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**TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL LIFE IN BASHKIRIA IN  
1960–1980**

Rima Suleimanova (a)\*, Zukhra Sabirova (b), Shamil Isyangulov (c), Narkas Akhmadieva (d),  
Fulfia Sultanguzhina (e)  
\*Corresponding author

- (a) IHLLUFRC RAS, Ufa, Russia, rnsulejman@mail.ru, 8(347) 235-60-50  
(b) IHLLUFRC RAS, Ufa, Russia, timerbulat2009@mail.ru, 8(347) 235-60-50  
(c) IHLLUFRC RAS, Ufa, Russia, isangul-schamil@mail.ru, 8(347) 235-60-50  
(d) IHLLUFRC RAS, Ufa, Russia, ahmadieva72@mail.ru, 8(347) 235-60-50  
(e) IHLLUFRC RAS, Ufa, Russia, sultanguzhina@rambler.ru, 8(347) 235-60-50

***Abstract***

The article shows changes in cultural life in one of the RSFSR regions – the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the 1960–1980s on the example of the television, radio, periodicals, publishing, cinema, theatre, education, science development. It is concluded that the transformation of cultural life in Bashkiria in the 1960s – 1980s was characterized by positive trends, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. During this period, television, radio, cinema, theatres, magazines and newspapers become the property of the majority of the population, both urban and rural. There was a noticeable increase in the general educational level of citizens, more and more broad strata of society were being introduced to the achievements of science and culture in general. At the same time, all the growing demands of people seriously influenced on the culture and cultural values of the services provided by this sphere. Moreover, cultural life was complicated, controversial, and not everything in it was definitely positive. Despite the undoubted achievements in development, there were the following: party and state bodies controlled the spiritual and cultural life, the sphere funded by the residual principle, national cultures were actively integrated into the all-Soviet culture, the course to national schools drawdown, which led to the infringement of native languages, folk traditions and customs, the strengthening of assimilation processes, etc..

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**Keywords:** Bashkiria, transformation, culture, science, radio, theater.



## **1. Introduction**

Significant changes in the socio-economic and socio-political life that occurred in Bashkiria in the second half of the twentieth century, as well as in the USSR in general, formed a serious basis for the cultural sphere development. It was based on the principles of collectivism and raising the living standards of the population. The need for a historical rethinking of the cultural significance in the Soviet social spiritual life, the forms of influence on citizens, extremely actualizes the study of the cultural sphere.

## **2. Problem Statement**

This article attempts to show the evolution of cultural life in one of the Russian regions – Bashkiria during the period of 1960–1980s, which in historiography was called stagnant.

## **3. Research Questions**

Such areas of republican cultural life as television, radio, periodicals, book publishing, cinema, theater, education, and science during the specified period serve as the subject of the article.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to analyze the transformation of cultural life in an autonomous republic during these years.

## **5. Research Methods**

The article uses general historical, systemic, statistical and other research methods. From a methodological point of view, it is important that the cultural life in Bashkiria over this period should be viewed in the context of the historical Soviet culture development in general.

## **6. Findings**

The cultural life in the Republic from 1960s to 1980s, as in the USSR in general, was multifaceted. There were works devoted to various aspects of this sphere during this period, but generalizing comprehensive works on it have not been published yet. But some aspects of this topic had already spared the interest of foreign researchers (Riasanovsky, 2000; Etkind, 2015; Johnson, 2015; Buck, 2015).

In the post-war years, the technical means for disseminating culture as television, radio, press, and publishing, had been improving, developing and acquiring huge importance. The goal was to gradually raise the spiritual life of the village workers up to the level of the city, to bring together and mutually enrich the culture of all Soviet peoples. In the postwar period aesthetic education become one of the main means, which harmoniously formed the developed society. Aesthetic views of a person become an integral part of his worldview, as well as a defining indicator of the person's spiritual development.

In December 1960, the Supreme Council of the BASSR decreed to build cultural institutions in rural areas over the period from 1961 to 1965. The assigned tasks were carried out by the efforts of local

authorities. By the beginning of 1965, 3114 clubs and houses of culture, 1332 libraries, 2343 cinema installations, 95 bookstores were already operating in the villages. Averagely, every resident of the Republic visited the cinema 17 times a year. The cinema development allowed demonstrating the films duplicated in the Bashkir language. Broadcasting of the Central Television channels began since 1966. In the mid-1970s TV in the Republic has become colourcast. Radio relay links Kazan-Ufa, Buraevo-Karaidel, Salavat-Uchaly were built, which allowed covering 85% of the population with television broadcasting.

