

# Russian Muslim Lifestyle Renovation Problems in the Modernistic Literature of the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## Abstract

The relevance of the research problem is due to the active processes of political, social and cultural revival taking place in modern Muslim community. The objective of the article is to study the attempts made with the view of theoretical understanding of modernization of Russian Muslims in modernist literature (the second half of the XIXth - the beginning of the XXth centuries). A leading approach to the study of this problem is the civilized approach; it allowed to consider the Muslims of Russia to be a part of pan-Islamic civilization and regard the transformation of their lifestyle in the context of general processes of modernization of the Muslim world. On the basis of studying the works of the reformatory, educational, national liberation movements' representatives the author came to the conclusion that the Jadid literature was assessed contradictorily: the modernistic discourse was combined with devotion to traditions. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the religious reformatory and educational problematic was becoming secondary at the same time was giving the ground to the social and political problems. The prerevolutionary literature laid the foundation for the scientific traditions of studying the Muslim modernism processes. This article submissions can be useful for elaboration of training courses on Islamic history, Muslim peoples, the history of the Tatar people, as well as the history of culture and social thought of the peoples of Russia.

**Keywords:** Muslim community, modernization, modernistic literature

## 1. Introduction

Since the turn of the 19th century, the rapid integration of the Islamic world into the global processes has led to an active involvement of the Muslim countries in the structure of political, economic, and cultural contacts at the international level, the progress of scientific world outlook and secular education; it brought new technologies to Muslims' lives, along with some elements of the European culture. The modernization processes of the Muslim community generally reflected the global trends of social and cultural integration and globalization of the economic system. Within a hundred years, the Muslim lifestyle has altered so radically that the scale of the changes is almost comparable to the millennium of previous development. The active European colonial expansion into the Muslim East contributed to that in a significant measure. However, the modernization was not just a response to the European challenge, but also an end to stagnation which had been lasting for many centuries. The retardation of once flourishing Islamic world from the Western development trends, followed by colonial or semi-colonial dependence from the European countries, revealed the profound crisis of its deep-rooted social and political system. As the transformation and destruction of medieval institutions went on, there occurred perspectives of renovation of lifestyle foundations. New trends demanded rebranding of traditional principles, particularly in the religious and legal areas. The modernization came to be a natural reaction to the crisis of traditionalism, hugely enhanced by the crisis of the colonial system.

The process of renovation, which began in India (Iqbal, 2002) (which further penetrated to Egypt, Turkey and other countries), in the XIX century was joined by the Muslims of the Russian Empire, where the processes of modernization along with common tendencies had some specific features. The way of modernization in different regions of the country was mostly dependant on local traditions, the intensity and continuance of socio-cultural intercommunication, the tactics and strategies of the colonial policy of the Empire centre, on the impact of revolutionary movements, etc. Despite a number of various issues, the Muslim modernism in Russia (the jadidism), as in other countries, was founded on the religious-reformation movement, on the basis of which the

enlightenment was developing and the establishment of national ideology of Muslim peoples was risen. Perceiving the movement of the Islamic world, the Russian Muslims had a great impact on the processes of the whole Muslim world.

Powerful movement of renewal gave rise to a wide modernist journalism and scientific literature in which Muslim intellectuals attempted to comprehend the gaining strength tendency. Until recently this sphere of historiography has not been the object of special research. At the same time, the importance of research in this area is related to contemporary processes of religious revival, which again have raised questions of the place of Islam and the Muslim Ummah in modern society, the ways of integration of Islamic religious and spiritual values and cultural traditions in modern world (Mukhametshin, 2005). The historical traditions of Jadidism represent an important experience in implementing modernizational reforms of the Muslim community (Nabiev et al., 2010; Gafarov, 2014). Strong debate on Jadidism (and "neojadidism") problems are not accidental either now (Nabiyev, 2014) or in the Soviet period of time (Gafarov, 2014).

## 2. Methodological Framework

Methodological basis of this research is a civilized approach, the most important provisions of which were developed in philosophical and historical works of Danilevsky N. I. (1991), Spengler, O. (1993), Toynbee, A. (1991), etc.

