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**TATAR PUBLIC THOUGHT ABOUT THE INTERACTION OF  
TURKIC-MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN CIVILIZATIONS**

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***Abstract***

The article discusses the points of view of leading figures of the Tatar social movement on the processes of economic, ethnic, cultural interaction of the Turkic-Muslim and Christian people in the Caucasus and in the Middle East in the early 20th century. The Russian Muslim movement in this period experienced a process of formation and consolidation. The highest point is considered to be the organization and activities of the All-Russian Muslim Party “Ittifak al-Muslimin” and its activities in the years 1905-1907; as well as the consolidation of Muslims into single fractions in all four convocations of the pre-revolutionary State Duma of the Russian Empire. The leading role in the party and in the Muslim faction was played by the deputies – representatives of the two largest Turkic groups of people in Russia, the Tatars and the Azerbaijanis. It was important to take into account and rethink the experience of many years of interaction of the Turkic-Muslim and Christian civilization within the framework of a single statehood. The experience of the Ottoman Empire is also interesting in this respect. Christian peoples found themselves under the influence of the Turkic-Muslim statehood for centuries. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Tatar elite already had this experience. Therefore, the opinion of the latter was very popular and relevant for understanding the processes of interaction between Muslim Turks and Christians in the context of all spheres of social development.

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**Keywords:** Social thought, Tatars, Azerbaijanis, the Caucasus, Muslim Congress, Turkic unity.



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## 1. Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Turkic-Muslim world of the Russian Empire was in search of ways to develop its ethnic religious identity. The Turkic people within the framework of the Russian state thrived to protect their religious, national rights. The struggle to preserve their rights in the economic, cultural, religious spheres of life led to the awakening of national identity.

This is not only a time of ideological unity of Muslim Turks within the borders of the Russian statehood, but also a period of active involvement of the most thinking and advanced part of Russian Muslims in the processes of ethnic and religious integration. The recognized leaders of this movement were the Baku millionaires A. Topchibashev, Z.A. Tagiyev, M.T. Aliyev and others, who for decades worked side by side in both commercial and public affairs with the Tatar bourgeoisie and the intellectuals (Zyabyrov, 2014).

The tsarist government itself was pushing Russian Turkic people to unite. In the historical tradition and official documents of Russia in relation to all Turkic peoples of a huge country for centuries the term “Tatars” was used, which meant both the actual Tatars (who lived in the Middle Volga and Ural provinces) and the Uzbeks (“Khiva”, “Bukhara” Tatars), and Azerbaijanis (“Caucasian Tatars”) and other peoples. All the Turks of the Empire perceived their ethnic identity and at times of acute social, ethnic or confessional conflicts tried to act as a united front.

During this period took place the ideological and organizational formation of all Russian Muslim movement and the creation of the Ittifak-al-Muslimin party. It is well known that at the origins of this organization were Tatar, Crimean Tatar and Azerbaijani activists, industrialists, prominent figures of the Turkic culture and Islam. All of them were interested in the formation of a special, Turkic-Muslim identity within the framework of Russian statehood. Therefore, a number of leading figures of the Tatar public movement turned to understanding the historical and practical experience of interaction between Muslim and Christian civilizations.

## 2. Problem Statement

The leading role of the Tatar-Azerbaijani intelligentsia in the process of the formation of the Muslim movement in the country was recognized unconditionally. If the Turks of Central Asia, the North Caucasus, Siberia, Altai, as well as the Bashkirs and Chuvash still lived their traditional patriarchal life, then such peoples as the Kazan Tatars and Azerbaijanis were on the way to an industrial society. And at the tanneries of Kazan and in the oil fields of Baku, its own bourgeois class and working class began to form (Mukhametdinov, 2000).

Already at that time, eminent thinkers noted the leading role Russian Islam played Turks. According to the famous Tatar public figure of the beginning of the twentieth century, Yusuf Akchura, the Turkic people, who were closely interacted with Europe, were the first among Muslims to accept the new trends of European thought. He rightly noted that “among the Turkic people, these ideas, especially the national idea, were perceived by the Turks, the Crimean Tatars, the Kazan Tatars and the Azerbaijanis” (Akçura, 1990).

At the end of the 19th century it was precisely among the Tatars and Azerbaijanis that the ideas of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism first appeared and spread. Kazan, Ufa, Astrakhan, Baku become the main

objects of close attention of the royal gendarmerie in order to prevent the spreading of these ideas among all Muslims of the empire.

Under these conditions, any events that took place in any part of the Russian-Turkic world immediately found response in the hearts of Muslims. All conflicts, military actions are reflected in the speeches of Tatar leaders. A good example is the attitude of the Tatars to the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflict in Transcaucasia, which was treated as an integral problem of the interaction of Muslim and Christian civilizations in the framework of a single multi-ethnic and multi-religious statehood (Salikhov, 2004).