Amateur cinema, as a new kind of amateur art, was established during these years. The participants in amateur film studios reflected the daily life of work collectives with the means of cinema, introduced viewers to the foremost workers of the production, told about their rest and creative aspirations. In the city of Oktiabrskii in 1957, amateur moviemakers organized the release of the film magazine “The Oil Territory”, where they revealed the everyday work, study and recreation of oilmen of one of the largest centers of the Second Baku (Oukaderova, 2017).

At the same time, it should be noted that the organization of mass film distribution in rural areas did not meet the growing demands of the population. There were not enough camera and power stations for movies broadcasting, not enough seats.

The Soviet press justifiably continued tradition to be the main source of reliable and sought-after information for the general public. It was supplemented by radio and television. Local information was their main informational source; it was the maintenance of a person’s connections with the Republic, city or enterprise, where he worked. This allowed “talking” about the pressing problems of the socio-economic, political, cultural, demographic development of the region and the country in general, to include their most diverse segments of the population into the discussion, both in the age and social sense, and in the gender and national. Radio, in its turn, as a “powerful ideological weapon”, solved and continued to solve many general educational, social problems, the tasks of agitation and mass-political work, increasing the literacy and culture of the population, useful leisure pastime of people (Wolfe, 2005; Serneva, 2001).

Despite the undoubted achievements, the periodical press of the republic was characterized by many mistakes, among them, a one-sided approach in covering significant issues, the habit of “reporting” about the party congresses, their preparation and conduct, the presence of ostentatious and formal in the materials and etc. The changed conditions in the Republic, the ideologization of public life, doublespeak had a detrimental effect on the press development.

Reading fiction, developing the intellectual potential and spiritual and moral guidelines of society, was an important factor in familiarizing Soviet citizens with cultural values. During the years under consideration, the national literature development was assumed as an important task of cultural construction. In Bashkortostan, as well as in the whole country, there were processes of culture and intercultural interaction internationalization at the level of national literatures, theater, music and visual arts. The need to increase the reading culture of the Bashkir and other non-Russian peoples of the Republic had stimulated the growth of translation and publishing, printing and distribution of printed publications, which increased markedly during this period.

The demand for culture outpaced the realizing cultural needs capabilities, especially in rural areas. Book production was inaccessible due to the weak development of the rural libraries network, bookstores and kiosks. In the 1970–1980s with the development of a centralized library network, qualitative changes

have occurred, urban and rural libraries have practically become equal in terms of book collections and the number of readers. The average rates of issuing books and magazines in the city and village were balanced.

The level of culture consumption by the Bashkir population confirmed the general trends in the country, but it had its own specific features. Thus, a popular form of cultural leisure was visiting theaters. During the tour, theatrical and entertainment institutions of the Republic carried out active propaganda work on the ideological, moral and aesthetic education of the rural audience. In 5 out of 7 professional theaters performances were showed in the Bashkir language. In the late 1970s - mid 1980s as a result of the growing cinema and television influence on the cultural life of society, theater attendance has slightly decreased. In 1979, the attendance rate equaled 1.4 million people, by the mid-1980s – 1.2 million.

There were certain difficulties in increasing republican population's competence in the field of culture. So, the main cultural and leisure centers of the village during the period under review were rural clubs and district houses of culture. The content side of the club activity, in addition to watching movies, conducting dance, literary and poetic evenings, was the creation of various hobby groups in them, sections in which people could find use for their talents. They carried out mass political and ideological work. In 1965, their number decreased to 6.7 thousand, to 92.4 thousand participants. In 1985, 166.3 thousand people spent their cultural leisure time in 10.4 thousand hobby groups.

Positive changes in the years under consideration occurred in school education. The resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of November 10, 1966 "On measures to further improvement of the secondary school work" set the most important tasks for education. Special attention was paid to aesthetic education, physical development and strengthening the health of students. The measures were taken to ensure the quantitative growth of schools and their students. In the mid-1960s there were almost 500 secondary schools in Bashkiria. In the mid-1970s 875 secondary schools functioned, in the first half of the 1980s there have already been 1086 schools.

Along with noticeable changes in the republican school education during these years, there were many unresolved problems and difficulties. Thus, there was the course to switchover schools into Russian. It affected the system of national school education. So, in 1974-1979 in the Republic, more than half of the total number of non-russian schools – 100 out of 1,100 – were switchovered to Russian learning without teaching the native language as a subject. As the result, national schools network was drawdowned, the number of preschool institutions conducting educational work in their native languages were reduced, the number of young people who spoke little on their native language sharply increased. There were also such difficulties as a strong lag in the material and technical base of schools, a shortage of premises, which continued to cause problems in the multi-shifts of education, etc.

