

# The Dialogue of Civilizations and Cultures: the Volga Region Experience

Vera V. Buravlyova<sup>1</sup> & Farit N. Shakurov<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kazan, Russia

Correspondence: Vera V. Buravleva, Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, Kremlyovskaya street, 18, Kazan 420008, Russia. E-mail: buravlevav@inbox.ru

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## Abstract

The relevance of the problem is defined by the value of the cultural and historical experience of interaction between Islamic and Christian civilizations in the Volga region to form the cultural dialogue at the present stage. Besides, the reference to the historical experience of the cultural dialogue is dictated by the need to design a concept of the cultural development of multinational Russia. The purpose of the article is to show the role of education and enlightenment in the formation of inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue in the Volga region. Objectives of the study and features of the studied material –was what determined the choice of a comparative and historical method and the concrete analysis as the main research methods which most completely reveal the methodological principle of historicism. The article emphasizes the main stages of the cultural dialogue in the Volga region and reveals that at the traditions revival stage the experience of cross-cultural interaction of the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> - the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, including in the field of education and enlightenment is used. The materials of the article can be useful for creating-generalizing works on Russian history and cultural history of the people of Russia, for students' educational work as well as for administrative decision-making in the social and cultural spheres.

**Keywords:** traditionalism, religious reformism, enlightenment, Jadidism, intercultural dialogue, tolerance, inter-ethnic, inter-faith interaction

## 1. Introduction

Russia as the center of Eurasia represents the meeting place of the West and the East, the Christian and the Islamic worlds. The dialogue of civilizations began in the Volga region. It was here, where significant and important traditions of inter-ethnic and inter-faith interaction were evolved to form the dialogue of cultures for centuries today. Due to that, the authors have made an attempt to show the role of education and enlightenment in the cultural dialogue while comparing the stages of its development: the origin and formation of inter-faith interaction in the past and its revival today. To study the traditions of cultural interaction of the people of the Volga region it is obviously possible to apply to the research area of "Borderlands history". Features of spiritual and political development of Muslims of the Volga and Ural regions that are essentially important for understanding of the processes considered in this paper are covered in the monograph by German scholar Michael Kemper (Kemper, 2009). Problems of Muslims' "non-Russian" education in the Russian Empire of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>-of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are investigated in the article by L. Brodovskaya, V. Buravlyova and A. Gafarova. As a result of the analysis the authors came to the conclusion about colonial character of the educational policy directed on Muslim assimilation. At the same time the system of "non-Russian" education became an important factor of development of enlightenment of the Muslim people (Brodovskaya et al., 2012).

The central place in American scholar Robert Geraci's study "Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia" is given to the so-called "Il'minsky's system" (Geraci, 2005). The main value of the work by R. Geraci is its versatility. The Empire's interaction with its "Eastern citizens" is examined on several levels: from the approach of central departments to local initiatives to school education and missionary work within the framework of theoretical and ideological attitudes and definite practices. R. Geraci studied the competition of Muslim and Orthodox projects in the Volga region.

Paul Vert in his monograph on missionary work of the Orthodox Church in the Volga and Kama region also notes

Ilminsky's innovations. P. Vert covers a number of ethnic variety problems within the Orthodox community. He also mentions the relationship of Christian Orthodoxy with "non-Russian confessions". The author makes an unambiguous conclusion that the difference between self-consciousness and peaceful coexistence was the phenomenon of life in the Russian Empire (Werth, 2002). Manchester University professor Vera Tolz writes about the role of Oriental studies in Russia in the dialogue of cultures.

B. Buravlyova and A. Gafarov (2012) note the uneven distribution of European innovations in the Muslim community as the acculturation of Russia and the westernization of the Middle East. Characteristics of Europeanization manifested across the spectrum of the traditional lifestyle of Russian Muslims from the elements of everyday culture to the perception of European principles in the fields of art, education and science. Tatar literary language of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century also indicates that certain European terms and concepts had entered the Russian Muslims' life and the communication between the Russians and Tatars. Russian culture became an active promoter of introducing Russian Muslims to the achievements of the European civilization (Buravlyova & Gafarov, 2012).

The Republic of Tatarstan has been recognized by UNESCO as a regional model of peacekeeping for a number of reasons including the historical genesis of traditions of tolerance. It is a great achievement of all the participants of the inter-ethnic and interconfessional dialogue. The informational, academic and methodological support plays an important role in this process. Research and practice conferences, round tables and seminars with the participation of scholars, representatives of government agencies and religious leaders of the country became traditional. The proceedings of the conferences have been published (Nabiyev, 2013).