They defined the general concept of this study, as well as a set of theoretical and methodological assumptions and ideas concerning the ways of development of the Russian Muslim community. Civilized approach allowed the author to consider the Muslims of Russia to be a part of pan-Islamic civilization and regard the transformation of their lifestyle in the context of general processes of modernization of the Muslim world.

Russian Muslims themselves, despite their centuries-long colonial acculturation, still considered themselves a natural part of the Islamic civilization by the turn of the Modern Age. It is in the light of their identity of a northern enclave of the Islamic world that the Tatar scholars of the 19th and early 20th centuries, such as S. Mardjani, Kh. Faizkhanov, G. Faizkhanov, R. Fakhretdin, and M. Bigiyev, regarded the history of the Muslim nations of Russia. This approach generally reflected the common stance towards their identity, taken by Russian orientalists. (While emphasizing the diversity of the Muslim world modern orientalists recognize the obvious similarities of social and cultural development in various countries (Khalid, 1998)). In his work "Muhammad as the prophet" (1881) Devlet-Kildeev connected the inevitable processes of integration primarily with the scientific progress and the development of the means of communication: "nowadays... railways and electricity more and more draw peoples of the Earth together"; "and only recently, by means of more frequent contacts with the West, the Muslims have necessity and aspiration for assuming the European cultural origins (Devlet-Kildeev, 1881). According to A. Bennigsen, the modernistic reformism was created by the emerging intelligentsia and merchant bourgeoisie (Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay, 1960). Shamil Mardjani visited the Middle East (Turkey, Egypt, Hijaz) during his pilgrimage in 1880. In his travel notes "The travel of Marjani" ("Rikhlat al-Mardjani") he noted the common tendency towards modernization, that occupied the Muslims' world. He also drew his attention to the developed system of Egyptian railways that was faster than in Russia (Iuzeev, 2003). Obviously, the research methodology related to the objective of the article, required the necessity to resort to the system-integrated approach (along with the civilized one), its basic elements: structural-functional, dialectical, typological, hermeneutic, phenomenological, comparative and other methods.

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The interdisciplinary nature of this study predetermined the resort to methods of religious studies, cultural studies, source studies, and other humanities. These methodological approaches allow to determine the stages of development, the nature and specifics of the Muslim modernist literature, the degree of its adequacy in reflecting changes (political, economic, cultural, which occurred in the XIX – early XX centuries, in the period of breakdown of traditionalism and renewal of lifestyle of the Muslim community.

## 3. Results

Mursa Alim (1882) writes about the Orient movement "in the sense of transformation of the old Muhammad

concepts to Islam and their coordination with the data of the modern science and with the right comprehension of Koran". According to his opinion, "the first place in (this-A.G.) movement of the Islamic thought on the way to scientific and philosophical progress by all means belongs to the Muslim people of India, which head Syed Ahmad Khan Bahadur draws attention " (Mursa Alim,1882).“We are now present, as he explains, at the beginning of new cultural revolution by successors of Indostan Muslims” (Mursa Alim, 1882). However Mursa Alim observes only the opening stage of cultural renovation: "The comprehensive course of studies for the last 25 years alone again (as in the days of prosperity of the Muslim education-A.G.) begins to be included in the syllabus of the Madrasah but still only in India, Turkey and Egypt"(Mursa Alim, 1882). Furthermore he admits, that "Russian Muslims" are still drawn in illiteracy (except for the smaller part of the Caucasus and the Lithuanian Tatars); "the Volga-river Muslims have not advanced at all (so far-A.G.) forward to the cultural growth since the moment they became the part of the Russian Empire"(Mursa Alim, 1882). Mursa Alim in his series of articles "The Islam and the Mohammedaism"(1882), analyzing the national and the foreign literature on the questions of Muslim modernism emphasizes, above all, the work of I. Gaspinsky "The Russian Islam: Thoughts, remarks and observations"(1881), that became a starting point for the Tatar publicism concerning this problem. The sections 8 and 9 are dedicated to this (Mursa Alim, 1882).

