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The Market of Islamic Goods and Services in Dagestan: Consumption Practices and Public Debates

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This article deals with the functioning of the sector of Islamic goods and services in Dagestan's urban space and the popular practices of consumption. It describes and analyzes various aspects of Islamic business, including the operation of the halal market, the women's clothing sector, and advertising strategies. Special attention is given to the issue of the hijab, its symbolic meaning, and its role in women's social life. The problem of Islamic consumption is viewed through the prism of the commodification of Islam, which affects both religious practices and the local economy. An intensive appeal to Islam in the city's social and economic space is not so much a sign of Islamic radicalization as it is a choice of cultural references in the society and a quest for new behavioral patterns. The emergence of new consumer attitudes forces Dagestani society to face a problem of choice between European standards and a new identity — belonging to global Islamic civilization. The article draws upon the author's field materials from 2011 to 2015.

Keywords: Islam in Dagestan, religious practices, commodification, halal market.

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IN the post-Soviet period, Islam has come to play a significant role in the social life of Dagestan, and an individual's religiosity, along with the forms of its expression, is now one of the most pressing topics of discussion in various communities. This tendency is particularly apparent in the urban areas of the republic, where modern, urban modes of life coexist, and are often closely intertwined, with religious resurgence, and, in some cases, with Islamic radicalism.

Over the past two decades, active migrations from the mountains to the plains and from cities beyond the borders of the republic have set in motion certain reactionary sociocultural and economic processes in Dagestan's cities; the makeup of the population, primarily of Makhachkala, has subsequently changed remarkably, and cultural and economic orientations have shifted in the course of changes to the business strategies and social ideology of the Dagestani people (for details, see Kapustina 2013). Almost everywhere, national projects, which were actively developed in the republic during the 1990s, have given way to others that are founded on religiosity/areligiosity. At times, it is the variant of religiosity that has become the important element in the formation of the identity of various groups among the urban population (for details about the national revival in Dagestan, see Kisriev 1998). This is due to the ethnic diversity of Dagestani society, as well as to the influence of the process of global Islamization on the republic and on the North Caucasus as a whole.

In this article, I will examine the place of Islam in the economy of the republic and, through an examination of Muslims' consumption strategies, the influence of religion on the social life of Dagestani society. Attention will be given to the behavioral practices of Dagestanis who appeal to Islam and who live in Makhachkala (since the majority of my field materials, collected in 2011, 2014, and 2015, relate specifically to the capital of Dagestan) and to the distinctive features of the mechanism of the consumption of goods and services that are branded in religious terms or that use Islamic symbolism and are included in the Islamic discourse of the capital.

The local "Islamic industry" itself is characterized by relative youth (its appearance corresponds with the beginning of the post-Soviet era) and by swift growth. In the cities of the republic, it is now possible to find a myriad of stores, from the largest supermarket to the smallest kiosk, that offer religious literature, video and audio recordings of sermons, prayer rugs, prayer beads, and the local style of skullcap (*tiubeteika*), that is, all those goods that can be called Islamic. In addition to merchandise expressly intended for religious purposes,

such stores also stock related goods that may not directly relate to Islam, but could be associated with it.¹

Among Russian cities that are perceived as “Islamic territories” (Kazan, Ufa, the capitals of almost all of the republics of the North Caucasus, other cities of Dagestan), Makhachkala is a special case. On the one hand, Islam has long been in Dagestan, and now, without doubt, it is the religion of the majority.² On the other hand, the Soviet period was one of forced secularity, and although Islam did not entirely disappear, it remained almost exclusively in the private sphere, having vanished from the public sphere. In the 1990s, as religious freedom emerged, society had to resolve many questions connected with religiosity, including how to consume goods that are related to the religious sphere or that are understood to be part of religious practice. In addition, Makhachkala, like other cities where Muslims live, is subject to global Islamic trends, both on the level of ideas and on the level of things. In this way, the case of Makhachkala is a synthesis of classic cases of cities with a Muslim majority that are reshaping the global trends of the Islamic market, while at the same time, of a neophyte city, which is only just “opening up” the market at the local level and learning anew the consumption of goods that can be branded as Islamic. There are evident similarities here with the situations of those European cities where the Muslim diaspora has comparatively recently begun to consume such goods, and where this consumption is occasionally declarative in character and is associated with versions of religious identity that are relevant and new to all of urban society.

Often researchers and informants alike are inclined to present “life in Islam” (that is, various Islamic daily practices) as a moral path oriented toward spiritual development, far from the conventional “Western” path, which is associated with a society of consumption, hedonism and even debauchery. However, a number of specialists insist on the existence of an Islamic model of consumerism, and an

1. I do not intend to address specific interpretations of dogma in this article, as I am concerned here with a certain society’s practices and declarations, which, in general, do not coincide with normative religious prescriptions.
2. I have intentionally not used the word “traditional” here, as the term is subject to debate. The phrase “traditional Islam” in Dagestan already has an extensive historiography in connection with the discussion of various versions of religious practice in today’s world, in particular, with disagreements between followers of the Salafi movement and Tariqa schools of Islam. All such definitions are unstable right now, owing to the heated polemics in the public sphere and in professional discussions about terminology and about the specific sects of Islam in the republic (for an overview of these problems, see Sokolov 2015; Starodubovskaia 2013; Biurchiev 2014).

analysis of the various forms of the commodification of Islam supports this thesis (Navaro-Yashin 2002). Here, commodification signifies the process in the course of which an increasing number of various types of human activity acquire monetary value and, in effect, become goods (Abercrombie et al. 2004). This article will describe examples of such commodification practices in Dagestan's public culture. Although similar processes are happening in other Muslim regions in Russia, the capital of Dagestan demonstrates particularly well the intensity and prevalence of this occurrence, and to some degree, it is even becoming a trendsetter in this regard.

