

THE VIEWS AND LAICISM TENDENCIES OF AZERBAIJANI ENLIGHTENERS ON STATE-RELIGION RELATIONS IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

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Abstract. There were different philosophical ideas about the religion-state, ruler and personality relations in Western Europe and the Islamic world in the East. When enlightenment emerged in Azerbaijan, Islam dominated all spheres of public life. Religion was the mainstay of state institutions at that time. From this period, the struggle began between the scholastic conservative religious and secular thinking. During this period, the views of the first generation of enlightened philosophers and thinkers on Islamic-state relations were loyal. Abbasgulu Agha Bakikhanov (1794-1847) spoke about the problem of interrelation of state, ruler, Islam, national and religious identity, Mirza Shafi Vazeh (1794-1852) about public administration, just, despotic shah, enlightened ruler, Islamic issues, and Mirza Kazimbey (1802-1870) about imam, Islam, ijthihad, ruler and religious reforms in the state, and studied the development trends from scholasticism to secularism.

Keywords: enlightenment, state, religion, intelligence, national and religious identity, just shah, enlightened ruler, public administration, imam, Islam.

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1. Introduction

During the period of enlightenment, new intellectuals — philosophers, secular thinkers, theologians, travelers and scientists — emerged in the West who revolutionized the worldview. In the 17th and 18th centuries, countries with a large number of enlighteners in Europe were called "republics of scientists". Attitude towards other cultures, religions, including the Muslim world and Islam, varied during this period. Some of the enlightened intellectuals were indifferent, while others were openly hostile.

"The Islamic world was a remote place for Western Europe. Europeans considered it far from their civilization. "Islamic world" meant a region where Islam was the dominant religion and was ruled by a Muslim ruler" (Kelsay, 2004, p.169).

In the enlightenment philosophy of the 18th century, the Western system of values was based on a citizen who could change the world for the better with the help of intelligence. Religion did not oppress them. In addition, for the Muslim world at that time, the state and the ruler whose powers were legitimized by religion were in the first place, and the people were subject to all his decisions.

In the Western European enlightenment, the idea on the Islamic world was formed that the close unity of Muslims is based on religion. As if ultimately, religious fanaticism seems to hinder the development of science, philosophy and art, as well as the development of their states. And the single Christian source united theologians and

secular intellectuals in the West. Even at that time, there was no unity among enlightened intellectuals on the issue of equality of all people. However, the enlighteners fought for freedom, opposed fanaticism and intolerance, and sought to win over the rulers. Western enlightened philosophers dreamed of a religion that combined science, morality, civic duty (At-Tveijush, 2009, p.43) and freedom, and wanted such a religion to be based on common sense and logic.

Enlightenment, considered the age of intelligence in the West, spread throughout the world, the Islamic and Turkic-Muslim world, including Azerbaijan.

Islamic scholars, who claim that enlightenment in Islam originated before the West and is related to the word "*enlighten, light*", show that this word "*is used a hundred times in the Qur'an*".

"*Enlightenment*" as a philosophical term was used to express liberal tendencies with humanist, logical and scientific grounds that emerged in Europe in the 16-17th centuries. For the first time, the German philosopher I. Kant used the term "*enlightenment*". European enlightenment sought to liberate civilization from the supremacy of the church and superstition. The idea of enlightenment is divided into three categories - the concepts of intelligence, nature and progress. Enlightenment was hostile to the church, the state and fanaticism.

In Islam, enlightenment-light appeared in the 6th century and spread to the West and the East. The European enlightenment fought against the despotism of the church and the suffocation of the mind, although no such thing had happened in Islamic civilization.

The church, its moral, financial, political, scientific despotism opposed political and social reform. "*Islamic enlightenment liberated the mind from the psychology of slavery. The enlightenment of mind and heart is obtained through faith in God and knowledge*". (At-Tveijush, 2009, p.44).

Political, socio-economic and cultural-moral conditions that created enlightenment in Azerbaijan in the 18-19th centuries raised the enlightened intellectuals of this period. Describing clearly the interrelation and interaction of the political, socio-economic and cultural-moral development of this period, academician Firudin Kocharli wrote:

"Changes in socio-economic and political life made a serious renovation in the moral and cultural life of the people, and in a real sense, caused to an intellectual awakening, a national renaissance. The masses of people, condemned by the Middle Ages to moral stagnation and mental inertia, began to awake and realize themselves. It was a period of national renaissance, formation of a new culture as a whole and the growing of democratic-minded intellectuals" (Kocherli, 1990, p.7).

