neighbours. They live in a safe world of their own making. They wish to be left alone. Shari'a *auls* do not pose a direct threat to Dagestan official bodies; however they are a confirmation of the lack of authority of such bodies. If the central government tries to regain that authority by force, the inhabitants may fight in order to protect the social system they had created (just like in the case of the above-mentioned Kadar zone in Buynaksky District in 1999).

⁶⁵ See: Д.В. Макаров, *Опыт введения шариата на микро-уровне: пример дагестанского селения Кироваул*.



Gradual introduction of Islamic law norms proceeds without any major social conflicts, as it is widely supported, not only by the religious persons. Many of those who are not active religiously are in favour of the ban on drinking, smoking and gambling. Due to the fact that there is little proof that in the upcoming years Russian State will better protect the safety of its citizens, the bottom-up popularisation of Shari'a in Dagestan will continue to evolve.

Two, parallel legal orders are a clear evidence of the gap between the everyday law and the formal legal framework. The intertwining of legal orders also points to the fact that the federal law is not the only paradigm that should be taken into consideration when analysing the legal situation in Caucasus. It also seems that Kremlin does not have the capacity to force local authorities to respect the federal law, authorities which, although formally presenting themselves as the representatives of the states of Russian Federation, do not respect the federal law in many aspects, and even, like the president of Chechnya, openly oppose them, introducing their own norms and orders that are inconsistent with the Russian Federation's Constitution. This state of affairs, together with the bottom-up islamisation described in the chapter on religious life, pushes those republics further away from the rest of the federation, making them rely more on their "own laws", even though they declare that federal law has formal priority.



MEN AND WOMEN IN SOCIETIES OF NORTH CAUCASUS



During the last 20 years, relations between men and women have undergone abrupt changes. It is, therefore, difficult to talk about one pattern of relations, even within individual states. Competing visions and standards of behaviour, stemming both from the local *adats*, Shari'a as well as from norms propagated in the USSR era, constitute a mixture which is natural and comfortable for some, while others look for easy and clear guidelines that are offered, for example, by the Shari'a.

In Muslim societies there exist a number of stereotypes relating to men and women through which we also look at Chechen, Ingush and Dagestani women. At the same time, we tend to forget the obvious – that there is no one Islam – its shape depends on a given location and is not free from the influence of local cultures. In result, it is a mistake to look at the North Caucasus societies through the prism of religion, whose stereotypic vision is present in broadcasts from the Arab world. It turns out that rules which are being presented are often as strange to us as they are to Dagestani, Chechen



and Ingush women and men who, similarly to us, have learned about them quite recently from the media.

I am not saying, of course, that religion does not play a major role in relations between men and women – it is difficult, however, to separate religion from tradition in this case (as in Arab countries); it is difficult to divide rules determining the behaviour of individuals into those that come from religion and those stemming from tradition – as a result of centuries of clashing of Islam, Christianity (mainly in the golden era of Georgia in the 12th century) and pagan beliefs, religious patterns blended with the local models of behaviour. On the other hand, Soviet modernisation, the accompanying Soviet emancipation and an increased participation of women in public life, are processes which have had an enormous impact on the current relations between the representatives of both sexes on the territory of North Caucasus and the entire former USSR. Despite partial discrediting (although not that significant as it would seem from the Polish perspective) of the former regime, models that were promoted and implemented back then are patterns to which the representatives of the middle generation relate to this day. On the one hand, the era of the Soviet Union resulted in erosion of traditional systems, but on the other it created such a wide platform of understanding, common goals and ideals that – even though almost 20 years have passed from its fall – they still have a significant influence not only on the social and political life but also on family relations, including ones between men and women. It is impossible, therefore, to look at modern societies of the North Caucasus without considering the modernisation processes of the USSR and the period that came directly after. The return to “ancient traditions” could be observed in all republics – in the majority of cases, after around 10 years, this process became less pronounced. For some, the old traditions have become an element of folklore, an addition, curiosity, for others - a way of living. It has to be mentioned that many Chechens have found out about the modern facts on the “old Vainakh traditions” quite recently – either from numerous ethnographic publications prepared by Soviet ethnographers or from television programmes made on the basis of these publications.