Islamic Business

The growing number of companies that appeal to Islam in their business makes evident that such an appeal is now one of the most popular business strategies in the republic. As a rule, this strategy pertains to the sale of goods that may be marketed as Islamic, although industries dedicated to the production of goods are developing in a similar fashion, especially in the spheres of food products and tailoring.

One example of a successful player in this field is the extremely large and well-known Islamic goods holding company "Risalat," which includes a men's clothing store, a women's clothing store, the restaurant "Miiasat," a tailor shop, a delicatessen, as well as a taxi service and a furniture showroom. The holding company is associated with and, in fact, was organized by the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Dagestan (Dukhovnoe upravlenie musul'man dagestana, hereafter DUMD), which evaluates its goods' adherence to Islamic norms. It is said that Risalat's profits are allocated to the Dagestan Islamic University (also opened under the auspices of DUMD). In addition to goods associated with religious practice, Risalat sells many other items, in particular, cosmetics and perfumes. Shampoo and other personal care items (for the face and body) made with black cumin, kohl, and henna are among the most popular products. As a rule, the cosmetics are manufactured in Turkey, the UAE, Syria, and other countries of the Middle East (except Israel, of course). The large quantity of goods imported from these countries is explained not only by the fact that commodities produced there are connected with religious practice and permitted for Muslim use, but also because the suppliers obviously trust local Islamic products. I have seen black cumin shampoo that is manufactured in Thailand being sold in stores, as well, but here it is important for the buyer that Islamic theologians draw attention

to the medicinal properties of black cumin. At the counter, so-called “Eastern sweets” are also on display.

I will note that, according to my observations, goods such as Arab perfumes, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, the use or ingredients of which are approved by Islam, have become especially widespread. For example, products that were not long ago considered exotic in Dagestan and were known only to those who had studied at Middle Eastern universities are now actively flooding the market. Such products include instruments for *hijama* (bloodletting), *siwak* (teeth-cleaning twigs), as well as black cumin oil, the universal remedy for any ailment.



Wedding dress store, The Islamic Bride. 2014. Photo by E. Kapustina

The names of stores and businesses that sell Islamic goods often contain references to the Arab world (for example, the company Arabian Secrets, discussed below). Such names, however, should not be attributed to orientalizing tendencies, but should rather be seen as an appeal to Muslim countries, which are important as sites of expertise in questions of Islam on the grounds that they are culturally and geographically closer to the “birthplace of Islam”; that Islamic traditions in these countries have continued without interruption; and to some degree, that the state ideology in some of these countries is

connected with the Islamic religion. For example, an Arab perfume boutique recently appeared in the city, which (as the name indicates) primarily sells brands of perfume from Arab countries. However, this store sells not only perfume oils, but also alcohol-based fragrances. When questioned about the permissibility of the latter for Muslims, the salesman answered that many Islamic scholars have come to the conclusion that alcohol evaporates from the skin and, therefore, alcohol-based fragrances may be used. Then he added that they are, after all, produced in Saudi Arabia, which is to say, if Saudi Arabia produces such perfumes, surely they are in accordance with the norms of Islam. In another shop, perfume oils were called “Islamic perfumes.”

Enterprises that appeal to Islam have also ventured into the sphere of sports and recreation. What is more, a few such enterprises even cultivate demand for their products precisely through such an appeal. For example, the recent appearance of a store called *Luchnik* (The archer), which sells crossbows and bows, might at first glance be taken as a reflection of a growing interest in the sport of archery or in the use of that type of weapon for target hunting. However, it should be noted that this store is located in immediate proximity to the Juma Mosque, in a building that also houses the aforementioned *Risalat* (which apparently also owns *Luchnik*). Moreover, their business cards display the store’s slogan, “Revive the Sunnah,” and in their promotional brochure, a hadith explains that archery is the best leisure activity for a Muslim. In 2014, *Risalat*, together with the Dagestan Republic’s Ministry of Sport, organized an archery tournament in various regions of Dagestan called “Revive the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.” Given that archery had hitherto not been popular in Dagestan and that this store appeared only two years ago, the cultivation of demand for the new products obviously came about through the process of positioning this type of sport as a recreation that is encouraged specifically for Muslims. Interestingly, according to one of my informants, crossbows and bows are now considered good high-status gifts (such as might be given to public officials or honored guests), since, according to him, there is a hadith about the coming of the end of the age, when, of all types of weapons, only bows and crossbows will remain.

In the context of popular pastimes prescribed by Muslims, horse races have enjoyed increased interest too, also as the result of an appeal to hadith, which approves of them. One should note, however, that in a few regions of Dagestan, horse races have long been loved and practiced, but their recent implementation in other regions has been specifically labeled as a commendable activity for Muslims.

