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Spiritual and Socio-Political Development of the Tatar People in the 19th – Early 20th Centuries

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Abstract

A special place in the spiritual heritage of the Tatar people belongs to the historical thought of the late XIX – early XX centuries. Tatar historians achieved significant results in the reconstruction and study of the national past in a short time. However, there is no works "where the formation and development of the Tatar historical science of the late XIX-early XX centuries would be considered specially". Systematized study of the historical thought of the Tatars of the period of Jadidism, the identification of features, trends, directions of its development remains an actual task of modern science. This paper is aimed at investigating the specific features of the spiritual and social and political development of the Tatar people at the end of the XIX - beginning of the XX centuries. The leading method for the investigation of this problem is the comparative-historical one, which includes historical comparisons, and also gives the opportunity to study both historiographic facts relating to a particular historical situation and the phenomena of historiography in their qualitative change, contributing to the elucidation of the laws of the development of historical thought. The main results: the development of the historical thought of the Tatar intelligentsia during the period of Jadidism was generalized for the first time, the features of the development of historical knowledge and the formation of the foundations of historical science in the Tatars at the end of the XIX - beginning of the XX centuries were singled out, its main directions were identified, their problems and development tendencies were shown. Bringing around a wide range of sources and taking into account the estimates existing in the literature, the authors attempted to conduct integrated study and analysis of the discussions on the ethnonym and ethnic self-identification that played an important role in the formation of the historical and national identity of the Tatars.

Keywords: History, Ethnic historiography, Society, Identity, Historical and cultural heritage, National studies, Tatars, Islamic studies.

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Introduction

Fast and rapid flow of the national life of the Tatars in the late XIX - early XX centuries are traditionally associated with the formation of an ethnic community of a new national type and the turning points of Russian history. However, the general processes in Tatar history received such an original embodiment, had a symbolic character for the whole Turkic-Muslim world and gave this world a bright pleiad of thinkers, public figures and political leaders that there is reason to speak of a certain "Tatar phenomenon".

At the same time, there is very little information that allows reliably judging the degree of education of the Tatars after the conquest of Kazan until the XVIII century. Probably, the schools existed semi-legally for fear of being annihilated (Amirkhanov, 1992). Interesting facts can be gleaned from official statistics. A researcher of the history of secular education of the Tatars A.Kh. Makhmutova cites data from a survey of schools in the Ufa province. 99 of 1,579 Tatar schools that were in the province by 1914, existed for more than a hundred years, and the year of establishment of 94 schools was unknown, presumably because of their long life (Makhmutova, 1982). The widespread dissemination of written culture is the result of archaeological expeditions. For 25 years of expeditions of Kazan University in the period of 1963-1988 about 800 settlements were surveyed in various regions of Russia and more than seven thousand manuscripts were identified. And, up to now, maximum 2-3% of the existing number of manuscripts survived, that is, over 95% of them fell irrevocably into oblivion (Usmanov, 1990). Let us also recall the well-known testimony of Karl Fuchs, professor at Kazan University, that "a Tatar who does not know how to read and write is despised by his countrymen and, like a citizen, does not enjoy the respect of others" (Fuchs, 1991).

So, there are good reasons to talk about the phenomenon of education and bookishness of the Tatars after the fall of statehood. Its external side was national-religious persecution, but it became possible only on the basis and thanks to the traditions of the Bulgaro-Tatar enlightened spirituality.

Having mastered the simplest knowledge in reading and writing and the basics of faith, a peasant boy from the very bottom, being able and wishing to comprehend more, could turn to the wisdom of numerous and accessible books, continue his studies in another madrassah with a well-known imam, and achieve knowledge that opens a prestigious spiritual career. On the other hand, the socially significant position by no means provided for a special material superiority. The venerable connoisseur of the Koran and Sunnah, tracing his roots from the Bulgarian times, often, like everyone else, lived off the land. There was no barrier and sharp social contradictions between the clergy and the majority of the people, democratization of the clergy took place. This means that a place that played a special social role due to historical

circumstances, as a rule, was occupied by the real and recognized leaders worth such role and able to perform it. Ummah, otherwise, showed a rare unity and cohesion. The establishment in 1788 of a government-controlled body of Muslims, the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly, violated, but could not fundamentally change the current state of affairs. The cultural, intellectual, political elite of the Tatars up to the Soviet era either belonged to the clergy or came from it.