If we describe the prohibitions and injunctions relating to women which, at least in the sphere of declarations, function in North Caucasus, these societies will seem (from our perspective of course) backward and extremely patriarchal. Women will be viewed as completely obedient towards their husbands or brothers, having no say. Especially, when the women themselves – at least at the level of declarations - confirm this state of affairs.

Surely, the system of norms which are in force in individual Caucasian societies is quite varied and sometimes completely different from European notions. I will try to present selected norms and rules that are important for the daily lives of people in contemporary Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia, with the provision that as far as in the relatively homogenous Vainakh societies the sphere of declarations is quite coherent, the Dagestani society, divided into several ethnic groups, has not developed common standards apart from those stemming from the religion. Other, based on local traditions, vary from one ethnic group to another and need to be separately discussed. Instead, I will try to stress both the more detailed differences and some common features of the lives of men and women in these societies.

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S CLOTHING





In all three republics the clothing of both men and women is extremely important. Clothes and jewellery are an element of social status in Caucasus; expensive and elegant (although it is an elegance, of course, different from ours) dresses or suits convey prestige. A stranger dressed in "ordinary" clothes is something unusual and shocking. Some might ask whether s/he is poor. Does s/he earn so little that s/he can't afford more expensive clothes? Women spend a lot on clothes. It is not rare to see women buying dresses for the equivalent of PLN 300-400, even if their income is low (PLN 1 000). Shoes are also important – despite the dust and mud on the streets, Caucasian women try to keep their shoes clean by cleaning and wiping them on every occasion. In Chechnya, there is even a custom of cleaning guest's shoes. Young men and women care a lot about their looks – they try to look as best as possible, they pay a lot of attention to their clothes and makeup. It sometimes happens that everyday clothes do not differ much from the ones wore during weddings or other ceremonies.

Both in women's and men's fashion black (especially in Chechnya) and white are the dominating colours. Jewellery is important – men very often give it to women (especially before the wedding). In Chechnya gold is particularly valued, as well as other expensive ornaments which are the symbol of social status. The majority of women wear skirts (of different length, however miniskirts are rare). In Chechnya it is even a requirement, although informal, and it is truly hard to see a woman wearing trousers. Women's dress code (a skirt of appropriate length and a headscarf) also applies in schools, universities, and public offices. A women without a scarf simply will not be let in. There have also appeared "guardians of morality" in the streets – they are usually persons from the Spiritual Board of Muslims who come up to women who are, in their opinion, inappropriately dressed and try to talk to them and convince them (usually in a delicate and cultural manner). They stress the value of modest clothing, purity, they encourage women to pray and live in agreement with the faith.

Nevertheless, women dressed "inappropriately" have faced persecution and insulting remarks. In 2009 and 2010, there were cases of spilling paint (shooting with paintball guns) on women who, according to the attackers, were dressed not modestly



enough⁶⁶. It may not be personal persecution, it is true, however, that some women, in particular those not supporting the policy of Ramzan Kadyrov, feel threatened and humiliated. The policy of terror and the lack of public debate on this kind of problems result in the fact that many women are afraid to voice their opinions. Eventually, regardless of religious preference and own wishes, the majority of women adapt to the requirements of the society.

WOMEN AND MEN VS. THE NATION AND MORALITY

The new, statutory dress code introduced by the president Ramzan Kadyrov is one of the elements of disciplining women to the best interest of the nation⁶⁷. Another feature is the fact of presenting the Chechen woman as a mother and wife which the well-being on the entire nation depends on and thanks to which Chechens will maintain their traditions. What is particularly stressed is the loss of tradition as a result of two Chechen wars. The "moral" Chechen women are the incarnation of that tradition. Thus, in a sense, women became the first victims of the "return" to Chechen traditions⁶⁸ - this is how it looks like from our perspective. A number of persons, including women, support such a policy, seeing positive values in president Kadyrov and his actions.