The service sector is also focused on Islamic prescription. Halal hair salons, where men are attended to by male hairdressers, have appeared in the city. According to my observations, the restaurant business has yet to offer the urban community “women’s cafés,” but there is already a “women’s beach” not far from Makhachkala. Advertisements for an ordinary *banya* (bathhouse) might contain the warning “haram not allowed” (so that an establishment for the relaxation and cleaning of the body will not be confused with the saunas, which in Dagestan are, in fact, synonymous with brothels). Even establishments that barely hide their profiles as “houses of indulgence” appeal to Islam; in Makhachkala there are a few establishments where men enter into “temporary marriages” with women for the duration of one night. Naturally, DUMD and many of the city’s citizens criticize such practices, however, judging by discussions on social networks, some view these establishments in a positive light, as a step in the direction of a righteous life for both “spouses.”



Sign on the entrance to the Café Azbar, which reads “Haram not sold here.” 2014. Photo by E. Kapustina

There have been attempts to introduce the norms of Islam into the world of finance. The limited partnership LaRiba Finance offers clients loans and goods on an interest-free installment plan, thereby

observing the law that forbids interest-bearing transactions (*riba*), and provides consulting services for Muslims. DUMD also certifies LaRiba's work. Other firms offer similar services, which they advertise as "Islamic installment plans."

The businessmen of Makhachkala, who actively declare their Islamic identity, talk about creating a special business association, determining membership through affiliation with the Muslim *ummah*³ (as a rule, of one branch of Islam) and formulating the rules for conducting business by Islamic norms. I was told of the existence of a business club where people conversant in *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) give consultations on various questions of business. Members of the club pay *zakat* (a proportional, annual property tax called for under Islamic law) in addition to dues. While some talk about such clubs as a reality of contemporary economics in the capital, others doubt the scale and even the existence of such associations. Nonetheless, businessmen from one branch of industry reportedly might meet daily, combining this, for example, with collective *namaz* (prayer).

In the republic's press, considerable space is allocated to religious issues. Columns in the most popular local newspapers discuss different aspects of the life of the "proper Muslim." In these columns, the reader can not only find texts about how to do *namaz* or how to hold a fast, but also analyses of all aspects of economic and social life: the regulations for opening a business, guidelines for relationships in the family and in society, and the rules of personal grooming (for examples, see the daily newspaper *Chernovik*).

There are also tourist firms oriented around organizing Muslim pilgrimages, especially to Mecca, for the hajj or the *umrah*.⁴ As an example, one tourist agency had also been under the control of the DUMD, but it subsequently became independent, while in actuality it retained its connection with the Spiritual Board.

Islamic business not only creates a supply of Islamic goods (several times I was told in interviews that the owners of various stores live in the UAE, or Turkey, that is, that the business comes from other countries) but also responds to the demands of believers. Sometimes the operation of this type of business might be taken up as a successful career for those who try to uphold the norms of Islam

3. *Ummah* means the community or nation, and typically refers to the whole Muslim community. — Ed.

4. The *Umrah* — a lesser pilgrimage, especially to Mecca, at any time of the year except for the hajj.

in everyday life (or who state such a goal). In other words, work in that sector is, in essence, a form of religious practice. Salespeople in one of the commercial pavilions said that the owner of that particular store had only been conducting business related to Islamic goods for six months, while she had earlier sold something else, unrelated to religion. First, she had changed her own way of life and had become a “practicing” Muslim, and then she changed the direction of her business. An Islamic business is perceived as halal not only for its owners. Occasionally, women in hijabs are able to find work in Islamic stores and cafés that focus on halal products, a fortunate alternative at a time when, in certain sectors, “covered women” might even be discriminated against. In particular, women are refused employment because of the hijab, whereas personnel of Islamic establishments are chosen, as a rule, from just such observant Muslims.

Islamic business in Dagestan is often transnational in character. As has already been mentioned, the entrepreneurs who are developing the sector of goods that are positioned as Islamic occasionally live beyond the borders of Dagestan and Russia, frequently in countries with an Islamic majority. A few of them have two homes, employing transnational practices not only in business but also in their own social life. I know of situations where moving to a country of “the Islamic world” propelled them into the business of trading Islamic goods, or even into the production of Islamic goods (examples include the manufacturer of chewing gum who will be discussed below and the owner of the store “Dates from Arabia”).

The Hijab: Fashion and Belief

Women’s clothing is one of the most sought-after of Islamic goods, and one of the most frequently discussed in society. There are an abundance of stores selling Islamic women’s clothing in the city, most of which opened from 2012 to 2015, and, in certain micro-regions, entire streets are now dedicated to the sale of this merchandise. In addition to the women’s clothing stores, Islamic men’s clothing stores have also appeared in Makhachkala, but clothing for Muslim women has become the truly significant Islamic business.