Gasprinsky, after visiting the principal centers of Islamic Modernism (Constantinople, Smyrna, Cairo, Damascus) as far back as in the early 1870-s, also saw the growing European influence in the Middle East. Regretful of "the complete isolation (of Muslims in Russia - A.G.) from the universal culture", the Crimean enlightener in his book "Russian Muslims" (1881) voices a hope that "Russian Muslims" will conduct civilization to the East (Gasprinsky, 1881). Afterwards in his "Russian-Eastern Agreement" (1896), Gasprinsky will emphasize certain success achieved. While back in 1881 he wrote of the single Turkic-language newspaper "Ziya-iKavkaz" ("The Sunbeam of Caucasus") issued by Tiflis administration, ten years later his "Tarjeman" ("Interpreter", 1883) gained a wide audience in Russia and abroad (Ismail Bey Gasprinsky, 1993).

In their works, the Muslim scholars – contemporaries and alert participants of the active modernization process triggered by Sh. Mardjani (1999), K. Nasyri (1977), Devlet-Kildejev (1881), A. Bayazitov (1898), and, a little later, R. Fakhretdin (2006), A.-Z. Validi (1915) and others – made the first attempts to comprehend "from the inside" the ongoing changes in the spiritual, social and political identities of Muslims in Russia. The estimate of the first reformers' (A. Kursavi and Kh. Faizkhanov) creative career was already given by Mardjani (Mardjani, 1999; Shikhabuddin, 2005). Analyzing their views, not only did he stand out as a strong supporter of the reformation movement, but also as a historiographer of the growing controversy between modernists and anti-modernists (the soon-to-be Jadidists and Qadimists), assigning to this struggle a distinct socio-political tone.

Despite calling Kursavi "the most worthy among them... , whose biography is described" in "Wafiat al-aslaf..." and highly estimating his accomplishments in the field of theology, Mardjani, however, dared not to call the disgraced scholar reformist or renovator of conception about belief openly. Kursavi appears to be a kind of defender of the primordial principles of Islam and consistent fighter against the grisly bid'ah (innovations). However, Mardjani indirectly makes Kursavi the founder of religious reformation (Mardjani, 1999) in contrast to the ignorant traditionalists. Pertaining to H. Faizkhanov, Mardjani takes more definite position. Noting that "he did his utmost to revive the former desire of Muslims to the study of rational and traditional sciences and was looking for ways to achieve this goal," Mardjani sets forth his student's project - to create "a new and glorious Madrasah" based "on Sheriyat and common sense." Defending the reform of Muslim education, and probably trying to protect himself, Mardjani comments on H.Faizkhanov's appeals to study European "rational" science, the Russian language, getting help from the state, etc. in the definitions that are presentable for perception by a traditionally oriented part of the Muslim community (Mardjani, 1999). Mardjani also expressed his thoughts about the creativity of the future outstanding religious reformer and educator, a young R. Fakhretdin. Being acquainted with his book "Itibar" ("Warning") (Kazan, 1888), (Mardjani – A.G.) pointed out that "this young man submits high expectations and if he continues in the same spirit, it is a great future, waiting for him" (Iuzeev, 2003).

More consequently the religious-reformation core of Kursavi doctrine was expressed by the outstanding enlightener K. Nasyri (1977). In his article "Obituaries and gravestones ", dedicated to Kursavi, he quotes him: "The days of learning something new have not passed at all and let everyone of us coordinate their actions correspondent to their mind and will. It is a shame to follow the common flow of thoughts" (Nasyri, 1977); thus he declaims against ijtilhad and condemns taqlid. These ideas are also present in other Kursavi's words, cited by the author: " the search for the truth and its discovery lie not in blind worship to the idols and religion of the antiquity, but in the critical understanding of them, right up to exclusion of needless ones, because it is the quality and the right of the human being, which was given by God. It is not right to believe the same way as we

were in the olden days" (Nasyri, 1977). Kursavi had gone through humiliation and persecutions and for the author he was, above all, the symbol of free thinking, the symbol of the fight against illiteracy and stagnation; he was an example, in which Nasiri himself found the moral support for his selfless movement. Characterizing the new way of thinking, Nasyri tells about his father, the scientist-calligrapher Ghabdennasir, son of Hussein (d. in 1872) from Shirdan village of the Sviyazhsk district. In one of his treatise, as Nasyri states, "he disproves the common opinion that the epoch of human's educational activity has gone. Mullah Ghabdennasir did not like people who denied any aspiration for the new" (Nasiri, 1977).