After the end of World War II, a relatively rapid growth of scientific institutions has been observed in the Republic, especially since the mid-1950s. In 1951, the Bashkir branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR was created as part of several institutions and sectors. Its abolition at the end of 1963 led to negative consequences in the science development in the Republic. However, in the late 1960s it was again restored. The institutions of the Bashkir branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences conducted basic research in various fields of science. The number of conducted research in higher education institutions significantly increased in the postwar period. By the end of the 1980s the Republic had a significant number of higher educational institutions, scientific organizations, laboratories, design and experimental divisions, whose

staff conducted research in various fields of knowledge. In the 1960s – 1980s there was a growing differentiation of sciences, new scientific fields and specializations appeared. In parallel with the growth in the number of scientific institutions, there was a rapid growth in the number of scientific personnel in the Republic. By 1980, the strengthening of scientific personnel had led the Republic ahead of the all-Union indicators in the percentage ratio of doctors and candidates of science to the total number of scientific workers.

In the period under the review, there was formation of science, both fundamental and applied, sectorial in the republic. One of the main problems in its development was the connection with production, the quickest introduction of the latest scientific achievements and technology into industry. In the 1960s – 1980s science, including fundamental science, increasingly integrated with production. However, it must be admitted that the academic scientific developments were relatively poorly implemented in production.

During this period, the participation of scientists in the republican public and cultural life, in the scientific knowledge promotion, especially of the social and humanitarian sciences representatives, was significant. In this regard, much attention was paid to the development of invention and innovation in enterprises and institutions. In the Republic, the number of rationalizers and inventors over the period from 1960 to 1985 increased from 44.2 thousand to 90.3 thousand people, that is, more than in 2 times, and the number of rationalization proposals and applications for alleged inventions in 1.4 times. Most of the proposals was actually applied into production. This work involved citizens into scientific activities.

Scientists of different fields of knowledge actively participated in the scientific and socio-political knowledge promotion. Thus, scientists of the Bashkir branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences for 1971–1975 had read about 5 thousand lectures and had published more than 1.5 thousand articles. During 1981–1985 they organized and carried out more than 14 thousand propaganda activities for the dissemination of scientific and socio-political knowledge. Representatives of the social sciences and humanities have been particularly active in the scientific knowledge promotion.

Many scholars took an active part in the public and cultural life of the Republic, at the same time acting as writers, poets, journalists, etc., and often being authors and co-authors of workbooks and textbooks in various fields for secondary schools and universities. A good tradition in the Bashkir branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences was the participation in the “Day of Science” and the “Week of Art and Literature”, when scientists met with workers of various enterprises, institutions, factories and plants. In addition to public lectures, question and answer evenings, oral magazines, interactive round-table discussions, express universities, people’s universities on economic, atheistic, social and political issues, etc. were held.

The republican higher educational institutions conducted a great work on the training of specialists in order to raise the general educational and cultural level of citizens, especially young people. For example, in 1960 universities produced 2.4 thousand people, and in 1985 there had already been 8.9 thousand. Graduation from the republican secondary specialized educational institutions during that period had increased from 5.3 thousand to 19.2 thousand people. The Ufa State Institute of Arts, opened in 1968, which produced many outstanding artists, musicians, artists, directors, etc., played a significant role in training personnel for the cultural sphere. The Ufa College of Arts had also done a lot in this regard.

Students from the universities were involved in the research and teaching and examinational work, which had a great importance. Thus, in 1959, students’ design bureau was created in the Ufa Aviation

Institute, which was a new form of students' scientific and technical creativity. Research work here was integrated into the educational process, became part of it. Students were attracted to perform contract and budget research projects. By 1980, there were 48 different scientific hobby groups, 10 students' design bureaus, 2 students' research laboratories that worked at the aviation institute. The institute was confirmed as the higher educational establishment for scientific work of Volga students.

In 1972 a student research institute (SRI) was established within the Ufa Petroleum Institute. Science classes here were also held in study time and in extra-curricular time and were included in educational plans and programs. In 1974, the SRI won the Lenin Komsomol Prize. In summation, up to 21 thousand students from the republican higher educational establishments participated in scientific and research work in 1980.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the transformation of cultural life in Bashkiria during 1960s – 1980s is characterized by positive trends, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The growth of the educational level of the population, the increasing demands of people seriously influenced on the culture and cultural values of the services provided by this sphere. At the same time cultural life was complicated, controversial, and not everything in it was definitely positive. Despite the undoubted achievements in development, there were the following: party and state bodies controlled the spiritual and cultural life, the sphere funded by the residual principle, national cultures were actively integrated into the all-Soviet culture, the course to national schools drawdown, which led to the infringement of native languages, folk traditions and customs, the strengthening of assimilation processes, etc. All these features had a negative impact on the development of culture and, in general, on the maintenance of cultural life, which was also worsening by one-sided interpretation and resolution of the internationalization principle, which were increasingly inherent in this period. Despite the great contribution of science to the culture development, the ongoing processes of further differentiation and institutionalization of this sphere objectively led to an increase in the gap between science and society.

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