## 2. Methodological Framework

Studying the cultural and historical experience of the interaction of Islamic and Christian civilizations, as well as the identification of the role of education and enlightenment in the formation of inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue are required to form the cultural dialogue at the present stage in the Volga region. Objectives of the study and features of the studied material –was what determined the choice of a comparative and historical method and the concrete analysis as the main research methods which most completely reveal the methodological principle of historicism.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 *Islam in the Historical Destiny of Tatars after the Loss of Their Statehood*

The Kazan khanate became the first state conquered by Russia. This fact predetermined the future attitude of the Russian power towards Tatars. They were dislodged from the large river banks and from the important roads; the forcible baptism became a core of the state policy. Military actions of national riots suppression within the first century of the Russian dominion became the usual form of government. The Tatars were a significant and powerful force in Stepan Razin's troops. In the XVIII century a number of revolts paralyzed the government possibility of extensive Zakamye and Cisurals area. Only a lesson taught by Pugachev riots forced the empress Catherine II to change the two centuries strategy, when they not only supported the self-appointed tsar and rose together with other peoples against social oppression, but also showed enviable organization abilities and strong determination to protect their national and religious rights.

In the conditions of religious persecutions Islam became the force, which united the ethnos. All subsequent history and spiritual life of Tatars were defined substantially by this fact. The burden of a leader, a guardian of its people was accepted by a mullah; the mosques and madrasahs were turned into organizing public institution. The parish community became the main form of the social organization for Tatars. The Tatar cultural, intellectual, political elite belonged to or originated from clergy up to the Soviet times. Existence in the conditions of opposition to Christianity defined isolation and conservatism of the community, domination of the medieval dogmatism rejecting any changes in spiritual life. The traditional ideology could not give new thinking demanded by the realities of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is subject not only to the Russian Muslims increasingly involved in the new economic and social processes; all Muslim East found itself on the colonial sidelines of history.

The renovation ideology was possible only in the form of reformatory ideas within the scope of traditional religious consciousness. Any new idea had to be consecrated with Islam, and only then it could be accepted by the society.

G. Kursavi and Sh. Mardzhani became the founders of this movement. The renovation emerged and obtained the most consecutive development among the Tatars of Russia, where the traditional ideology was especially strong due to the certain circumstances. The possible reason for it may be, that almost seven generations were compelled to seek for the answer to the main and very secular and grounded question: does this nation have any

future, and what should be done to realize this future? And when the rest of the Muslim world faced a similar question, the Tatars already knew, where and how to look for an answer.

### *3.2 The Development of the International Interaction between Christian Orthodoxy and Islam*

In the Tatar intellectual movement religious reformation was developing a close relationship with enlightenment, logically preceding it as a necessity to consecrate any new undertakings. Enlighteners criticized medieval stagnancy and congestion, supporting the spread of secular education and science. At the outset of the enlightenment movement were such figures as Ibrahim Halfin, G.Utyz Imyani. Its most prominent representatives of mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century were Sh. Mardjani, Kh. Faizkhanov and K. Nasyri. Russian reality influenced the Tatar enlightenment tremendously. Speaking Russian was required not only as a practical necessity, but also as a tool to become familiar with secular knowledge and European culture. The role played by Kazan University, and especially its Orientalists, in achieving these goals of achieving a new level of international development was invaluable. Russian orientalism has a special place in the dialogue of cultures and civilizations (Tolz, 2012).

Manchester University Professor V. Tolz notes that Russian orientalists managed to avoid "colonial arrogance" concerning the peoples and cultures of the East. V. Tolz states that national policy ideas of the 1920s were not innovative at the intellectual level. The orientalists left a mark on the national policy of "the first decade of the Soviet power" (Tolz, 2012).

The practical embodiment of the educational program, synonymous with renewal per se, was the Jadidist movement. In Jadidist madrasahs about ¾ of the academic curriculum was given to secular subjects. Russian was a daily lesson; neither of the other subjects was given as many hours. Studying History of Russia was obligatory. The first Tatar book on Russian history was K. Nasyri's "The Brief History of Russia", published in 1890.

Comprehending the history of the Russian-Tatar relations, the Tatar social thought addressed the subject of "common homeland". It was mostly reflected in publications on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of the Patriotic War of 1812 and the tercentenary anniversary of the House of Romanovs. These papers presented a series of historical facts confirming that Tatars defended the independence of their common homeland with Russians. Writers, poets and journalists tried to show the commonness of the history of Tatars and Russians and thus to prove the point of "equal rights to everyone in the common homeland" (Shakurov, 2002).