As you know, although enlightenment appeared in the history of social and philosophical thought in Azerbaijan in the 18th century, the roots of enlightenment ideas date back to very ancient times. In fact, the enlighteners did not criticize the essence of Islam, but some clerics, men of god, despotic rulers and officials. F.Alakbarli's opinion drew attention so that from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th, a more serious turn in the attitude towards local-scholastic-dogmatist Islam began: "*Gradual opposition of some thinkers of that time to those misuse the religion by adopting "Islamic culture" as a whole was heroic back then. In this sense, we see those who oppose local-scholastic-dogmatic Islam as secular-innovative, free-spirited supporters of Islam (A.A.Bakikhanov, G.Zakir, S.Nigari). In the early days, the latter showed in their works that the cause of any backwardness (ignorance, etc.) in the Eastern Islamic world and the opposer of any kind of renovation was not Islam or Eastern Islamic culture, but simply ... dishonest clerics, mujtahids mullahs or oppressive despotic officials"* (Alakbarli, 2018,

pp.93-97) (also rulers). However, according to the political concept of Islam, the ruler is responsible to the people and the community, and the people, in turn, have the right to express their distrust of the ruler.

Research methodology. The article uses general scientific analysis, synthesis, systematization, generalization and comparative methods, descriptive and critical, historical, systematic, socio-cultural and comparative approaches.

2. The problem of the state, ruler-Islamic relations, and the unity of national and religious identity

Bakikhanov criticized despotic rulers who monopolized Islam and sought to discipline them through enlightenment. He wanted Islam and the state to be a phenomenon of interrelation and unity. And the ruler misused Islam to keep the people obedient. However, *"the state is necessary to support order in the world, and this is necessary to support order in religion"* (Karimov, 1986).

Islam and Islamic rule aim to put an end to cruelty and injustice. In an Islamic state, there is no supremacy other than divine laws.

According to Bakikhanov, *"despotic rulers distance Islam from progressive traditions with their negative actions. Arbitrariness and ignorance are observed in Muslim countries thanks to hypocritical theologians and despotic rulers who support them"* (Bakikhanov, 2005).

Bakikhanov created the image of a just ruler in his poem "Hagg soz" and showed that such rulers care about the people, the state, religion, which is the basis of the state, and separate the world and religious affairs. *"Bakikhanov was in favor of separating world affairs from religious ones in state policy. Undoubtedly, the term "world affairs" here refers to solution of the socio-political, military, etc. problems of the material world"* (Alakbarli, 2018, p.152).

Bakikhanov recommended that it should be based on consultation, action, truth, honesty, reason in world and religious affairs, and underlined the importance of teaching secular sciences along with religious ones.

Comparing Western and Eastern cultures, Bakikhanov preferred Eastern Islamic culture unlike the desire of Azerbaijani enlighteners to become Europeanized; *"If the Eastern culture is revived, the Islamic rules and regulations are followed correctly, the Muslims learn not only the religion but also the secular sciences, then the Islamic world can regain its former greatness. On the other hand, Western culture cannot be applied to Islamic countries, because its true essence does not conform to the Islamic-Eastern culture. This does not mean that Bakikhanov did not see the positive aspects of Western culture at all. Certainly, he did not consider Western culture successful for Muslim nations because he approached the issue from a broader perspective and from national and religious peculiarities"* (Alakbarli, 2018, p.156).

All this proves Bakikhanov's commitment to his Turkic-Muslim religion, people and homeland as a patriotic enlightener. After his trip to Europe, Bakikhanov began to distinguish between religious and national feelings under the influence of Western culture. He saw that the Russian colonies, despite being Christian or even Slavic, were fighting for their national identity and independence.

The Soviet philosopher Heydar Huseynov shows that A. Bakikhanov criticized the feudal-administrative method, promoted science and culture in every possible way, *"ruthlessly criticized fanaticism and religious mentality"* in his socio-philosophical views

(Huseynov, 2006, p.168). Undoubtedly, although the scientist is an atheist, he is not talking about Bakikhanov's criticism of Islam as a whole.

Although Bakikhanov described the positive moral qualities of the rulers in "Gulustani-Iram", he could not forgive their fanaticism and cruelty. Bakikhanov described the modern ruler of Sheki, Mammad Hasan khan, as follows: "...he was prudent and brave, loved discipline and applied it everywhere in his khanate; but it was a pity that his strong fanaticism and cruelty were not combined with these values" (Bakikhanov, 2000, p.154).

Academician Afrand Dashdamirov shows that 19th century enlighteners (including A.A.Bakikhanov) referred to the Islamic ideological and philosophical traditions and the literary and philosophical heritage of the medieval Azerbaijani renaissance" (Dashdamirov, 1996, p.33).