Chechen television stations often broadcast programmes which say what women are allowed to do and what their "duties" and goals are. Although I do not have the necessary statistical data, everyday observations of life in Chechnya show that many people not only watch these programmes but also relate to the values promoted in them. Programmes, posters, new Chechen Women's Day – these types of activities make women feel appreciated but also - disciplined.

Women in Chechnya and Caucasus in general are all the time under pressure of being good wives and mothers. It is easy to notice that the majority of women working in NGOs and women who are professionally active are either unmarried women or

⁶⁶ See: <http://www.inosmi.ru/social/20100928/163245424.html>.

⁶⁷ More on disciplining in: Falkowski M., Kaliszewska I., *Matrioszka w hidżabie. Reportaże z Dagestanu i Czeczenii*, Warsaw 2010.

⁶⁸ See: <http://www.inosmi.ru/social/20100915/162954361.html>.



divorcees and widows. I also met a woman who was left by her husband because she didn't take care of the house enough. It is possible that Kadyrov's activities aim at "returning to tradition", rebuilding the nation, etc. It is clear, however, that such actions are a threat to personal dignity and self-esteem of many women.

As part of the returning to tradition in Chechnya the so-called *nokhchalla* is also mentioned. *Nokhchalla* comes from the word *Nokhcho*, which means 'a Chechen'; it is a term that incorporates both the traits considered inherent to the Chechen character as well as standards of behaviour. It is a sort of a moral code. A code of honour of a man, a knight, a defender of the nation, a gentleman and a guardian⁶⁹. It is important to add that the word *Nokhchi* itself already contains a heavy emotional load. Is someone behaves inappropriately, Chechens can make him behave himself by saying: "Are you a Chechen or not?"

Not only does evoking such elements of tradition suggest a wish of disciplining the nation but it also helps people to believe that despite the general opinion and the fall of tradition, as well as the demoralisation of the society due to war, everything can change for the better, that both in religion and in tradition there are some values and guidelines on how to live.

EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY STUDIES

In North Caucasus there is an enormous gap in the level of education and the mindset between the young adults and the middle generation. Persons aged 50-60 are usually well-educated, they were professionally active (both men and women) and often went abroad in relation to their job. They have at least the general knowledge on politics and current events in the world and history. On the other hand, young persons aged 18-25, in particular women, seldom go outside the territory of their republics. Many of them do not even have the secondary school final exam. Very few young girls from rural areas or smaller towns study at a university.

⁶⁹ See: <http://www.chechen-republic.com/ochechncah/613-tradicii.html>.



It is not reflected in statistical data because formal graduation, receiving a diploma, is not matched with actual graduation. Buying of diplomas and secondary school final exam certificates is a common practice in Dagestan. I am familiar with cases of giving a diploma in one's dowry. As a result diplomas (even ones obtained fairly) of Dagestan universities are not (actually, not formally) accepted in other parts of Russia and are often disregarded when accepting someone for a job. As a consequence, persons who truly want to learn go to Moscow (or other Russian cities) or, if they wish to obtain Islamic education, to Arab countries. Mostly men leave. Young girls are rarely allowed to go abroad alone.

“FEMININE” AND “MASCULINE” JOBS

There are many gender-determined jobs. There are also many jobs that are not appropriate for women. Some, on the other hand, do not benefit men.

Nowadays, the “perfect” job for a woman is one in the budgetary sector: as a school or kindergarten teacher, at the post office or any other public office. If a husband can support his family, he usually prefers his wife to stay at home and look after their children.