One of the leaders of the democratic movement G. Iskhaki named unwillingness to study in Russian schools and alienation from the Russian culture among the "progress obstacles" which can lead Tatars to extinction (Ishaki, 1904).

Such views characterize the generation of Tukay, Iskhaki, Fatikh Amirkhan. Rejecting medieval stagnancy and criticizing traditional Tatar society, they saw its antipode in the dynamically developing Russia.

### *3.3 Imperial Discourse of Acculturation*

With the expansion of the borders of the Russian Empire to the west the problem of non-Russian population acculturation gained more importance. The developing ethno-confessional situation predetermined a particular interest of the imperial administration to the life of Muslims. The Muslims' involvement in the system of national education was thought to be a new perspective of colonial acculturation. Anyway, the trend did not gain support in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the Muslims, frightened by forcible Christianization, steered clear of state schools preferring to get religious education at madrasahs and mektebs. As a result, special secular educational institutions were started for the non-Russians. In 1818 in Kazan the first project of a similar school was presented by the mufti M. Khusainov and the professor of the Kazan University P. S. Kondyrev. This project intended to open two schools for Muslims in Kazan and Orenburg. Except religious subjects, teaching Russian and one of the European languages as well as general education disciplines were included in the curriculum. The schools were to train decree mullahs, officials, teachers; the best graduates were to acquire the right to go to the university. This project wasn't realized because of contradictions with official bodies. The trustee of the Kazan educational district M.L. Magnitsky considered these schools as establishments for activating missionary work. The issues of education for non-Russians were discussed up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Along with public institutions the attempts to open district, public and private schools were made. The principles of managing education and the methods of training "non-Russians" were extensively discussed, which further raised the key question of teaching language at such schools. For mission-related teaching community even the possibility of introducing muslim religious subjects seemed quite disputable. There were debates about voluntariness of education for "non-Russians". It is obvious that the program of education for "non-Russians" directly depended on the goals of the imperial policy.

The contradictions of the Russian pedagogical thought of that period are clearly represented by so-called "Il'minsky's system". Though being a strong supporter of educating non-Russian nations, N.I. Il'minsky repeatedly warned against acquainting Tatars with the achievements of the European science for fear of their national consciousness development. He emphasized the inextricable connection of education and Christianization; he was one of the organizers of the missionary society "Saint Guriya's Brotherhood". On the basis of "The regulations on primary national schools" a number of "brethren" schools (1864) were started. It was planned to prepare teachers and the clergy from the indigenous people. Il'minsky initiated establishing the Kazan central school for christened Tatars (1863), then the Kazan non-Russian teachers' seminary (1872), which he considered as key elements in the system of "missionary institutions" of the Kazan region and the East of European Russia at large. Regardless of the objectives, "Il'minsky's system" contributed to spreading the Russian language and secular education among christened Tatars. Teaching on the basis of the native language of "non-Russians" was the advantage of this system.

In 1870 "Il'minsky's system" was officially recognized by "The regulations on the education of non-Russians" and recommended its implementation in practice. However, in fact teaching in Russian was prevailing in the state system of education of "non-Russians". In the 70th of the 19<sup>th</sup> century three-year Russian-Tatar schools were opened which officially did not aim at teaching the native language at all. In 1876 four-year Tatar teacher's schools in Kazan and Simferopol' were started. They also could not avoid the strong Russian language influence.

In the following years the government policy of the "Russian" education of Muslims continued. "The rules about primary schools for non-Russians living in the east and southeast of Russia" (March 31, 1903) imposed exclusive studying of the Russian language. As a result of the explosion of discontent among the Muslim population in 1907 and 1913 the new "Rules about primary schools for non-Russians" were introduced. But they didn't change the colonial character of the official school policy directed on the assimilation of Muslims. Nevertheless, the system of education for "non-Russians" became an important factor of the development of education of the Muslim people.

At the same time during the attempts "to turn Tatars into Russians" and to weaken the influence of Islam, the Russians changed their visions of themselves, the nation and the culture (Geraci, 2005). The orthodox community of the Volga and Kama region was experiencing the influence of "non-Russian confessions" (Werth, 2002). Researchers also point to the similarity and interdependence of political views between a number of democratic Russian intellectuals and Muslim modernists.

Rejection of Russia was demonstrated by none of the representatives of the Tatar public arena of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the struggle for national and religious rights united different classes of society. Even the idea of the Turkic-Tatar unity was popularized by Ismail Gasprinsky in the context of searching Russian-Muslim consensus, and he offered the way of developing such relations (Gasprinskii, 1993).