Over two centuries of existence under persecution and oppression, conceived by the Tatars as a confrontation with the alien world of Christianity, have determined the isolation and conservatism of their community, the domination of a frozen medieval dogmatism, rejecting any changes in spiritual life. The realities of the coming 19th century demanded a new interpretation, which traditional ideology could not provide. This was true not only for Russian Muslims, who were increasingly involved in new economic and social processes. The entire Muslim East found itself on the colonial backyard of history, and even the Ottoman Empire among European diplomats was not called otherwise than as a "sick person". Everything new was supposed to be sanctified by Islam, and only then it could be accepted by society. The ideology of renewal was possible only in the form of "religious and reformist ideas within the framework of traditional religious consciousness" (Khasanov, 1997). The founders of this movement were G. Kursavi (1776-1812) and S. Mardzhani. The well-known foreign researcher A. Bennigsen (1913-1988) writes that the Tatar religious reformers "long before the Arabs, Turks, Iranians or Hindus declared the right of every believer to search in the Koran and Hadith for answers to all political, social and religious questions. Their influence on the development of the reform movement, not only in Russia, but throughout the Muslim world, was absolutely exceptional in importance. Due to their activities, poorly known in the West and ignored by Muslim historians themselves, Islam has ceased to be an obstacle to progress, and the path to reforms in other areas of language, education and political organization has been cleared" (Bennigsen, 1995).

The successful development of Muslim reformism is easily explicable and proves the universality and susceptibility of Islam to new conditions. But why does the renewal begin and get the most consistent development among the Tatars of Russia, where, due to circumstances, the traditional ideology should have been particularly strong? Perhaps the reason is that seven generations were forced to look for the answer to the main, very secular and mundane question: do the people have a future and what should be done to make it happen? And when the rest of the Muslim world was confronted with an essentially similar question, the Tatars knew where and how to look for an answer to it.

Methods

The methodology of this research is based on the doctrine of dialectical development and the principles of objectivity and historicism. The research tasks and the features of the material studied determined the choice of specific methods of scientific cognition. The methodological principle of historicism is most fully revealed in the methods of comparative-historical (cross-cultural, comparative) and specific analysis. We also used the periodization method, which follows from the principle of historicism. The objective and tasks of the paper, involving the systematization of historiographic material, required the use of the system approach method. The method of logical analysis made it possible to reveal the features of historiographic facts and their relationships, tendencies, trends and stages in the development of historical thought, and theoretically generalize the results of the study.

During the work on this paper, the descriptive, chronological and problematic methods of presenting the material were also used.

Results

The development of historical knowledge among the Tatars in the late XIX - early XX centuries

In the second half of the XIX century, the development of Tatar historical thought undergoes radical changes, conditioned by the reformist movement and the formation of an ethnic community of a new national type. The realities of the XIX century required the overcoming of medieval isolation and comprehension, which the ideology of traditionalism rejecting any changes could not give. Renewal of the Tatar society begins at the turn of the XVIII-XIX centuries with the nomination of the idea of a religious reformation, it is defended by the enlighteners and embodied in the last quarter of the XIX - beginning of the XX centuries in the transformation of all spheres of national life, or the movement of Jadidism. The historical consciousness, formerly turned into the past of lost glory, was unacceptable to the awakening and reviving people. History, therefore, represented not only one of the areas of scientific knowledge, which development the enlighteners supported. It was necessary to know the past to establish the idea of ethnic unity and determine its own historical and cultural place among other nations. Recreating the national history was one of the main elements and significant factors of national consolidation.