In his article "Opening of the first Russian - Tatar school for Muslim children" K. Nasyri (1977) tells about vicissitudes of the struggle for starting Russian language school "between "a certain teacher" (Nasyri K.) and "a certain inspector" (Radloff V.V.). Nasyri says that it was possible to make a first step in spite of incompetent authority and Conservatives' resistance. Everything works on the model of European schools ", "subsequent teachers can certainly learn from his experience in the right conclusions. (Nasyri, 1977). However a wonderful educator warns about thoughtless and rude introduction of European experience without considering local conditions and national traditions (Nasyri, 1977). In the XIX century many orientalist had already mentioned the fatal consequences of European acculturation of Muslim society (Lebedev, 1899).

Murza Alim warned about the harmful thoughtless perception of European culture as well (1882). "While the negative phenomena (sectarianism, materialism, atheism and nihilism) are alien to Mohammedan, they can be spread however, if invited and not invited editors slavishly imitate European civilization and accept all ideas indiscriminately". "True progress, - he wrote shrewdly, is a result of intellectual work preceding the time, ... If the progress is not made by the surroundings, then the result of it can be more harmful than beneficial" (Murza Alim, 1882).

Confirming his predecessors' (Devlet-Kildeev, Gasprinsky, Murza Alim) statement that "the Islamic doctrine does not block any real improvements" (Bayazitov, 1898), A. Bayazitov, an outstanding Tatar modernist thinker, also warned the reformists against extreme measures, "reforms and novelties at all accounts, having nothing to do with the Muslims' history, opinions, way of life, spirit, and so on" (Bayazitov, 1898). Speaking without reserve about the cultural disaster that befell the Islamic world, Bayazitov, as well as Devlet-Kildeev, sought to show in his works "what circumstances drove the tide of people's lives to the wrong path and stopped the natural development of these lives, which is the very core of humanity's history" (Bayazitov, 1898). Along with the causes of religious and dogmatic nature, he mentions the social and political causes of waning of intellectual life in the Muslim cultural centers.

Following the death of Sh.Mardjani (1889), the acknowledged leader of the Russian Muslim renovation, numerous references to "the great teacher" went together with the attempts of analyzing the reformation movement. One of the first works on that front was a small book by M. Akmulla, a Bashkir poet and enlightener, entitled "Damella Shihabeddin hazrat nemmersiyase" ("In Memory of Shigabutdin Mardjani", 1892), which points out Mardjani's achievements in reforming the educational system (Akmulla, 1892).

This initiative was then continued by R. Fakhretdin, who dedicated a number of researches in the bibliographic edition "Asar" ("The Traces") and on the pages of the journal "Shura"("Advice") to the study of the theoretical inheritance of turkic-tatar reformers and enlighteners G. Kursavi, Sh. Mardjani, H. Faizkhanov, K. Nasyri, M.F. Akhundov, I. Gasprinsky, G. Akhmarov, Akmullah, K. Halidi, al-Afghani, etc. Appreciating the greatness of Kursavi, Fakhredin compares him with Alexander the Great as well as with the most outstanding personalities of the Muslim East. After the Bulgar state established Islam as a main religion, Kursavi was the only one, whose works were popular. It was him, who was the proof to the idea that (with much effort) the Muslim of Kazan may reach perfect results in sciences. After his death the Muslim people of Kazan and Bulgar, and probably the whole Muslim world lost a great scientist" (Fakhretdin, 2006). Recognizing Kursavi as a mujtahid, Fakhretdin, along with the other enthusiastic comments gives the opinion of Nugman ibn Amir Assamani: "Most representatives of the scientific world believed that Abunnasir was an innovator, who got a good tidings from the prophet Muhammad" (Fakhretdin, 2006). Citing Assamani, Fakhretdin in fact states that it was the activity of Kursavi that gave the birth to the reformation movement among Russian Muslims.