Women, especially young women, should not work, for example, any “road jobs” or travelling related jobs, such as: driver, waitress, casino worker (recently forbidden) or club worker. This is related to the fact that such professions expose women to contacts with men. Therefore, women working such jobs are considered as “easy” and “available”. Artists, especially singers, have the same reputation. On the one hand, they are admired and adored by many and, on the other hand, they are rarely considered as good candidates for a wife, unless for the second wife. Much has changed since the time of the USSR. While at that time parents or grandparents had no objections to their daughter becoming a singer, today nobody encourages girls to this job (unless it is outside the republic) – often not because of religious beliefs but for fear of difficulties in giving their daughter away in a marriage.



Since the collapse of the USSR the number of women taking up work has also changed. Therefore, while present grandmothers and mothers raised and acculturated in the USSR usually have had professional experience, sometimes related to travelling to other parts of the empire, today, lots of young married girls stay at home, rarely travelling in the country or even the republic. Many of them have no profession or skills beyond those gained at home.

Such situation can be justified both by the labour market problems, very low salaries in the budgetary sector (from the household perspective, it is more cost-effective for the husband to support the family since the wife's income is quite poor), and the impact of stereotypical opinions about Arabic countries (i.e. a rich husband supporting his wife or wives who have no worries besides raising their children).

Lots of women, having a chance for a low salary at most, decide to stay at home, especially as it is positively valued by the society. The problem arises when a woman is left alone – either after a divorce or the husband's death. At first, she receives help from her family but in time she has to find a job – usually due to the lack of qualifications it is a hard and low prestigious work, e.g. at the marketplace.

In the North Caucasus there are also many “unmanly” and non-prestigious jobs that do not “befit” men or are worked by a man only if one is forced to. For example, men rarely work at marketplaces. Azeris living in the south of Dagestan, who culturally are traders, are the exception to the rule (Mountain Jews also used to be traders but they mostly moved to Israel). During the crises related to the collapse of the USSR in the Caucasus (as in many other places in the world in crisis moments) women were those who tried their luck at marketplaces, also in the neighbouring Azerbaijan. Work at a marketplace is regarded as hard and non-prestigious (especially for a subordinate worker). Men also rarely work at shops – with the exception of shops with audiovisual equipment and mobile phones. In certain regions of Dagestan work at the construction site is also considered non-prestigious – it is determined by the tradition. Construction works were most often performed by hired workers or, in former times, slaves. Such works did not benefit people from the respected families (the so-called *uzdeni*). However,



worsening of the economic situation forced men to work also at construction sites. Thereby, due to the lack of volunteers, these are well-paid jobs. In order to avoid being “ridiculed”, men try to find jobs in the neighbouring regions or republics (e.g. in Chechnya where there is a high demand for construction and reconstruction workers). Dagestani often work at construction sites in Moscow or other Russian cities.

In Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia renovation works inside the house, such as walls whitening or stucco work are often performed by women. Such work is considered easy and women are regarded as more reliable.

Men often work as taxi drivers, suppliers, TiR drivers in Russia, and *marshrutka* (share taxi) drivers. This is the most popular work to be performed by men. Many of them work in a similar way in Moscow in taxi corporations.

In recent years, work in militia has also been considered as low-prestigious. Moreover, due to the more and more common assassinations, it is a dangerous and low-paid job. In order to support their family, a militiaman in Dagestan has to take bribes or be involved in “additional” activity. Although the officers’ salaries are determined at the general Russian level, part of the income goes not to the militiamen but to their superiors. As a result, personnel selection in militia is very negative – everybody tries to find (or buy) another possible position. Although militiamen are the main victims of radicals’ attacks and are considered to be representatives of “the kaffir country” (the country of atheists), it is not true that only atheists work in militia. Lots of militiamen are believers who have taken up this work not because of ideology but for economic reasons or due to the lack of appropriate education.

