

## Place of Internet Resources in the System of Islamic Mass Media in Russia

*Vasil Zagitovich Garifullin and Lyailya Rashitovna Sabirova*

Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya  
Street, 18, 4200008, Kazan, Russia

**Submitted:** Dec 8, 2013; **Accepted:** Feb 9, 2014; **Published:** Mar 2, 2014

**Abstract:** The author analyzes role and place of religious mass media in information field of Russian federation. Using the examples from Tatar periodicals the author demonstrates the formation and development of Tatar journalism, growing significance of Islamic internet-resources in modern media space. The activity of main general federal information-analytical websites is considered and specialized websites for Moslems are analyzed, the main thematic focuses of these resources are described.

**Key words:** Religious Mass Media • Internet • Islamic Journalism • Russian Mass Media • Tatar Journalism

### INTRODUCTION

Today religious media resources are dynamically developing segment of Russian mass media. However, the believers of different confessions do not get sufficient regularly renewed objective information about life of their parishes “and this is the serious fault and undeveloped side of functioning of our journalism” [1]. In these conditions Internet starts to play more prominent part “as one of the key channels conveying information about religion, as important platform of information-communication exchange inside religious organizations and one of the means for recognition of his cultural and religious identity by an individual [2]”.

European and American scientists started to investigate religious internet resources since 90s of the last century (Lochhead D., Babin P., O’Leary S.D., Brasher B. E., Hojsgaard M. and others) [3-7]. Specific features of religious internet journalism, especially in Islamic segment of information field of Russian Federation have been studied insufficiently. Our article is intended to define the place and role of Islamic web media-resources of Russia.

**Main part:** National journalism of Islam people in Russia was formed in the end of XIX-beginning XX centuries and by efforts of Islamic clerics was oriented to educated

part of population, which mainly graduated from theological universities of pre-revolutionary Empire-madrasah. Prominent representative of Islamic circles of this period, akhun Ataula Bayazitov, initiated publication from the very first Tatar newspaper “Nur” (a Ray of the Sun) in St. Petersburg in September of 1905. 2 months later a lot of newspapers and magazines were published for the first time in different regions Russian-Kazan, Ufa, Orenburg, Uralsk, Astrakhan and other cities a in Tatar language First periodical specialized periodicals were issued for Russian Moslems. In the beginning of XX there were 10 specialized editions 7 newspapers and 3 magazines. These were newspapers “Al-galyami muslimin (Moslem world)(1906-1907), Khamiyat (Salvation)(1907-1908), Nur (Ray)(1905-1914), Borkhany Torakkiy (Evidence of progress) (1906-1911), Bayanelkhak (Journal of Truth) (1906-1914), Islakh (Reform) (1907), Olfet (Friendship) (1905-1907), magazines Din ve megyishat (Religion and life) (1906-1918), Ed-din ve el-adeb (Religion and maoral) (1906-1908, 1913-1917), Nazhat (Salvation) (1907).

Religion was prioritized theme on pages of printed media that time. Printing editions regularly covered reforms in theological universities, the problems of interrelation between religion and national self-consciousness, spirituality and morals.

“The Tatar press, which appeared relatively late, had practically occupied the leading position in the Moslem world of Russia, both in quantity, authority and influence. Often it defined the spirits and ideas, prevailing among Moslems” [8]. In the end of XX century under the influence of well-known political transformations in our society national journalism was reborn very quickly, especially in the Russian regions, specialized newspapers and magazines for believers were published, religious programs appeared on radio and TV and stable system of Moslem mass media was formed.

Today, every clerical division (muftiyats, Islamic High Councils) on the territory of Russia (there are about 50 of them) publishes its own newspaper, broadcasts TV programs on local TV, has its official websites. For example, clerical division of Moslems of the Republic of Tatarstan issues the newspapers "Umma" and *Din ve megyishat* (Religion and life), has its official site [www.dumrt.ru](http://www.dumrt.ru). Such officially registered editions and sites make foundation of Moslem mass media in Russia.

In the same time, federal and information-analytical web-sites are most popular and high-powered in this system. They include website “Ансар.Ru”(ansar.ru) which appeared earlier, in 2003. It functioned as weekly web-based media. In 2009 it cardinally changed its format - everyday news, photo, audio and video-sections appeared. Besides that interactive functions, for readers were added: forum periodic quiz for users. “Since the moment of its appearance the tasks of information-analytical channel are conveying objective and reliable information about events in Russia and the world and the processes taking part in the society, consolidation of Islamic Ummah of Russia, finding out the cases of discrimination by religious and national attributes, protection of believers' rights. Website is supported by its own journalists in different regions of Russia and offers up-to-date news information and exclusive analytical articles, reviews, religious-theological materials, opinions of well-known experts on different issues. One of the most actual topics discussed on the pages of Ansar.ru is development of Islam banking sphere, Islam finances and hallel-industry” [9].

Coverage of social-political, economic, cultural and other spheres of Moslems' life in Russia and abroad is fulfilled by another website -“IslamNews”(islamnews.ru).

Islam.Ru ([islam.ru](http://islam.ru)) and Islam for Everybody ([islam.com.ua](http://islam.com.ua)) perform similar functions.