While paying the tribute to his spiritual teacher Mardjani, Fakhretdin, being the publisher and commentator of his works, gives quite a conservative estimate of his reformation activity. In his "Short Biography", edited by "Rihlat al-Mardjani" ("Mardjani's Journey", 1898; Iuzeev, 2003), Fakhretdin writes: "His doctrine, the essence of which is serving his people, presupposes criticizing some Muslim works. It is well known what hardships and persecutions the people who chose this path have to endure, and this man was steadfast in adversity. His profound ideas and mighty pen led him to his glory and made him a hero till the last" (Iuzeev, 2003). As for Kh.

Faizkhanov, Fakhretdin refers mostly to the opinions of others (N.A. Ashmarin, Sh. Mardjani) (Khusain Faizkhanov, 2008). The article about him largely uses vague expressions such as “they say”, “it is believed”, “some people think”, etc. Fakhretdin must have missed the opportunity to familiarize himself with the main works by Faizkhanov, which is confirmed by his own admission that “even after some serious research I failed to find the work... where the official correspondence between the Ottoman Sultan, the Crimean Khan and the Russian tsar is collected. It is believed that after his death, his works on history and Russian Madrasahs were lost” (Khusain Faizkhanov, 2008). Describing the school reform project, Fakhretdin proposes to his readers an extract from Mardjani’s “Wafiyat al-Aslaf”. However, in his comments he persists in his opinion that his “teacher’s” concerns regarding studying Russian and, possibly, instruction of other subjects in Russian and by Russian teachers, are exaggerated (Khusain Faizkhanov, 2008). Advocating in fact Faizkhanov’s project (not against Mardjani, but against traditionalist conservatives), Fakhretdin involuntarily emphasized Faizkhanov’s more radical views.

Beside the prominent figures, R. Fakhretdin refers to some important problems of the Muslim religious modernization. For instance, in his work "Koran and the Printing of It" (1900) he gives a review of Koran's printing history, regarding this controversial, from the traditionalist point of view, act as undoubtedly positive (Fakhretdin, 1900).

In the early 20th century the historiography of the Muslim Modernism is supplemented by Muslim scholars and publicists who take an active part in the political struggle: I. Iskhaki, A. Bukeykhanov, Y. Akchura, A.-Z. Validi, A. Tsalikov, S. Gabiyev, G. Ibragimov, D. Validi and others. (I. Dinmukhametov was quite "right in tracing a close ideological succession between A. Kursavi, Sh. Marjani and the generation of Jadidist reformers such as G. Barudi, R. Fakhretdin, M. Bigi, etc." (Islam, 2004)). G. Iskhaki in his work “Ike yez eldanson inkyiraz” (“A Disappearance 200 Years Later”, 1904) showed the picture of recent innovations in the general context of development of the “Bulgar Nation”. Pointing out certain achievements (school reform, newspapers, journals, development of theatrics), he does not fall into self-delusion. His conclusion leaves no doubt whatsoever: the reforms must go on, otherwise, it will result in “inkyiraz” (disappearance) (Iskhaki, 1998). Kh.-G. Gabashi, a historian, is more optimistic about the future of the Bashkir people. Despite the gloomy predictions of some ethnologists, he draws our attention to the fact that “there are quite a few scholars and teachers among Bashkirs who are ready to sacrifice their lives for their religion and nation; they are young people who have Russian and Muslim education”. That is a guarantee of the “soon-to come wonderful life” of Bashkirs (Gabashi, 1909).