On the other hand, many men – especially from Dagestan and from poor families - join the army. Military conscription in Chechnya has been controversial for a long time. At present, this problem is partially solved since the military service is no longer compulsory. Military service, as opposed to work in militia, is usually well-received by the society. It is considered to be the way for a boy to become a man, learn to shoot and gain new experience. Obviously it does not mean that introducing military units into e.g.



Dagestan is supported by the society – quite the contrary. These two facts, however, are not connected by the public.

It is much easier for men to choose their profession. However, they are obliged to support their families. High social demands concerning living standards, house equipment, cars or mobile phones force men to earn a lot of money, sometimes even beyond their capacity. Care for children, also adult ones, intention to give them away in a marriage, send them to the university, or build houses for them require further expenditures. Young scholars are in a difficult situation – the salary of a doctor or a professor is too low to support Caucasian family. Therefore, many of them hold two or three posts.

Young men from poor families have no chance to get married if they are unable to provide a proper financial status for their wives – either on their own or with their relatives' help. This causes lots of social problems. Surviving is not a problem in the Caucasus since it is relatively easy to find a low-paid job. The problem is the demand for a certain living standard. Although the situation in the North Caucasus may not be justified only by economic problems, this argument is reasonable since the economic demands are much higher in this part of Russia than anywhere else. As a result, the ranks of militants do not consist of people who have no food to eat or no place to live but of young men from poor families, often uneducated and unskilled, who are incapable of earning money for a house or marriage with their part-time jobs. Without perspectives, yet surrounded by other people's wealth, they see justice only in the state of Allah.

MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND POLYGAMY

Girls get married quite early, especially in Chechnya where cases of 15-16 years old girls getting married are relatively common. Usually, however, a girl gets married in the North Caucasus in the age of 19-20. Girls older than 25 are subject to hard family pressure for getting married. In Dagestan a family tries to give away a daughter or a son in a marriage with someone from the same village or at least region and nation. Therefore, one may speak of a relatively high degree of endogamy, especially in the villages where marriages between first cousins happen (marriages between second



cousins are a standard). On the contrary, in Chechnya and Ingushetia marriages with members of the same family are not well-received. It is not even advisable to marry a member of the same *teyp*, although in the case of large *teyps* this rule is not obeyed (also because of the fact that a *teyp* lost its meaning as a basic unit of the social system – see the part on social divisions).

Lots of marriages (especially in Dagestan) are arranged. Parents and relatives search the best match within the family or friends, and the meeting is arranged⁷⁰. Great occasions to meet the future husband or wife are wedding receptions and any other holidays. It is quite common to meet future spouses via Internet, to be precise - via ICQ message programmes (*Gadu-Gadu* equivalents). Young people communicate with each other, call each other, and send their pictures. This is how marriages between local people and people working in other Russian cities or abroad (men usually) are arranged.

Sometime later Internet or phone friends meet, usually in a larger group of friends. Then, families are informed about the acquaintance and next meetings are arranged in the relatives and friends presence. There are several such meetings before the wedding (some are aimed at discussing wedding and financial matters). If future spouses come from various parts of Russia, it happens that they meet only once before the wedding.

Weddings are usually organised when the family can afford it. Quite often that is the time when the search of “the other half” just begins. Wedding involves large expenditures – it is usually organised for 500-700 guests. Rented wedding halls look like hangars. This tradition is still observed in Dagestan especially (in most cases alcohol is also served at weddings there). In the post-war Chechnya wedding receptions tend to be simpler (although there also happen splendid parties for the entire family and village). They are organised at houses more often than in Dagestan, and alcohol is usually not served.

⁷⁰ For more information about marriage, wedding ceremonies and receptions in Dagestan see MA Dissertation of Karolina Rzemieniuk (Dulęby), 2007, records of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Warsaw.