Website Islam Today ([islam-today.ru](http://islam-today.ru)) attracts big audience, it was established only in 2012, but now it has about 20000 every day [10]. Site is in 3 languages (Tatar, Russian, English) and covers the issues of spiritual and secular life, opinions of experts about different problems and is the most quick-responding among all similar web resources. The creators of the site argue, that the main target of it is "to get reader interested in Islam culture, wisdom of Moslem philosophers, beauty and sincerity of religious ceremonies.

Website Voice of Islam ([golos\\_islama.ru](http://golos_islama.ru)) is a bit different. It is information-discussion community, materials for which are written by the users themselves: they find and place on this site interesting news and publicist materials, discussing very up-to-date political and social themes. Most part of published articles are analytical materials of socio-political kind, news devoted to main events of the day.

If you compare journalistic materials on religious sites with religious-theme articles in secular mass media, you will see that the latter predominantly use negative tone. In Islamic mass media all headlines are neutral, “effective” phrases to draw attention are not used. Secular journalistic coverage, even when it is focused on positive phenomena in the life of Moslems, tries to attract attention of readers using sensational headlines. Arson of churches in Tatarstan in the end of 2013 is the most convincing illustration of this idea. Some authors from popular All-Russia recourses believe, that arsons and terrorist acts in Tatarstan were the result of collaboration between Tatarstan authorities and Wahhabis [11], but most of Islamic resources viewed this situation as a geo-political order-the organizers must be found out in Russian Federation. [12]. Partially it is proved by the fact, that the responsibility for explosions in Volgograd was taken by Islamists from Iraq.

Specialized sites on different topics and life spheres of Moslems, for example, site Magarif (Enlightenment) ([magarif.ru](http://magarif.ru)), devoted to the problem of Islamic enlightenment and education perform positive function in development of Islamic web-resources. Here you can find information about religious educational universities, learning programs, textbooks, etc. Internet-club for Islam believers of young age is located on website [www.altinurta.ru](http://www.altinurta.ru). Among specialized sites there are hallel standards committee's site Hallel ([halal.rt.com](http://halal.rt.com)), charity fund Zaklyat, property fund Vakif ([vakftr.ruuyiu](http://vakftr.ruuyiu)) etc.

The system of Moslem internet resources also includes big number of sites of separate parishes and muchtasibats. Moslems in most districts of Tatarstan have their own local periodicals. Most local tele-radio companies have special sections for believers. Some mosques also have their internet-sites. The most well-organized websites are Suleiman (suleiman.ru) and Zakaban mosques in Kazan (isxak.ru) in which predominantly internal life of makhalla is covered. In Tatarstan there are also sites of religious universities, site of Russian Islamic University (e-riu.ru), Kazan Islamic college (kik-kazan.ru).

Informing and education (including religious one) through positive information is a key principle of work of most Islamic sites. But very often they lack appropriate up-to-datedness, while covering important events, there are little analytical material devoted to urgent issues of believers' life. These faults are the result of absence of targeted training of good journalists with specialization on religious sphere. Another obstacle for development of Islamic segment in Internet is that many websites are not registered as mass media and there is uncertainty blogs and forums status, which results in collisions with law.

### CONCLUSION

Analysis of materials published on these sites allows to make conclusion, that they are based on traditions, which historically have formed in Russia. Key topics of such sites are:

- Up-to-date information about life of Islamic communities and small commentaries;
- Enlightenment issues including materials about key religious celebrations and their significance for believers;

**Inference:** Internet resources make big contribution into the process of further development of culture, facilitating friendship and understanding Russia's nations.

### REFERENCES

1. Kashinskaya, L., L. Resnyanskaya and M. Lukina, 2003. Religion in information field of Russian mass media. Moscow:
2. Luchenko, K., 2009. Internet in information-communicative activity of religious organizations of Russia, PhD thesis, Moscow.
3. Babin, P., 1991. The New Era in Religious Communication. Minneapolis.
4. Lochhead, D., 1997. Shifting realities: Information Technology and the Church. Geneva: WCC Publications.
5. Arthur, C., 1993. Religion and the media. Oxford.
6. O'Leary, S.D., 1996. Cyberspace as Sacred Space: Communicating Religion on Computer Networks. Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 64: 4.
7. Brasher, B.E., 2004. Give me that online religion. New Jersey; London.
8. Religion and cyberspace, 2005. Edited by Hojsgaard M. New York.
9. Tatar history and civilization, 2010. Istanbul: IRCICA, pp: 695.
10. Islamic information channel ANSAR.RU. Date Views 25.02.14 [www.ansar.ru/about/](http://www.ansar.ru/about/)
11. Islam-Today.ru. Date Views 25.02.14 [www.islam-today.ru/](http://www.islam-today.ru/)
12. REGNUM Date Views 25.02.14 [www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1745306.html](http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1745306.html)
13. Salman, F. Terrorism is ordered beyond the borders of Tatarstan. Date Views 23.12.2013. [www.islamnews.ru/news-143449.html](http://www.islamnews.ru/news-143449.html)