The Modernist advances in the life of North Caucasian Muslims are the topic of "Caucasus and the Volga Region" (1913), a book of essays by A. Tsalikov. In his opinion, however, the progress here is not so great in comparison with the achievements of Russian Muslims because “the new-method Muslim schools took over the old-method ones” among the latter. As a politician and a leader of Muslim nations’ liberation movement, he points to the fact that the development of the “new method” in the early 20th century proceeds not only and not just in confrontation with the “old method” (Qadimism), but in keen struggle with the tsarist reactionary politics (Tsalikov, 1913). A. Bukeykhanov in his obituary article dedicated to Abay Kunanbayev, a Kazakh poet, made the first attempt to analyze the life and work of his prominent compatriot. This work appeared originally in such newspapers as “Semipalatinsk Paper” (1905) and “Semipalatinsk Regional Bulletin” (1906), afterwards – in a scientific publication (Bukeykhanov, 1907). In his article, written “in memory of Tatar (Azeri - A.G.) Molière”, S.I. Gabiyev points out that M.F. Akhundov was “relentless at castigating his co-religionists’ dismal bigotry, their shameful backwardness and so on”; “in his works... novelties that he wanted to enrich the Muslim world with”, “to make the Arabic alphabet simpler, more straightforward and universal for all Muslims” (Gabiyev-Kumukhsky, 1911). A large part of that period’s works analyzing the activity of Muslim reformers and enlighteners was concerned with the important dates of their lives and work. It must be admitted that these publications, written sometimes in the spirit of madhiyya/marsiyya (laudatory genres), alternate the characterization of Modernists’ innovations with eulogies to their strong adherence to Islamic traditions and canons.

In 1915 (by Hijra) many works were devoted to the 100th anniversary of the birth of Marjani. In which he received a well-deserved recognition of the founder of the national ideology, awaken identity of Russian Muslims (Tatars - in particular) to the spiritual and cultural revival. In anniversary collection “Mardjani”(1915), made by G. Gubaidullin, G. Gumari and Sh. Sharaf, the most distinguished representatives of public and Tatar scientific ideas (H. Atlasi, G. Baroudi, A.-Z. Validi, Kh.-G. Gabashi, G. Gubaidullin, G. Gumari, A. Maksudi, M.-N. Tyunteri, K. Tardzhemani, R. Fahretdin, Sh. Sharaf and others) took part in creating the collection. The four chapters of the collection tell the Marjani’s biography, his scientific research, religious and world outlook philosophical views and historical works. Speaking in support of “Tatar historian scientist” from professors’

attacks, Validov A.-Z. particularly stressed that Mardjani "devoted his whole life to science"... (in particular studying the history of the Muslim East), declaimed against ignorance and stagnation, calling Muslims for comprehension scientific knowledge (Validov, 1915).

In the first quarter of the XX century, there is a gradual change of paradigms. If Tatar intellectuals of the second half of the XIX century, partly the early XX century (Marjani Sh., Fahretdin R., Ibrahim G., Bigiyev M. and others) examined the fate of the Muslim peoples of Russia primarily in view of their belonging to the Islamic world, the next generation of scientists, reflecting the general trend of social and political development, was more focused on the idea of Turkism (Zenkovsky, 1960). Most clearly the concept of Turkic unity was realized in the historical works of the Kh-G. Gabashi, A-Z. Validi, G. Gubaidulin. As a result, historiographic emphases shift from religious and reformat issues to modernization of their entire structure of Muslim peoples of Russia, the formation and development of their national ideology.

#### 4. Discussions

The conclusions of the Muslim modernists in regard of the beginning of the renewal process of the Muslim community frankly caused a negative reaction of the official representatives of Oriental studies (I. N. Berezin (1855), Smirnov D. V. (1889), A. E. Krymsky (1903) and others), absolutely denying any positive changes in Muslims lifestyle. The aim of their research was to show the initially false nature of Islamic study: "all that is done wrong in Muslim society..., belongs to Islam" (Berezin, 1855); and consequently the impossibility of development of the Russian Muslim (mostly Turkic) peoples on the basis of their inherent civilized foundation. Krymsky A. E. explained the fact of introduction of the new modern schools, book and periodical publishing entirely due to beneficial influence of the European colonial policy (Krymsky, Miller, 1903). Soviet historiography undoubtedly perceiving Muslim modernist literature as detrimental one in theoretical and methodological aspects occupied similar positions on this issue.

#### 5. Conclusion

Thus, in the second half of the XIXth - early XXth centuries in line with the formation and development of journalism and scientific literature of the Muslim peoples of the Russian Empire (Tatars, Bashkirs, Kazakhs and others) the source material on modernization problems of the Muslim community, its primary systematization and critical reflection was accumulated. In contrast to the semi-official research, having an imprint of political involvement and socio-cultural biased estimation, the emerging national modernist historiography proposed an adequate, positive estimation of modernist processes, developed a scientific approaches, indicated prospects and provided a course for the further research.

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