Salafis objected to loud wedding receptions and, most of all, to all wedding receptions with alcohol and music, since they believed that such customs do not conform to Islamic norms. Generally, Salafis do not participate in such parties. Their weddings are organised in accordance with “Islamic” rules – without music (only religious songs are recited/ sung) and without alcohol. An appropriate outfit is also required – women must wear skirts or high-neckline dresses and scarves. Such a change in the local wedding tradition causes lots of stress within the family that would want “a normal” wedding for their children and, most of all, relatives who could not imagine a party without vodka or dancing (this problem still exists in Dagestan where apart from a very religious part of the society there are many people or even entire *jamaats* of people who do not go to mosques or pray regularly).

Many marriages in the North Caucasus are not registered in ZAGS (Registry Office). Weddings are organised only in the presence of Mullah and witnesses. Why is it so? It is connected to, *inter alia*, the growing significance of Islam for the society of the North Caucasus, decrease of the state prestige, lack of obligation, unwillingness to change documents (involving corruption), and tradition – wedding is an important ritual for the society, not the very act of contracting marriage. It is the wedding that legitimises the relationship in the community. Even if performed, the procedure of registering marriage in ZAGS is treated as a formality. The wedding ceremony is carried out by a Mullah (who sometimes is invited to the wedding reception with a ZAGS clerk). Usually, there are also two witnesses present. Moreover, contracting marriage in ZAGS is often considered to be an additional trouble in case of divorces that are quite common. I also met irreligious people (in cities) who decided to have Islamic wedding since they were not sure if they can make it work for life or wanted to “try” to live with each other. By doing this, they satisfied their family and their community of relatives and neighbours and, in the case of divorce, they avoided lots of formalities.

Young married couples, especially those living outside cities, usually do not live on their own. They often live at husband’s parents – at least for certain period of time (until their own house is built). Young married women have lots of new responsibilities – both to their husbands and, probably first of all, to his family. Young women in the



North Caucasus complained to me about being treated by men as servants after the wedding. They have to fulfil their commands, as well as commands of their mother-in-law. Husbands usually do not stand up for their wives. In general, the youngest son stays with his parents while the older children try to build their own houses (sometimes at the neighbouring plot).

Most of the household responsibilities fall on the young married women and on women in general. Men practically do not help in households, even when they do not work. Performing house works by a man is considered “unmanly” or insulting his dignity. A man washing dishes or vacuum-cleaning would be mocked by his friends. Especially such works as bringing water or throwing out litter are regarded as typically feminine. This custom is so deep-rooted that men who live alone throw out litter in the evenings so that nobody could see them.

Women also shop; men often take them to the marketplace. Women are also in charge of all repair and renovation works at the house.

Unemployed men, if they do not find seasonal job, stay at home watching television or play in *nardy* (backgammon), a game popular in the North Caucasus. If they have a car, they usually give a lift to their friends or family or they try to make money as (unofficial) taxi drivers. Sometimes they look after their children. However, they do not change or bathe them. In accordance with the Chechen customs, a father should not hug his children in the presence of other people (it does not apply to a grandfather, however).

Most of men have driving licence (it can be easily bought in the Caucasus). There are few women drivers, however. Generally, they are educated women from cities, conducting their own business activity. In the country it is rare to see a driving woman.

Unfortunately domestic violence is a quite common phenomenon. There are various reasons for it, same as everywhere else. There are also cases of rapes within marriage. While young women often decide to leave their husbands in the case of beating, if children are born most of mothers are afraid of losing them (or staying alone



with children) and they bear insults and beatings. At present, there are several organisations⁷¹ women can turn for help to. However, asking for “external” help is not well-received, and the woman is not always supported by her family in seeking a divorce.