The first scientific study on the history of the Tatar people, that is, a study based on comprehensive analysis and scientific criticism of a wide range of sources, was published in the 80-90s of the XIX century. A two-volume work by Sh. Mardzhani "Mustafad al-akbar fi

akvali Kazan va Bulgar" (Information involved in the history of Kazan and Bulgar). Beginning with "Mustafad al-akbar..." (Marjani, 1900), a stable historiographic system is formed – a set of works united by common goals and tasks, unified in the main approaches to the interpretation of national history. Thus, it is legitimate to assert about the constitution of the historical science of the Tatars, which formation and development belonged mainly to the period after the first Russian revolution.

A feature of the historical literature of the late XIX-early XX centuries was its heterogeneity and mosaic structure. An attempt of strict classification would be more or less artificial. The emergence of historical science was a contradictory and complex process, and it would be correct to talk about the occurrence of its various directions.

The main problems of historical research were due to the tasks of national renewal. The content of the emerging historical science was primarily determined by the need to recreate national history. The studies begun by S. Mardzhani were continued by his successors R. Fakhrutdinov, Kh. Gabiashi, G. Akhmarov, Kh. Atlasi, A. Validi, G. Battal, G. Gubaidullin. The defended by them thesis "the history of the people should be written by national historians" not only stressed the social significance of historical knowledge, but also had a scientific aspect: the creation of a full-fledged scientific history of the Tatars could be successfully achieved primarily within the framework of national historiography. The study of the history of the Tatar people presupposed the use of the eastern and autochthonous sources, the Muslim, including the Tatar, heritage, only partially accessible to European science, appeals to Russian sources and the achievements of Russian and European Oriental studies. Cooperation with Kazan and Russian scientists, participation in the activities of the Society of Archeology, History and Ethnography under Kazan University, acquaints Tatar historians with the Russian and European historical science. The ascending to the methodology of the Arab-Muslim historiography, for example Ibn-Khaldun, understanding of history as a system of knowledge based on reliable facts, which not only expounds the past, but comprehends the essence and causes of events, is strengthened by the mastery of modern methods of scientific search and analysis.

Questions of national history in the works by Tatar historians at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries

Historical literature on the history of the Tatars is represented by studies systematically describing the past of the Tatar people (some of them were declared as textbooks), monographic works dedicated to individual state formations, popular publications and periodicals. The only body of the Russian Muslim periodical press, consistently and purposefully propagandizing historical knowledge, was the Orenburg journal Shura, headed

by the historian, prominent religious and public figure R. Fakhrutdinov. Hundreds of articles covered pages of not only national, but also general Turkic, Muslim and world history. Playing a significant role in the dissemination of historical knowledge among the Turkic-Muslim peoples of Russia, the journal confirmed the recognized leadership of Tatar historiography.

Considering the recreation of the past of their people as the main task, the Tatar authors paid more attention to "external history", that is, event series, supplementing the presentation of the military-political history with information about the location, neighbors, customs, beliefs of the ancestors of the Tatars, the cultural and economic development of their states. At the same time, certain theoretical principles for investigating the history of the Tatar people were put forward, and today they preserve methodological significance.

The division of the history of the Tatars into two main periods, until the fall of Kazan and within Russia, proposed by Sh. Mardjani was became common in the studies on national history. The past before the fall of the Kazan Khanate was considered a "true and independent history", and most of the works were devoted only to this period. If a relatively objective reflection of the first period was possible under limitations, the censorship in turn did not leave any hopes for an exposition of the actual situation of the Tatars after 1552. Nevertheless, the role of Islam and the Muslim clergy in preserving and unifying the people after the loss of independence was singled out and revealed by the Tatar historians based on the specific material. As a decisive factor of ethnic consolidation, the unity of the historical fate of the Turkic communities conquered by Russia was considered.