F. Alakbarli described in detail the influence of A. Bakikhanov on the religion and state relations: "*Although at first sight Bakikhanov spoke in favor of the Shiite sect, in general he emphasized the great essence of Islam. In this sense, Bakikhanov was against the restriction of Islam to any nation or region ... In this sense, Bakikhanov, who was the opposer of limiting Islam to any nation or region, supported the liberation of this religion from the monopoly of fraudulent akhunds and ascetics, and the revival of its innovative, free and great essence. He considered it possible for a person to become perfect and reunited with God in the light of Islam*" (Alakbarli, 2018, p.167). This idea of Bakikhanov in modern theological and scientific literature coincides with the main features of the Islamic state, state-religion relations. With the help of Allah, Islam unites all people. Islam does not belong only to the Arabs, it is not exclusively an Arab religion. Islam never puts one community, region, period or generation above another. Only the ruler is supreme, and the rest are his subjects. God is the true legislator. "*No law given by God can be changed: the Islamic state is based on the laws given by God through the Prophet in all relations. The government that leads the country must keep the people obedient. It is a political body that is obliged to implement the laws of God. If the government ignores the laws sent by God, then its orders will not be binding on the believers: the Islamic state is neither despotic nor dictatorial. The Islamic state does not have a parliamentary form of government. The Islamic state is not associated with a presidential form of government. If we characterize the Islamic state properly, it can be defined as the "rule of laws" of the deity, the Creator, not of the people*" (Kasevich & Stankevich, 2010, p.23).

In Bakikhanov's enlightenment views, national and religious identities form a unity in the life of Muslim people. Bakikhanov saw the happiness of every Muslim nation, including Azerbaijanis, in the renaissance of religion and statehood.

3. Just shah, public administration, Islamic relations

Mirza Shafi Vazeh, one of the Azerbaijani enlighteners, was not against Islam, but clergy, fanaticism and tyrannical rule: "*Vazeh, like Bakikhanov, did not accept not Islam, Eastern culture, but the religious superstitions that had arisen related to that religion or culture. In this sense, the main target of criticism in the worldview of Vazeh, who had a deep knowledge of Islamic-Eastern culture and philosophy and was a close acquaintance with Western culture, which was considered the progressive culture of its time, was not Islam, but hypocritical clerics and mullahs*" (Gasimzadeh, 1974, p.162).

Mirza Shafi sharply criticized the despotic, cruel shahs for stifling people's freedom: "*Mirza Shafi repeatedly showed that the dominance of shahs was caused by the*

ignorance and backwardness of the people" (Huseynov, 2006, p.148). Therefore, he wanted the people to be educated so that the evil shah could not be able to rule them. In his works, the issues of fair government, a just ruler, or how a ruler will be forced to be fair had a particular place. For example, he wrote in the poem "*Shah Abbas*" that Shah Abbas was oppressing the people, and the people could not respond to him due to their ignorance. Only Salim, a singer who suffered a lot, found a way out from Shah Abbas's oppression (Vazeh, M.Sh., 2004, p.52).

Vazeh criticized the random people holding high positions in the state, pointing out the gaps in public administration of Gajars. Vazeh wrote that a state could be despotic and oppressive, if most of the officials who run it were random people.

In his political pamphlet, Mirza Shafi with all his might focused on the shahs who published their manifestos to deceive the people. He reminded the people that the shahs never did anything for the prosperity and freedom of people. All their manifestos had only one goal - to further restrict the freedom of the people and exploit them (Huseynov, 2006, pp.188-189).

In the poem "One day the Shah wrote a manifesto with his own hands ..." Mirza Shafi wrote that once a manifesto was published by the Shah, which differed from the others in its content. This manifesto astonished the people (Vazeh, M.Sh., 2004, p.53).

H. Huseynov characterized the shahs as "*exploitative*", despotic, cruel and waging in accordance with the Soviet period.

Thus, in his enlightenment views, Vazeh criticized superstition, not Islam, and shifted from scholastic dogmatic thinking to secular one. Although he appreciated Western culture, he did not idealize it. Avoiding the officials (rulers), whom Vazeh called fraudsters, did not mean abandoning Islam or ending Turkic statehood. Vazeh's goal here was very simple: "*to fight against those who distort Islam and make the Turkic statehood unjust*" (Alakbarli, 2018, p.272).