### **3. Research Questions**

The research was aimed at solving three interrelated tasks. First, this is the definition of the boundaries of the ideological unity of Muslim Turks within the borders of Russian statehood at the beginning of the 20th century. Secondly, to identify the historical factors that contributed to the formation of the Turk-Muslim identity. The third task is to define the problem of the relationship between the Turkic-Muslim and Christian people in the Caucasus and the Middle East in the works and activities of Tatar public figures of the early 20th century.

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

The research was aimed at solving three interrelated tasks. First, this is the definition of the boundaries of the ideological unity of Muslim Turks within the borders of Russian statehood at the beginning of the 20th century. Secondly, to identify the historical factors that contributed to the formation of the Turk-Muslim identity. The third task is to define the problem of the relationship between the Turkic-Muslim and Christian people in the Caucasus and the Middle East in the works and activities of Tatar public figures of the early 20th century.

### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of the study was a systematic approach in combination with historicism. General scientific systems approach involves the use of socio-historical, general scientific and interdisciplinary methods: problem-chronological, comparative historical, retrospective, etc. for the transfer and analysis of historical material. The principle of historicism implies consideration of the statements' peculiarities of Tatar social thought about the problems of interactions of civilizations, taking into account specific historical conditions.

The study of the views of Tatar intellectuals on the problems of interaction of Turkic-Muslim and Christian civilizations during this period, historical causes and factors that led to the formulation of the problem in public practice, was carried out on the principle of actualization and was based on an essentially meaningful analysis of the opinions of prominent representatives of Tatar public figures (Fakhrutdinov, 2006).

A systematic approach to the problem and a systematic analysis of the material made it possible to identify various opinions, to cover the understanding of the Tatar public thought of the early twentieth century as far as the problems of the interaction of Turkic Muslims and various ethnic groups of Christians

in the South Caucasus and the Middle East. To obtain representative information from periodicals and other published sources, the methods of biographical and historical problems were applied.

## 6. Findings

The Tatar and Azerbaijani bourgeoisie constituted the most active part of the all-Russian Muslim movement. On August 16-21, 1906, the 3d Russian Congress of the Ittifak-Al-Muslimin Party was held, in which the most prominent representatives of the Tatar financial, political and intellectual elite took part: I. Gasprinsky, S. Alkin, G. Ibrahim, G. Barudi, G. Apanai, Yu. Akchura, S. Maksudi, A. Maksudi, G. Iskhaki and other Turk-Muslim leaders of the Russian Empire (Taktamysheva, 2014). But unanimously the chairman of the representative assembly (it was attended by representatives from 17 regions of the empire with a significant Muslim population), was elected Azerbaijani millionaire Alimardan Bey Topchibashev.

After the Tatar delegation (represented immediately by 6 regions of Russia - Kazan, Orenburg, Ufa, Astrakhan, Samara provinces), the Azerbaijani delegation was the most numerous. From the Astrakhan province, among the four declared Tatar delegates, in fact, two - Mustafa Lutfi Izmailov and Husain (Hussein) Hayatov were Azerbaijanis. It is not by chance that Yusuf Akchura noted: "Kazan Tatars and Azerbaijanis always closely contacted and worked for the good of their nation" (Akçura, 1990).

At this congress, the problem of Armenian-Azerbaijani clashes in the Caucasus was first touched upon (Akopyants, 2017). Many prominent representatives of the Azerbaijani and Tatar intellectual elite, including the great ideological inspirer of all the Turks of Russia, Ismail Bey Gasprinsky, gave comments about the distressing events. The speeches of the speakers were filled with deep experience of the situation created in the Caucasus, expressed willingness to stand up to protect the interests and lives of Azerbaijani brothers. As a result, the All-Russian Muslim Congress passes a resolution "On protesting actions against Muslims in the Transcaucasian region" (Kamilova, 2008).

The resolution, in particular, stated: "To our bitter disappointment, the Russian Muslim Congress listened to the report on the ongoing clashes of Armenians with Muslims in Transcaucasia. Our brothers in Shusha and in the counties were made victims of truly unjust and biased orders to Muslims and actions of General Goloshchapov. Protesting against such actions, the congress hopes that the Governor of His Majesty in the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, in view of the just complaints of the Muslims of the city of Shusha and the counties, will remove not only General Goloshchapov, but also all those responsible who support two nations for centuries and lived in the world. At the same time, the congress considers it its duty to appeal to the spiritual and secular representatives of both nations to take into their own hands the mutual reconciliation of the Transcaucasian Muslims with the Armenians..." (Fakhrutdinov, 1992).

Thus, we see that the participants of the Muslim Congress tried to prevent bloodshed and keep the peace. The chairman Alimardan-Bey Topchibashev and other prominent Azerbaijani delegates consistently adhered to this position (Hasanly, 2013).

The question of the oppression of Azerbaijanis at the 3d Congress demonstrated the unity of the ideological position of Russian Muslims. As Adile Ayda writes in her work "Sadri Maksudi Arsal": "As at previous congresses, at the 3d congress of Muslims the spirit of unity reigned, i.e. feeling of Turkic unity, the consciousness that all Turkic people of Russia (besides those who were not Muslims) bearing different names, form a single family ... After a long speech by the chairman of the congress Alimardan

Topchibashev, the Sunni delegates embraced with tears in their eyes with the Azerbaijani Shiite delegates "(Adile, 1966).