There are stores in the city that sell ready-to-wear Islamic women’s clothing, imported, for the most part, from Turkey and the UAE, though to a lesser degree, and rarely, Saudi Arabia. These last, as salespeople know, are very expensive for the Dagestani consumer and for that reason the business of sewing dresses in accordance with the

norms of Islam is currently growing in Makhachkala's tailor shops. Dress patterns from Saudi Arabia are rarely copied directly (according to the salespeople, they are very loose-fitting and, in general, are not favored by locals), but are usually redesigned according to local taste. Ample lace and other elements of décor are sewn onto the classic black "Saudi" model, and, at the same time, the dresses are frequently sewn with a narrower silhouette (although not a slim one). A few models are even more representative of local color; they are sewn in the style of the so-called "Dargin" dresses, which are wide dresses with a yoke (they are preferred by older women). Makhachkala Islamic fashion is not static and changes from year to year; in 2014, dresses with ruffles and dresses with lace yokes were popular. Islamic wedding fashion is a separate topic, which I will address below.

The fundamental element of women's Islamic clothing, which, in a sense, has become the symbol of the "observant" woman, is the hijab headscarf. According to my observations, the main consumers of hijabs are young women and university students or girls in their final years of secondary school — that is, girls of marriageable age. In Dagestan, the hijab stopped being an unusual sight long ago and is now common everywhere. According to one female informant, very few people are now surprised if a girl suddenly starts wearing a hijab, as they would have been at the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s. Women often begin to wear a hijab before marriage or immediately following it, often at the insistence of their husbands. Moreover, they often begin gradually, at first wearing a headscarf that only covers their hair, then moving to a bright hijab and to clothes that fully cover their body but are fairly close-fitting, and only later to black *kabalai* dresses, or to loose-fitting dresses of muted, usually dark colors. Middle-aged women are seen wearing a hijab less often. According to one female informant, when a "covered" woman is middle-aged, she is more frequently suspected of radicalism.

In the context of this examination of the Muslim women's clothing industry, attention should be given to the social discourse on the topic of traditional Islamic clothing in contemporary Dagestani life. The appearance of one or another element of global Islamic fashion in the urban areas of the republic is a traditional competitive arena for the proponents of different positions on the culture of the city and, more broadly, of Dagestan. The topic of Dagestani women wearing hijabs (and more broadly, clothing that hides a woman's figure with the exception of her face and hands) has stirred the most public interest. I have heard stories of a bus driver's fundamental refusal to drive

women in hijabs and of women in a beauty salon who refused service to “covered” women, along with stories about people’s exceptional attentiveness and goodwill toward these women as representatives of a higher moral culture. Women dressed in this manner are often greeted as “sister” on the street. The terminology is also interesting: proponents of the hijab call women in hijabs “covered” (*zakrytye*); critics call them “wrapped” (*zamotannye*) or even “Chupa-chups” (a popular brand of lollipop in the former Soviet Union; the slender figure of a young woman in a slim or even tight-fitting dress, paired with a high, voluminous hairstyle in a hijab, has conjured this image for a few witty individuals).

Proponents of secular conventions of life in the city emphasize the foreignness of the hijab to Dagestani culture and propose to those women who are zealous for female Islamic piety that they wear the traditional headdresses of the mountain women, such as the *chokhto*⁵ or kerchiefs, which also conform to the norms of Islam (Takhnaeva 2011). Proponents of the hijab defend it by stressing the rights of the individual and freedom of conscience. It should be noted that the hijab, having passed through the process of commodification, has become a symbol of Islamic identity throughout the entire world (Navaro-Yashin 2002).

According to data from interviews with respect to cases of discrimination against young women in hijabs, problems arise most often when seeking government employment or during their time in high school, and to a lesser degree, in institutions of higher education. In recent years, conflicts have periodically arisen associated with the wearing of hijabs, but since the mid-2010s this tension has somewhat lessened. One of my female informants told me: “When I was hired, I was called into the office, and they said, ‘Why have you covered yourself? Don’t you understand that such people are viewed differently and that comments will be made to us?’” (M., age 31). Then, acquiescing to the woman’s choice, her employers asked her at least not to wear black so that she would not be suspected of radicalism.

At the same time, in the private commercial sector there might be entirely different expectations. I saw help-wanted advertisements in local newspapers that required the applicant to be a “covered” woman, even when the establishment was not directly associated with Islamic industry.

5. The traditional women’s headwear in the mountain regions of Dagestan.

Against the background of conversations about the conformity of the suggested options of “Islamic” women’s clothing to “folk” costume, a question arises as to the place of traditional Dagestani culture in the contemporary life of the republic. Traditional costume, especially for women, has experienced a renaissance in the post-Soviet North Caucasus republics in the wake of a national revival and interest in native culture. In the Western and Central Caucasus, enterprises dedicated to making “traditional” clothing, especially clothing for celebrations, in particular for weddings, have sprung up everywhere. The growth of such enterprises has been recorded in North Ossetia, Ingushetia, and Chechnya, as well as in the South Caucasus — in Abkhazian and Georgian societies. As an example, one might recall the Tbilisi tailor shop, Samoseli Pirveli, which has recreated various types of traditional costume for the many regions of Georgia and presents them as examples of haute couture (Sytnik 2014).