### *3.4 Revival of Traditions*

The revival of national culture in the modern Russia is connected with the process of "the religious revival" in the post-Soviet period (new confessions priority, which is characterized mainly by "ethnic confessions priority"). The religion is understood as a means of culture and moral support. Religious and national elements show such high degree of interpenetration, that sometimes religious and national concepts become identical.

The dialogue between representatives of various religions is an objective reality of social dynamics in Tatarstan. The balanced development of religions in Tatarstan presents a particular interest. The compliance with the interest balance of two religions – Islam and Orthodoxy- and the equality of all religions before the law plays an extremely important role. Islam, the second religion in number of believers in Russia, is a traditional religion for more than thirty ethnic groups of Russia, as well as for considerable part of migrants, therefore the experience of Tatarstan deserves attention.

A lot of common approaches in sociocultural space of Russia were found by the modern Russian researchers analyzing the main conceptual documents of both faiths - the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the Russian Muslims. Inter-faith dialogue is directed at consolidation of efforts in the solution of social and educational tasks. Labor ethics in Orthodoxy and Islam have one common denominator – moral approach to economy, when a man with his requirements, both material, and a spiritual, is made a corner stone.

The attitude to work, wealth, social responsibility and mercy of the owner are estimated similarly both in Orthodoxy and Islam. Both the national and private charity was widespread in the multinational and poly-confessional Russia. Today charity becomes a platform for the ethnic confessional development.

One of the factors generating the understanding of the "alien" in the conditions of poly-confessional society is

education in general and the religious education in particular. The system of Muslim education created in the Republic of Tatarstan at present covers different levels including Islamic university (RIU) with the secular regulatory status. Formation of religious education on the basis of theological heritage traditions developed by the great Tatar theologians of the end of THE 19TH - the beginning of the 20th centuries (Nabiyev, 2010) turned out to be the most complex problem for creation of this system. So far Russia lacks any textbooks written in compliance with the local traditions of Muslims. We have already noted that the pre-Soviet cultural, political elite of Tatars either belonged to clergy or originated therefrom. Today Muslim educational institutions of the Republic of Tatarstan have not yet reached the level the Muslim intellectuals of the high qualification education capable of active participation in the improvement of the Russian society. According to the rector of the Russian Islamic University in Kazan R. Mukhametshin, Muslim educational institutions suffer from stagnation.

It is a challenge not only for religious figures. The secular intellectuals can also make their contribution into formation of full-fledged system of Muslim education, which would be based on historical traditions of the Russian Muslims and adapted to the Russian reality.

This factor is considered when training clergy for the poly-confessional region of the Volga both by the Islamic university in Kazan and the Kazan theological seminary, despite the difficulties of the religious education formation.

It is necessary to carry on tradition of influence of the Kazan gymnasium and the Kazan University on the cultural development and education of all peoples living in the Kazan region. Learning oriental languages, including Tatar, has been started first in the Kazan gymnasium. It is difficult to overestimate a role of the Kazan orientologists in the development of education, literature and press of the Tatar, Chuvash, Mari, Mordovian and other peoples. The dialogue is important not so much between the religions, but between the representatives of these or those faiths. Obviously, it is necessary to pay attention to the issues raised in the dialogue of the secular and religious consciousness. The schools of Tatarstan introduce "A basis of religious cultures and secular ethics" comprehensive training course, which is one of the first steps in implementation of the spiritual and moral education concept of the younger generation in Russia.

Revival of national culture and religion today represents a certain return to traditions. Studying these traditions and formation of tolerance is one of the challenges for teaching history and other humanitarian courses. Much of the insufficient attention to this issue in the course of teaching is owed to the textbooks content.

Russia is the country, in which cultures interaction traditions go deep into centuries.

The Russian State was founded as multinational one, however, this process failed to find due coverage in educational literature. Educational literature of Russian history and culture does not regard Russia as the multiethnic, poly-confessional state.

The history of Russia is described by the authors only as a history of the Russian people; you will hardly meet any mention of the multinational character of the Russian state, its federal framework.

These issues are considered only in few textbooks, which are, as a rule, published in the regions (Ufa, Izhevsk, Khabarovsk).

But it is extremely important to emphasize a role of various peoples in ethnic genesis of the Russian society, to focus attention on the facts of cross-cultural dialogue at all stages of history.