4. Interrelation of the concepts of imam, Islam, ijtiḥad, enlightened ruler. Religious reforms

Mirza Kazim bey was one of the Azerbaijani enlighteners who spoke about religion-state relations. There are different approaches about Mirza Kazim bey's conversion from Islam to Christianity in philosophical literature. Kazim bey wrote about state-religion relations in his article dedicated to the Sheikh-Shamil movement. H. Huseynov described it in detail. He wrote about the imamate of Sheikh Shamil: "*According to M.Kazim bey, the lexicographic meaning of the term imam is a leader, guide, indicator, divider, as well as a head, a means that serves to achieve the border, the way and the goal*" (Huseynov, 2006, 186).

H. Huseynov describes in the explanation of the word imam that according to Imam Kazim bey it means a religious and civil leader: the legal meaning of "Imam" is the one in charge of all the affairs of the Muslims, both religious and civil, and therefore the imamate is divided into two categories: senior imamate (kubra) and junior imamate (sugra). M.Kazim bey showed that in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the word imam was of great importance. The word imam meant guide, leader. The person who guided the believers and led the process during the performance of worship was called an imam. In addition, the head of the military forces was sometimes called an imam as well. It is clear that the legal meaning of the word imam is leader, guide and indicator. M. Kazim bey also came to the conclusion that the word imam had different meanings in Sunnis and

Shiites. For example, the Shiites did not allow the legal existence of imams after the last imams of Ali's dynasty. The Sunnis, on the other hand, believed that it was possible to elect an imam. Thus, the concept of imam has different meanings. In addition to all this, M. Kazim bey wrote, - the rank of imam also has a respectable meaning as a leading man of his time.

"The rank of Imam, in the sense of a leading man of his time, is given to the most famous people in the field of science. Most of the remarkable scholars of the first centuries of Islam have this epithet, and some have adopted it almost as their own names. In addition to all the above, M. Kazim bey also noted that the word imam meant a representative of the people as well" (Huseynov, 2006, p.148). Although he considered Sheikh Shamil's imamate controversial from the point of view of Sharia, Kazim bey showed that he was a representative of the people and united religious and secular power in his hands.

Kazim bey explained Islamic laws and related concepts. According to Kazim bey, the word "Shari'ah" means "preparing the way" and consists of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (hadiths about the Prophet). Islamic fiqh or Islamic jurisprudence is also based on the doctrines of the Shari'ah, which consists of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, p.247). Writing that the word "fiqh" meant "concept, cognition" and an educated person was called "feqih", Kazim bey stated that the history of "science of fiqh" started with the prophet and then was developed by four caliphs (Abubakir, Omar, Osman and Ali). However, during the period after the four caliphs, differences of opinion among Muslims increased over the observance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and "*thus, new sects and cults emerged in Islam (Hanafis, Malikis, Shafi'is, Hanbalis, Mu'tazilites, Kharijites, etc.). Thus, the foundation of Sunni legal schools was laid.*" (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, pp.251-252). Kazim bey wrote: "*From the earliest days of Islam, Eastern jurists defended the independence and inviolability of the law. The Prophet Muhammad gathered everything about the religious and political life of his followers. The Qur'an and the Sunnah that he left to his followers remained an unchanging guide for them even after the death of the Prophet*" (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, p.255).

Emphasizing that the concept of "ijtihad" (serious attempt, serious effort) has a special place in Islamic jurisprudence, Kazim bey wrote that those who gain this degree were called "mujtahids". "According to the thinker, who stated that ijtihad consisted of three stages (independence in drafting the law, independence of the school and system created by the legislator, independence in the execution of judgment), mujtahid was considered the greatest gift of God in terms of Shariah and meant special authority" (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, p.253). He wrote: "*Those who aspire to reach this level must, certainly, have a thorough knowledge of all schools of law and all branches of this science, including Arabic and logic, which are considered necessary for jurisprudence. They must be ready to resolve any issue arising from the law immediately, present evidence to substantiate their decision, and reveal the different opinions of the first and second degree mujtahids on this issue*" (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, pp.270-271).

Through the imamate, Sheikh Shamil earned the title of "*leader of the believers and ruler of the Caucasus*" (Kazim bey, Mirza. 1860, p.303). In his "Muridism and Shamil", he researched imamate and muridism in a large geography – Muslim East, Caucasus in terms of development and Sheikh Shamil. Kazim bey also explained the concepts of jihad, sect and invitation in connection with muridism: "*Jihad – struggle for faith, sect – the true path to God, and invitation – a call to revolt against the hated government, to protect legal or religious rights.*" (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, p.26).

M.Kazim bey defended the idea of an enlightened monarch in the 30s-50s of the 19th century. According to Kazim bey, *"wise rulers can lead the country through the development of industry, technology and science and create a great society"* (Shukurov, 2005, p.561). The philosopher hated tyranny. M.Afandiyev shows that *"hatred of despotic rule characterizes the humanism of M.Kazim bey's socio-political philosophy"* (Efendiyev, 2006, p.413).