In Dagestan, this practice has not been as widespread. Separate initiatives of the secular national intelligentsia are not worth considering here, since they have not achieved a wide public response. Even the initiative of Ramazan Abdulatipov, the head of the Republic of Dagestan, to dress his civil servants in traditional garments like the *cherkeska* (the Circassian coat) was received coolly, and even with annoyance, as utter foolishness. In Dagestan, the hijab and the image of the “covered woman” has emerged as a competitor to the fashion of off-the-shoulder dresses for secular holidays and weddings. I recall, from my own observations, that, ten years ago, there were still signs hanging in a few places within the republic that read, “wedding [*venchal’nye*]⁶ dresses for rent,” referring to the “European” type of wedding dress, with crinolines, décolleté and other similar accoutrements. Now in the republic, hijabs for weddings are gradually crowding out all of their competitors (in one of the wedding salons of Kizlyar, the owner said that practically all off-the-shoulder dresses and those with décolleté had disappeared, since demand for them had fallen).

Men’s Islamic fashion is also not static. Alongside the classic *tiubeteika* skullcaps, men’s *jellabiya*⁷ of the Arab type and even turbans have appeared (such exotic raiment is not common in Dagestan, but is still seen on the streets of the city). For the time being, people consider the *jellabiya* to be a marker of radical Islam, but not all that long ago

6. *Venchanie* is a term for the Christian ceremony.

7. A *jellabiya* is a long, full garment with long sleeves. — Ed.

hijabs also carried this connotation, and now they are common in all branches of Islam. In the last couple of years, an even more specific type of women's clothing was introduced — the niqab, a cloak with an opening for the woman's eyes only, worn with black gloves.

Studies on the practice of hijab-wearing in Europe and Russia — in particular, in Tatarstan — show that women do not necessarily wear a headscarf as the result of an imposed code of conduct and pressure from the religious community. Rather, the decision to wear a hijab is sometimes the conscious and individual choice of a Muslim woman, especially in societies where an opposing discourse dominates (whether secular or from another religion) and where “thorough adherence to the laws of Islam is viewed as a legal right, which must be frequently defended in the public sphere. Here, traditional Islam yields to the realization of women's rights and to the multicultural context, within which a modernist project with a new system of cultural and moral values is formulated” (Garaev 2010). In this case, the hijab might at times be part of a project of emancipation, either as the condition for a young woman from a religious family to go beyond her family circle, and thus, as her access to an education and a career, or as an element of the free choice of a young woman who is leaving the control of a patriarchal family and is stepping out in defiance of the local community (Benkhabib 2003). I have heard of similar heated polemics in families where a young woman had to defend her right to wear a hijab to her parents or her spouse.

Not long ago in Dagestan, the hijab might also have been understood from this perspective. This is partly true even now. According to my informants, “observant” Muslims (especially those opposed to *Tariqa* [Sufi] Islam), among whom there are many “covered” women, are, to a high degree, focused on marriage outside of their *tukhum* (kinship group) and village; indeed, they enjoy great ideological freedom in this case. In Dagestani society, an orientation toward endogamy has traditionally existed and has not lost its relevance in any way within the village and sometimes within the *tukhum*. In a few communities, even marriage to cousins is still possible. Now that the hijab has become mainstream, however, it has gradually lost its power as a “manifesto.” Moreover, it cannot be denied that women are forced to wear hijabs, especially by their fiancés or husbands, on the eve of or after their weddings. That such situations occur frequently is evident from the public debate on the problem (in particular, in the press; see, for example, the information portal www.daptar.ru) and from my field notes.

The problem of the hijab can also be viewed through the prism of global Islamic fashion, as it is supplanting local variants of traditional women's clothing throughout the world (for details, see Tarlo 2010). Of interest here is the question of the interaction between Islamic symbols and secular fashion in urban culture, and through this, the question of the fashion of religiosity itself, which is transmitted everywhere. It is clear that the hijab in Dagestan is often not only a reflection of religious faith, but also of fashion. For example, some urban women wear "half-hijabs": a kerchief or scarf that covers the hair but with a top layer that fits loosely at the neck and leaves the earlobes and earrings visible. According to the saleswoman in one Islamic clothing store, more than one-third of the store's customers are "uncovered" women. In all fairness, women whose transition to the classic hijab is a gradual process might be wearing such "half-hijabs" (for examples of similar cases in Kazan, see Garaev 2010). Based on my observations, the number of women in Makhachkala who wear not a hijab, but a headscarf, in the form of a turban that covers the hair in its entirety but leaves the neck and earlobes uncovered, or kerchiefs or scarves draped over their hair, or another similar variation, has greatly increased. Even ten years ago in the Dagestani city, the women who were wearing headscarves were either old women or women from the country who were either visiting the city or who had moved there recently. Often, women from the country would remove their headscarves when arriving in the city and put them on again upon returning to their village. Now Makhachkala women themselves — more often than not young women and girls — wear headscarves, turbans and hijabs.

Several times, in conversation, I was told that young women want to cover themselves, because it is pretty and because there are so many fashionable options available.