Polygamy is not a common phenomenon in the North Caucasus. In spite of early acceptance of Islam, it was a rare and strange practice in Dagestan. It was more frequent among the Chechens and the Ingush on exile (they were sent into exile to Kazakhstan in 1944 by Stalin for the alleged collaboration with the Nazi). It was said that the clergymen encouraged to marrying as many wives as possible so that the nation could survive. This institution was “revived” again after the collapse of the USSR and the increase of Islamic impact that clearly foresees the possibility of having up to four wives providing – what has to be stated – that they are all treated equally and that the husband can support them all. Polygamy is not approved by women but it is more and more accepted by the society. In Ingushetia it was even legalised for a short period of time by president Aushev. It is also well-received by the president of Chechnya Ramzan Kadyrov. The unlawfulness of polygamy with federal law is insignificant since, as it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, relationships are hardly ever certified.

At first, polygamy was popular among the rich who could afford to support several wives. With time, polygamy was an “excuse” for other types of illegitimate relationships. It should be stated that such relationships did not last long. They were more than enough similar to the institution of mistresses⁷², known to us, especially popular among travelling men who used to live for years in two relationships – with a “real” wife in the Caucasus and the “additional” one in Russia. Usually, both women did not know about each other. Moreover, it has to be pointed out that being unfaithful to one’s wife is generally accepted by the society, and sometimes even by the wife.

⁷¹ For example: Лига защиты матери и ребенка, ДРООП Психея.

⁷² See Falkowski M., Kaliszewska I. *Matrioszka w hidżabie. Reportaże z Dagestanu i Czeczenii*, Warsaw, 2010.



Irrespective of individual cases and Islamic consent, marriage with the second wife is usually regarded as "a man's whim" and is rarely approved by the community.

The difference between the second wife and a mistress is that, in accordance with Islam, it is more and more common to take a widow, a woman with children or a woman abandoned by a man as the second wife in order to help and support her. Such a phenomenon has lately occurred also in the Caucasus. Obviously, it is not frequent. In one of the Makhachkala mosques the local Mullah performs matchmaking – women who would like to become second wives apply to him and the Mullah announce it during a sermon, encouraging men to second marriage.

Lot of women approve such an idea – chances to get married after turning 35 years old are usually small, and this institution enables her to give birth to a child. The Mullahs emphasise that Islam approves taking such a woman as a second wife. As a result, this idea becomes more and more respected by the society (as opposed to the above-mentioned polygamy that is rather considered man's whim).

DIVORCES AND DIVORCED WOMEN

Divorces are quite frequent in the North Caucasus. There are no statistical data on this subject since many marriages and divorces are not certified. However, there are a lot of young divorced women and men. There are many reasons for divorces – same as everywhere else. The most common one is the mismatch of partners who had seen each other 2-3 times before they got married. Generally, couples divorce in the first year of marriage. Contrary to what is believed, a girl has no difficulties in getting married for the second time. The only difference is that her second husband should also be divorced. Rarely does the family give consent for the divorced daughter to marry a boy who had no wife before. Divorces during the first year of marriage may be surprising from our perspective. However, such marriages are often equivalent to our premarital relationships that also sometimes do not last forever. In accordance with Islam, that intermingles with people's lives more and more, in order to get a divorce one has to say "I will divorce you" three times. If these words are said in anger and the couple still wants to live together, according to the religion, it is required to marry somebody else at



least for a one day. Only then the couple may get married again (after waiting 3 months to check if there is no child from the second marriage).

In Dagestan children stay with their mother after the divorce, in Chechnya, however, they stay with their father (if they are very young they live with their mother at the beginning and they will be taken by their father later) and the mother may visit them. If by any chance children had stayed at their mother's, the father would take them back when the woman decides to get married again. If children stayed with their mother and she gets married again they live with the family for the first six months. Later, if the new husband approves it the children are taken to the new family.

From our perspective, the idea of leaving children with their father may seem strange or even barbarian. However, from the cultural point of view it is reasonable since it is extremely difficult for a woman with a child to get married for the second time. This problem does not apply to men.