A characteristic feature of the works on the history of the Tatar people was the coverage of the common Turkic past. Historians could not escape the idealization of the Turkic antiquity – a trait inherent in the historical consciousness of the era of national revival, when the desire for a better future leads to the search for greatness in the past. Showing the vicissitudes of the political history of the Turks and Tatars, they specified the need for intra-ethnic and inter-Turkic unity.

The national consolidation put forward the problem of ethnonym and ethnic identity: "Who are we? Muslims, Bulgars, Turks or Tatars?" Islamic identity, expressed in the adoption of the confessional term "Muslim" as a self-designation, was necessary to withstand the opposition of the Christian onslaught, but did not satisfy the nation seeking its own particular historical place among other Turkic-Muslim peoples. The origin of the Tatars became the core problem of the first volume "Mustafad al-akbar...", where the scientist addresses the reader from its first pages with the famous question "Who are you, if not a Tatar?" and stands for this name. He for the first time scientifically substantiates the origin of the Volga Tatars from the

Bulgars and reveals the historical continuity of the Volga Bulgaria, the Golden Horde, the Kazan Khanate and the Turkic-Muslims of the Volga region. The Mardzhani's theory of the ethnogenesis was accepted and developed by subsequent Jadidist historians, but they could not reach unity with respect to the ethnonym.

Discussion and Conclusion

Considering the genesis and formation of historical science in connection with the process of national consolidation, which necessary element and important factor was the re-creation of the past of the Tatar people, we focused on the features and problems of coverage of national history, due to socially significant tasks of the time. Later on, based on the systematization of material on the work by individual historians, one should begin a comparative study of the specifically historical problems, conceptual and theoretical-methodological approaches. A large number of studies on the history of Islam have been waiting for special study. We have limited ourselves to the development of this special and very important direction of historiography. There is a need for a source study of the creative heritage of the late XIX-early XX centuries. As already emphasized, the development of methodological issues remains a topical issue, among which is the problem of synthesis in the Tatar historical thought of Western and Eastern traditions. A promising area for future research is the study of the role of works of fiction in the formation of the historical consciousness of the Tatar society.

Analysis of historical works, discussions and publications in periodicals allows us to conclude that the ethnogenetic concepts of historians were both a formative factor and an expression of the trend that became dominant in Tatar social thought: the predominant part of the national elite, regardless of adherence to any of ethnonyms, recognized a different from other Turkic and Muslim peoples cultural and national identity of the Tatars and advocated its development. The majority supported the self-name "Tatars". The decisive factor was that when consolidating different ethnic groups, only the most common and integrating self-name could become entrenched, just as the "Tatars" was. As one of the directions of the developing historical science, the studies should be considered that covered the history of Islam from the standpoint of reformism, which occupied a significant place in the repertoire of books on history. The urgent need to return to the original purity of the doctrine was confirmed by an appeal to the former glory of the early Muslim societies and the era of the Muslim renaissance. This period includes the beginning of the study of national historical thought. We should emphasize that the appearance of works devoted to the development of knowledge about the past, the emergence of historical science, testified to the constitution of history as a

science, since historiography as the history of historical science is one of the most important elements of its self-awareness.

Achievement of a new stage in the development of historical knowledge was confirmed by works and publications concerning the problems of methodology and philosophy of history. They were few in number, but the very fact that the course of the philosophy of history based on positivistic ideas (developed by Iu. Akchura), published later as a separate book, was taught in the Kazan madrasah "Muhammadiia". The development of the Tatar historiography of the general history and history of Russia was associated with the Jadidist transformations and the need to provide the madrasah using modern methods of teaching with teaching aids. However, the range of works on world and Russian history was not limited only to educational needs; educational literature was also compilational and quite heterogeneous. It is known that historical education is a part of history as a science. The development of school history education among the Tatars, the publication of textbooks, the obligatory nature of history lessons in the secular block of subjects, the public attention to the problems of teaching history and their discussion on the pages of periodicals make it possible, in particular, to talk about the genesis of this area of historical science.

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Conflict of interest

The authors give confirmation that the presented data does not contain a conflict of interest.

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