When my sister and I went to Risalat to buy shampoo or something, the [sales]girls said to me — my sister was dressed (covered — E.K.): "Don't you want to cover yourself too?" I said: "No, I don't." She said: "Well, you should. With these things, with headscarves, you can dress so much more fashionably. But everyone walks around with their hair loose." They think that it's more fashionable this way (covered — E.K.) than with loose hair. But I don't walk around with my hair loose in order to be the most fashionable. What's fashionable about that? Almost the entire city walks around like that! That's not the point . . . But they say: 'This way, you can wear scarves in various ways, so many fashionable, beautiful scarves.' That's exactly what they say. (P., age 29)

At a time when European fashion has been substantially scaled down in Dagestan (transparent or very tight-fitting clothing and short skirts are essentially condemned, and neither the clothing of European subcultures nor unisex styles ever caught on), the search for fashion guidelines leads contemporary Dagestani society toward countries with Muslim majorities.⁸

What is more, young women see the hijab as an additional opportunity to increase their chances of a successful marriage, or as a way to rid themselves of a blemished reputation, and thus improve their chances in the marriage market.

A girl was engaged, she was fifteen years old, maybe even fourteen. I asked, why is she engaged so early, why get married? And my sister told me: “What do you expect? At least she’s covered — naturally, they’ll take her.” (P, age 29)

Now a lot of guys also demand that . . . women cover themselves before marriage. (M., age 31)

To conclude the discussion of the hijab, I want to offer a passage from Alisa Ganieva’s well-known story, *Salam, Dalgat!*, which gives an accurate portrayal of Makhachkala reality in the early 2000s:

“Zalina, look at Zainab!” Asya whispered loudly, pointing a claret-coloured fingernail at the next table where a girl sat in a pretty *hijab* headscarf. “She’s covered up,” said Zalina, looking sideways at Zainab’s Islamic garb. “I knew she’d cover up after what happened.”

“Why, what happened?”

“Well, her family left her on her own with a girlfriend in the village one night and to cut a long story short, she went off into the mountains with some guys. Her cousin happened to come by and knocked at the house, then raised the alarm. She came back the next morning and they took her to a doctor immediately to have him check her for signs of intercourse.”

“And...?”

“I don’t know. She wanted to get married but now she pretends she’s too pure for it.” (Ganieva 2010b)

8. Stores offer their customers fashion magazines purchased from Turkey, for example, so their clients can navigate the world of Muslim women’s fashion.

Halal Territory: Islam in the Food Industry

The term halal usually implies products permitted and not forbidden to Muslims, and, more narrowly, it has to do with food products. The Islamic world is not in complete agreement as to the definition of what is halal and what is not, insofar as not all possible food products were directly mentioned in the Qur'an. By and large, theologians agree regarding the majority of foodstuffs: for example, seafood and locusts are considered permissible for use as food, but dogs and donkeys are not. However, not all teachers of Islam share these convictions, even within the bounds of Sunni Islam (Bergeaud-Bleckler et al. 2016). The halal industry, and Islamic consumption more broadly, have only recently begun to attract the attention of representatives of the social sciences, but this topic already occupies a well-defined niche in anthropological studies (Bergeaud-Bleckler et al. 2016; Fischer 2011). Worthy of mention in the study of this phenomenon are the topics of the Islamic project of globalization, research on the Muslim diaspora — primarily that of Europe and the United States, but also of other regions — as well as research on the global market of Islamic goods as an economic reality.

If one were to take a look at the case of Dagestan, then it would become apparent that everywhere in the republic restaurant and commercial businesses, while establishing their range of products and in the development of their advertising slogans, are using more frequent references to the sphere of religion. “Halal” stickers can be found on all types of food products, although such a sticker does not always indicate the existence of any license from an authoritative Islamic institution. The word “halal” is written not only on the packages of those products that might be suspected of containing forbidden ingredients, but on many others besides. For many food service establishments, halal shwarma and halal pizza are flagship dishes.

The majority of cafés and restaurants, which not many years ago still had alcohol on their menu, do not serve it now. According to citizens, the reason for this is not only the growing piety of the owners, but also the influence on the market of the so-called “woodsmen” (*lesniki*).⁹ Rumors have spread among citizens claiming that these

9. Participants in illegal militias, who hide in the rural areas of Dagestan, i.e., “in the woods” (*v lesu*).

“woodsmen” send “thumb drives” with requests written on removable media devices to end the sale of haram products. Someone assured me that the “woodsmen” were only pursuing a ban on products prohibited to Muslims; others say it was a covert form of racketeering. In either case, disobedience leads to one thing — coercive measures (for example, the bombing of a store).

A few cafés, which opened very recently, positioned themselves from the start as halal territory. An example of this is the café chain Z&M. These are trendy cafés with a refined, European interior, Wi-Fi, and dozens of each kind of dish, but no alcohol at all. Cafés are also emerging that target those Dagestani Muslims who are even stricter in their way of life. An interesting example is the story of the bistro chain Azbar (Courtyard). It opened in Makhachkala a few years ago and fairly quickly dominated the market; more than a dozen such cafés opened around the city. The characteristic design of these cafés included the predominance of wood in the interior and a focus on dishes in the style of shwarma and shashlik. Needless to say, the cafés did not serve alcohol. Colleagues informed me that the founders of Azbar did not originally target strictly observant Muslims, but simply wanted to open a café with male servers that did not serve alcohol. When they initially began to recruit personnel they were dissatisfied with the qualifications of those who came, but at some point they visited the mosque on Kotrov Street (known locally as a Salafi mosque) where many young people expressed a desire to work in the new establishment. Since the first Azbar café was located near that mosque and a few of its members worked there, the rest of the “Kotrov congregation” began to eat lunch there. As a result, Azbar gradually acquired a reputation as a club for Salafi Muslims; that is how both the café’s regulars, as well as the wider public perceived it. The bistro began to emphasize and actively cultivate its Islamic orientation. For example, at the entrance, visitors would find a sign informing them that haram (that which is not permitted) was not sold there (along with an illustration of a pig, a wine bottle, and cigarettes). However, very soon the customers of Azbar began to suspect it of catering to illegal armed militias. Raids occurred more than once, and, as a result, around two years ago, Azbar closed. Now these cafés have been sold off to other owners and have lost their Islamic flavor. Another Islamic-oriented restaurant, Room Center, also suffered from the increased attention of law enforcement agencies to the activities of such cafés. Police officers, who suspected that some of its employees were “participants in extremism,” visited