Since 1906, the leaders of Russian Muslims have been actively working in the State Duma. The restrictive framework of the electoral laws of 1905-1907, as well as the direct participation of the central and regional administrations in the process of regulating election campaigns led to the fact that for the entire period of the existence of the pre-revolutionary Duma, 79 Muslim deputies were elected to the Russian parliament - 25 deputies to the Duma 1- the first convening, 37 Muslims in the second, 10 in the third and 7 in the fourth Duma (Usmanova, 2009).

Since individual deputies were elected twice or more, only 67 people represented the interests of the Muslim population of the country, united in an independent Muslim faction. Archival materials and journalism of the time show that both Muslims and non-Muslims viewed the Muslim faction as a "national group", although it originated on the basis of a common religious identity. It was the "national group" that made the faction national composition — the overwhelming majority were Tatars and Azeris – the Volga-Ural region (Tatar) in four Dumas were represented 40, Turkestan and steppe lands of Kazakhstan – 16, the Caucasus (mostly Azerbaijanis) and Crimea – 23 deputies (Usmanov, 2009).

In conditions when Muslims of certain regions were deprived of the opportunity to send their deputies to the Duma, the Muslims of other regions and regions of the empire, first of all, the Volga-Ural region and the Caucasus, assumed responsibility for their wishes and demands. This may explain the desire of Muslim deputies to act in the all-imperial parliament in a consolidated manner.

At this time, Y. Akchura was one of the most active members of the Muslim faction, he became friends with his colleagues - Mamed Tagi Aliyev, Alimard Topkibashev, Ismail Zeinal Tagiyev. On a united front, the Tatars and Azerbaijanis fought for the ethnic and confessional rights of Russian Muslims, defended the right of Muslims to education. It was during this period that Yusuf Akchura became thoroughly acquainted with the problem of ethnic oppression consistently held against Azerbaijanis.

In a whole series of his works, this prominent representative of Tatar intellectual thought touches on the question of the relationship between the Turk-Muslim and Christian people in the Caucasus and the Middle East. From the standpoint of protecting the interests of Muslim nations, he notes in one of his works: "Christian rebels in every way oppress Muslims, bringing this patient people to a white-hot. Then the government, instead of persecuting the troublemakers, begins to encourage the Muslim population to retaliate. The Muslims, at first only defensively, then carried away, go on make a terrible mess. Christians in their articles focus on the result of events, and not on the reasons that caused them. If the Armenians who now occupy important positions in trade, finance, industry and agriculture in all the Ottoman provinces, in one word, in all spheres of the economy, continued to live in the highlands of eastern Anatolia, could they achieve their happiness and wealth?" (Akchura, 1913).

On the pages of reflections of the leaders of the Tatar-Muslim movement, the processes of the Turkic-Christian interaction of the early twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire were also reflected (within the boundaries of which, like in Russia, the Turks coexisted with Christian peoples).

So, a prominent Tatar figure and enlightener Fatih Karimi (he lived in Orenburg, repressed in 1937 and sentenced to death by the Soviet authorities as a Turkish spy) in his work "Istanbul Minskatlura" (Istanbul letters) wrote how he was struck and saddened that almost all the shops in Istanbul belong to the

Greeks and Armenians, hotels and restaurants to the Greeks, publishing and newspaper business are also in the hands of the non-Turkish bourgeoisie. Turkish schools are supplied with textbooks mainly by Armenians, they also produce these textbooks. Muslims themselves in such a situation look less successful economically and intellectually. Although this is far from the actual situation (Karimi, 1913).

F. Karimi was sincerely outraged by the fact that the Turkish people, one may say, lack periodical press. Armenian, Greek, Jewish and even Arab newspapers, they all serve the ideals of their nations, their interests. Their benchmarks and goals are known to everyone and they move up very confidently and decisively. Only the Turkish press has no known and accurate reference point, it does not have an ideal ... (Karimi, 1913).

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the Tatar leaders tried to unite their efforts in the struggle for the independence of the Turkic people, to preserve the language and culture. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Tatars did not separate their fate from the fate of their fellow Turkic Muslims, primarily Azerbaijanis and other people of the Caucasus and the Middle East. They were deeply worried by the events in the Transcaucasus, they supported the development and preservation of the national interests of kindred people.

The process of formation of the Turkic-Muslim identity in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century was in the initial stage. In this situation, it was very important to support each other for building tactics of cooperation in various projects and practical activities to defend common ethno-confessional interests.

The Tatar social thought, on our opinion, on the basis of the materials studied in this work, carefully studied the situation of the Christian-Turkic confrontation in the South Caucasus and in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the statements of the Tatars are characterized by an objective approach to the situation. There are no nationalist, radical assessments.

At the same time, it is clear that the Tatars support the efforts of the Muslim Turks of the Transcaucasus in defending economic, political and cultural rights. They mark attempts to minimize the role of Muslim Turks of the Caucasus and the Middle East in public processes as negative.

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