A divorced woman has a special status in the North Caucasus. Although in general she comes back to her family home and shares certain restrictions with unmarried women, she still has more freedom, especially in urban agglomerations. The truth is that this status means lots of freedom – also sexual – since nobody expects her to be a virgin. Divorced women are attractive to very young men who would gain sexual experience for the sake of prestige among friends. They are aware of the fact that not many unmarried women would agree to a carefree relationship. However, they do not treat relationships with divorced women “seriously”, and the women are fully aware of this.

Adat, Shari'a, television, as well as models from Moscow have influence on the relations between men and women. It may seem that the ongoing islamisation would cause further limitations of women's rights and professional development. On the one hand, the propagated model of an unemployed mother and wife make women enter such a role. On the other hand, Islam, in accordance with Koran, may be a tool of emancipation of women – as strange as it may sound. Apparently, some women believe that the liberation from patriarchal rules of the North Caucasian societies would be the conscious acceptance of Islam that – against stereotypes common in the western



societies – may be the source of emancipation. Islamic rules binding women – although different from Christian interpretation – provide women with more rights than rules of the Dagestani or Vainakh societies.



CONCLUSIONS

Everyday life is not an easy discussion material, especially everyday life in three different Caucasian republics. Because of the religion, *teyp*/family structure and, most of all, the fact of functioning within one country we can see more similarities than differences. The latter are hidden and not so easy to classify or explain. It is incredibly difficult to confront field experiences and own research with other people's research due to the lack of studies on cultural anthropology or sociology (with several exceptions⁷³) and quite old statistical data⁷⁴. As a result, research and observations presented above, with the exception of factographic data taken from books and scientific studies, are subjective.

The description presented herein is generally based on the ethnographic research and observations. Methodology of qualitative research, on the one hand, enables to investigate the society in question and to get to know its rules. It provides information about actual and declarative social divisions or the relations with the state. At the same time, even long-term field ethnographic research enable the description of certain part of reality – the one you learn most about. On this basis one may generalise, although there is always a risk of extrapolation of a local particular feature to the entire diverse region.

Refugees continue to come to Poland and other European countries. Their direct motivation was not analysed in this description. According to the description of the economic situation, the poor financial situation is only one of the reasons for emigration of the North Caucasus inhabitants. Economic reasons are of course significant, especially among the Chechens who are supported by a large Diaspora in Europe. In spite of many discomforts and difficulties in applying for refugee status, they would rather start a new

⁷³ Ethnographic research in Chechnya and Ingushetia in 2000 were conducted by: Ieva Raubisko, Ekaterina Sokirianskaia. In Dagestan: Jurij Karpov, Katija Kapustina and, although it was a short research, – Enver Kisrijew and many of the Dagestani scientists – however, they used to work at material culture.

⁷⁴ From the national census in 2002 the results of the new census will be available in May 2011.



life in Europe than work hard in Moscow or in Siberia. Defined migration routes are significant for making decisions on migration. For example, only few Dagestani and Ingush leave the country although the situation in both republics is unstable at present and, theoretically speaking, it could result in immigration to the West.

Additionally, it has to be stated that while Chechens consider the West in a quite positive way (sometimes even idealised, similar to the Polish myth of America), most of Dagestani perceive the West as their “enemy”. It results from the media campaign accusing western countries of the destabilisation in the North Caucasus (the alleged support for fighters in order to “destroy Russian enemy”), models transferred from the Islamic world and – most of all – difficulties in travelling abroad. The inhabitants of the North Caucasus are much more often refused to get their visas (despite the official invitations) than people from other regions of the Russian Federation.

There are also not many international non-governmental organisations in the North Caucasus. It is connected to the difficulties with Russian authorities, disinformation on the situation in the region, as well as the policy of western countries towards Russia. Such situation is one of the reasons for further isolation of the North Caucasian republics, the inhabitants of which more and more often perceive the Islam state as the only way to development and stabilisation. If the situation in the North Caucasus does not change soon, it is possible that the above-mentioned Islamic state will be *de facto* established, not *de iure*. And only 3000 km from the borders of the European Union.



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