the restaurant several times in 2013 to conduct searches (Ostrovskii 2013).

In the city's local food establishments that are less clear about their relationship to Islam, more often than not reminders of the rules that a Muslim must observe during a meal can be found. For example, in one café featuring Turkish cuisine, posters hanging over the tables inform guests of the *adab* (sharia rules of etiquette) for meals, with the requisite mention of the hadith from the life of the Prophet that are associated with meals. In the end, halal products and halal consumption, as a defined cultural and religious norm, have, in effect, created a new economic niche and new values in various industries, but have thereby complicated economic reality, which has provoked certain legal and ethical problems (Coombe 1998). This new economic activity is beginning to necessitate a system of certification, a clientele, suppliers, and marketing strategies.

Inevitably, this begs the question of a certification for products permitted to Muslims. In many cases, DUMD and other similar boards in Russia (in the case of products from other regions of the country) act as the organization that carries out such a certification. Yet, since all believers do not consider this organization authoritative (and many Salafi even view it with blatant hostility), it can be argued that the city lacks a single local center of certification for Islamic goods. For many Dagestani Muslims, products manufactured in Arab countries, as well as in other countries with a Muslim majority, are a priori halal, merely on the basis that they were produced in a place where Islam is professed.

Halal products might be used as an element in the construction of a particular identity for the modern Dagestani, primarily for the urban citizen. Similar alignments of identity by groups oriented toward Islam, particularly through the use of halal products, are taking place in other communities, like Turkey, for example (Navaro-Yashin 2002). At the same time, halal consumption might be understood primarily as a challenge to the "Western" model of modernity, that is, to the secular model (Lever and Anil 2016). This clearly also applies to the case of Makhachkala. By way of example, halal cafés are becoming sites for meetings of urbanites for whom their Islamic identity is in many ways becoming a priority. A characteristic example is the gatherings of businessmen who are trying to conduct business based on the norms of Sharia in a secular state. Often the polemic with Eurocentric, secular forms of consumption is carried out with the help of copying their stylistics and in the very same terms of commodification.

Fashion Islam – Islam as Mainstream

According to my observations, one of the important strategies of Islamic marketing is to make Islam fashionable, and especially, to make it attractive to young people. For this reason, many goods branded as Islamic and produced in Dagestan appeal to a young audience and directly or indirectly copy the “secular” brands on the market. A characteristic example is the chewing gum “The Family of Fuad and Samira,” released in Dagestan in 2015, which directly copies the popular “Love Is” brand (Turkish chewing gum with liners imprinted with sayings about love). The distinctive feature of this new Islamic gum is that the liners have comics about the family life of Muslims Fuad and Samira and their children, Raikhana and Dzhamal. All the comics are created in the style of “Love is . . .”, but the sentences begin with the phrase “Happiness in a family is . . .” Interestingly, Dagestani Ramazan Emeev – who studied at the university of Al’-Azkhar in Egypt and teaches at the S. Daitova Islamic University in Khasavyurt – established Arabian Secrets, the company that produces this gum. According to Emeev, at the heart of the stories in the inserts are human values common to all people, not just Muslims: respect, devotion, mutual assistance, and social cohesion (Krainova 2015). Indeed, certain comics contain neutral phrases, such as “happiness in a family is respecting elderly parents,” or “happiness in a family is caring for your spouse when she is sick,” however, alongside these one can find prescriptions exclusively for Islamic believers, such as “happiness in a family is getting up together before sunrise for the *Tahajjud* prayer.” The appearance of the characters in these comics is also interesting. Fuad is depicted with a beard, but no mustache; Samira and Raikhana are in hijabs, while everything is in the same stylistics as the drawings from the “Love Is” gum wrappers. The business owners emphasize that their product is halal, discussing its ingredients in detail, defending the permissibility of depicting living creatures with the goal of Islamic propaganda, and taking on their critics with the assistance of the opinions of authoritative ulema (Islamic scholars) and the experience of Arab countries (Krainova 2015). In addition to this chewing gum, which its creators market as a product primarily for children, teenagers, and young people, the company also produces Siwak Plus, a gum based on the extract of the *siwak* (the traditional Islamic chewing stick), which is likewise marketed as a halal product (Kachabekova 2015).