M.Kazim bey stated that the rule based on tyranny, oppression and serfage, the enslavement of the people, their condemnation to ignorance, the tarnishing of its morality, the removal of national and moral values prevent the development of civilization. *"According to the thinker, if the existing rules do not meet the natural requirements of the people, it is their right to change them ... the scholar shows that if the judges violate these rights, the people reserve the right to overthrow them"* (Ahmadli, 2012, p.135).

Kazim bey also fought against ignorance and superstition, not religion. He initiated enlightenment to get rid of ignorance. Kazim bey wanted to study Islam scientifically. Kazim bey, who accepted mainly Turkish-Islamic culture and partially Eastern culture, preferred Christian-European culture. He was critical of Turkish culture: He, on the one hand stated that *"the West cannot create enlightenment in Asia with its policies. The reformers of the country must be born in this country itself"* (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, p.66), on the other hand, he wrote: *"Will the East, our first homeland, the cradle of mankind, the place and time of birth of this light, be covered with enlightenment? When will civilization come to life here? Is the West really incapable of making a benevolent revolution here? Will Islam really remain an eternal obstacle to civilization?"* (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, pp.66-67). It is clear from these considerations that Kazim bey, in addition to promoting the emergence of enlightenment and the existence of local reformers in Asia, spoke of the elimination of Islam, which the West considered as a *"benevolent revolution"* in Asia and an obstacle to *"Western civilization"*.

Speaking about the state-religion relations, Mirza Kazim bey considered enlightenment and the development of culture as the main means against ignorance and backwardness rather than Islam. He emphasized that during the spread of enlightenment in the public life of people, there was a struggle between ignorance and enlightenment, and that culture prevailed in this struggle and illuminated the path of mankind: *"The thinker, who deeply studied the history of the people throughout the world, noted that fanaticism was later supplemented by tyranny, which became an integral part of secular power. Sharply criticizing tyranny in his socio-political and philosophical views, the thinker was hostile to it and showed that tyranny meant enslaving the people and ceasing their cultural development"* (Ahmadli, 2012, p.136). The author shows that Mirza Kazim bey explained the history of the establishment, development and causes of the decline of states and empires.

As Islam developed, *"tyranny was added to fanaticism, because it later became a part of secular power"* (Kazim bey, Mirza, 1985, p.66).

Kazim bey's main directions of religious reforms are as follows:

- *"Curbing government arbitrariness,*
- *Elimination of luxury both in the palace and among the nobles,*
- *Ending the ferocity of ministers, governors and officials in general,*
- *"Proper execution of the power, fair laws"* (Ahmadli, 2012, p.174).

Thus, Mirza Kazim bey's main contribution to state-religion relations was that he was a supporter of the rule of the state with fair laws based on secularism.

During this period, the existing processes seriously affected the state-religion relations:

- *“Opportunities and conditions were created for the integration of Azerbaijani culture and literary environment into Russian and European culture and literary-artistic process,*
- *Close ties with the intellectual, cultural and literary environment of Russia and Europe led to the inclusion of a new class of intellectuals, new and modern ideas to Azerbaijani culture,*
- *The socio-economic development of the Azerbaijani society changed the traditional essence, social-class structure, national, moral and cultural life of the society, created conditions for the gradual domination of modern European democratic values,*
- *The segment of Azerbaijani intellectuals grew in modern European-oriented science, education and culture centers of Russia”* (Aliyeva, 2010, 90).

5. Conclusion

Thus, in the first half of the 19th century, the first generation of enlighteners considered religion and secularism in unity, along with innovation and science. New changes were observed in religion-state relations under the influence of Russian-European culture. The foundation of democratic and cultural traditions affecting the moral development of the people was laid, historical religious views were replaced by a rational approach, a secular attitude to the historical past was formed in the philosophical and social thought of Azerbaijan in the 1940s, the transition from religious scholasticism, which kept all the spheres of public life under total control, to secularism started. The factor of modernity was also reflected in the approach to the theocratic state.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, Azerbaijan, split between the Russian Empire and Gajar Iran, was divided into two parts. Russian military occupational bodies were established in northern Azerbaijan. Therefore, during this period, when Azerbaijani enlighteners spoke about "state-religion" relations, they mostly referred to Ottoman Turkey, especially Gajar Iran, as an example of state-religion relations. At that time, we lost our statehood, although the Islamic Sunni-Shiite sect was dominant in Northern Azerbaijan..

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