The growth in number of schools with training in the native language in RT is substantiated not so much by the demand or requirement of the population, as the language policy of the government. Equality of languages in the republic is understood as allocation of an equal amount of hours on studying of the Russian and the native language. All schools teach the Tatar language and the Tatar literature. And if 4 hours per week are allocated for the Russian language, the Tatar language can be allocated 5 or even 6 hours at the expense of additional hours, the republic is entrusted to introduce. The standards at present offer some models of the curriculum, including for schools with the native (non-Russian) language. And all schools of Tatarstan have passed on to this model. The Russian government, the Ministry of Education and Science are very often lobbying the training of the state (national) languages of the republics.

RT is one of the most advanced republics in the solution of language education issues. In 1992 the Law "On Languages of the Peoples in the Republic of Tatarstan" was adopted in the republic, approving the need of all-round development for cultures and languages of all people living in it. It emphasizes that all languages of Tatarstan peoples enjoy the state support. Tatar and Russian are proclaimed as two state languages.

In compliance with the requirements of this Law, the State program on preservation and development of

languages of the peoples in the Republic (1994) is accepted and realized. The development of bilingualism is necessary at present. In the last decade there occurs a great interest to studying of English in interrelation with Russian and Tatar. Thus a trilingual education problem has been created.

Construction of the Qol Sharif Mosque and restoration of Annunciation Cathedral in the Kazan Kremlin became symbols of tolerance of Orthodoxy and Islam in the republic. The idea of cross-cultural interaction in the multiethnic Volga region has laid the foundation of the Bolgar-Sviyazhsk project.

#### **4. Discussions**

Complex and boundary character of the problem is defined features of its historiography. The first period of the scientific research of cultural interaction of the people of the Volga and Ural regions includes the end of the 19th century. First of all, the scientific works of this period are associated with activity of east category of Kazan University and its scientific societies. At the beginning of the 20th century the Euroasian school updated conceptual base of studying the problem cultural interaction of the people of Russia. In general, the end of 19<sup>th</sup> - the beginning of the 20th centuries is characterized by a linguistic and ethnographic bias of the research of cultural interaction. During the Soviet period features of enlightenment in the Volga region Kazan university influence on culture of the people of Eastern Russia, biographic and ethnographic aspects of cultural interaction of the people were studied Russia (S. M. Mikhaylov).

In the 1990s the new period of studying cultural heritage of the people of Russia begins. The research cycle of "Culture, Religion and Society" made the greatest contribution to studying the problems of cultural dialogue of the people of the Volga and Ural regions, which is represented 23 releases of the books published in 1997-2013. On the basis of interdisciplinary approach the cycle undertakes a complex study of cultural interaction experience of the people of the Volga region, including cultural and historical experience of Islamic and Christian interaction development, the state and confessional relations. The basic framework of the project and some of its results were stated in the report of the project manager - Kazan University Professor R.A. Nabiyeu at the International scientific conference (Kazan, May 23<sup>rd</sup> 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013) "Sociocultural potential of inter-faith dialogue" (Nabiyeu, 2013). The problem of education and enlightenment at the stage of origin of Orthodox and Islamic cross-cultural interaction and the revival of traditions in comparative perspective was not considered in the previous researches.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Cultural and ethnical dialogue in the Volga region has an old and rather contradictory history. Initially the relations between the Russian state and Muslim citizens developed in a complicated and ambiguous way. But during the same period generations have amassed the positive experience of peaceful coexistence of Orthodox Christians and Muslims as well as the experience of their service to the unified homeland. Since the Kasimovsky kingdom of the Ivan the Terrible period and before the Russian revolutions of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many notable Muslims had served faithfully to "The White Tsar", being made the cream of Russian nobility. During the post-reform stage, since 1860s young Muslim intellectuals prepared an extensive program of cultural and social reforms (Jadidism) and became an integral part of the intellectual elite of the Russian Empire.

For Russia the cultural dialogues – the way of the country's survival. Only this dialogue is able to provide preservation and development of the cultural diversity. The modern historical education base does not take the experience of traditions of inter-ethnic and inter-faith interaction into consideration neither does it promote the formation of tolerance in the Russian society. The constant mode of the dialogue and enlightenment for mutual understanding – that is the way to inter-faith tolerance. It has to be reflected in academic literature and in generalizing works on the cultural history of Russia. The development of bilingualism and trilingualism has a great importance.

#### **6. Recommendations**

The materials of the article can be useful for creating generalizing works on Russian history and cultural history of the people of Russia, for students' educational work. Going far beyond the educational process, the materials of the article can be used as well as for administrative decision-making in the social and cultural spheres.

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