Islamic clothing stores also try to be fashionable and imitate Western brands. As an example, let us take the chain of women's clothing boutiques *Girl in Hijab*. The name of the store is written in English, and on the sign is the spirited slogan in Russian, "Just cover up!" (*Prosto pokroisia!*). However, on the other side is a banner with a Qur'an citation that conveys the necessity for women to wear modest clothing that covers them: "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (Qur'an 33:59). And this is not the only example of this bizarre combination of Islamic rhetoric and Dagestani glamour, with its imitations of famous Western brands of clothing and its use of Latin letters and English store names. The stores *Abaya Style*¹⁰ and others like it delight the eyes of consumer and researcher alike by means of this combination.

Advertisements for products often contain references to sacred texts and are associated with religious holidays, events, or sites. For example, an advertising booklet for a store that sells dates mentions the hadith in which the Prophet praised the quality of dates' flavor. The display might have indicated only the dates' origin, such as "Medina dates," where Medina would have undoubtedly referred to the story from the life of the Prophet, rather than to any unique quality of the dates from that particular city. On packaging for a toothpaste with *siwak*, the Russian text will mention the desirability of using *siwak*, as recommended in the hadith. On close examination the original packaging of this toothpaste, with everything replicated in both the Arabic and English languages, reveals not a single mention of the sacred texts and not a single textual or graphic reference to Islam. An examination of similar examples suggests that the appeal here to Islam, its norms and regulations, might be taken as a marketing strategy and a mechanism for promoting one brand or another.

In Dagestan, the use of religious texts in advertisements is happening everywhere and is viewed primarily as a public demonstration of the business owners' religiosity, which shapes their positive image in the eyes of their consumers. For example, banners outside a mobile phone store (on top of which is the logo of the clothing boutique, *Milano*)

10. *Abaya* — a hijab-cape that covers a woman's figure to her waist.

inform the city's inhabitants: "Almighty Allah said, 'The Qur'an, a faithful guide for people, was sent down in the month of Ramadan. Fast for My sake, and I will reward [you] for it.'" When stepping away from work, the barista in the coffee shop of Risalat's shopping center puts up a sign: "Break for *namaz*, 5–10 minutes."

The use of templates from the secular sphere for the advertisement of Islamic products sometimes takes on comic proportions. For example, an interesting version of an advertisement appeared on one of Risalat's banners: "Promotional offer from the company Risalat. Buy a set of disks for 1200 rubles and receive a coupon and the chance to receive *three trips to the hajj* or hundreds of other valuable gifts from KIA Rio company." According to a teacher at the Islamic University of Makhachkala, nothing in this offer is forbidden by Islam, yet the use of trips to the hajj as a prize is closely reminiscent of companies' offers that promise their customers trips to southern resorts.

Islam tries not only to be fashionable, but also positive. In Risalat's stores, smiley emojis are put up with the slogan, "Smile, it's the Sunnah," and signs are posted on the cash register declaring, "We love our prophet Muhammad." Similar stickers, on which the name of Allah is often combined with a heart, are featured on the back windows of the cars of some residents of Makhachkala.

Yet another particularity of Islamic business is its positioning primarily as a social project. As mentioned, the holding Risalat allocates its earnings to Dagestan Islamic University. R. Emeev, who teaches at the Khasavyurt branch of that university, said in an interview with a journalist while speaking about the launch of "Family of Fuad and Samira" gum that "this is a social project for the good of society" (Krainova 2015). As further examples, we might take the aforementioned Islamic-goods stores, whose owners opened that particular business only after they had become "observant" Muslims. Business as an intangible, business as a form of religious confession is seen as a specific distinctive feature of the halal industry.

According to my data, the appeal to religion as an advertising strategy is more the initiative of business owners themselves than a reflection of the policy of those in power. In recent years, banners with hadith sayings have disappeared from the walls of homes, put up in their time with the support of DUMD. When Abdulatipov came to power in the republic in 2013, the banners were taken down. But in private trade, the use of religious trappings has grown many times over. In my view, such Islamization — being without a doubt a

marketing strategy in the competition for new customers, a certain fashion for religiosity, *and* a reflection of certain social discussions about religion — amounts to the consequence of processes connected with the search for a public ideology. The examples of the management of Islamic business examined here illustrate the dramatic rise of the business sector in Dagestan. At the same time, the market in Islamic goods is teetering between European standards and a new regional identity that views Dagestan as a territory of Islam and, hence, as part of Islamic civilization. Now, references to Islam in the urban social and economic space are not so much a sign of Islamic radicalization as they are the society's choice of a cultural orientation and the formulation of new modes of behavior, modeled particularly after the Arab-Islamic East.

The advertisement of goods that are in no way associated with Islam often appeals to the sphere of Islamic religion, and, conversely, Islamic products are advertised with the help of recognizable marketing strategies and direct copying of examples from “secular” business. The commodification of Islam in Dagestan is a new economic and social reality, which is influencing both the religious practices of the republic's inhabitants and the development of the local economy. The consumption of goods, marketed as Islamic, is becoming a declaration of a level and type of religious conduct. Along with this, a Muslim's religiosity and focus on a proper way of life are successfully “sold.” In conclusion, the urban social space in Dagestan, which is exceptionally saturated with Islamic symbolism and the exercise of Islamic consumption, is a site for the discussion of Islam and a forum of religiosity. The city discusses religion with its inhabitants through commercial sites, food establishments, and the service sector, and as a result, communities — important building blocks in the formation of modern Dagestani society — are forming around the commodification of religious practices.

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