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The Historical Memory of The Tatar People in The Works of Musical Culture

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Abstract

Studying of the structure and content of the social consciousness of non-Russian peoples in Russia, the historical aspect is very new and promising scientific task. Of particular interest is the study of structures of Tatar- Muslim's historical memory in the region of the Volga and the Urals. The aim of our study: to trace the formation of the cultural symbols of the Tatar people, contributing to the folding of national identity. Based on the study of Tatars' historical memory structures we found the qualitative content of social consciousness mostly of Tatar youth in the late nineteenth - early twentieth centuries, named social protest songs of Shakirds in madrasas. Studying of Volga Tatars' amateur musical creativity is the new look, considering Shakirds' songs in madrasas as a historical source, which also reflects the historical memory and national identity of the Tatars.

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1. Main text

Studying of the historical memory of non-Russian peoples of Russia is a new and important direction of interdisciplinary research in social anthropology and history. Historical memory exists in public consciousness, and at the individual level of each person. Historical songs and songs of the Volga Tatars' social protest is an interesting source for understanding the formation of the cultural symbols of ethnic identity. It is a well-established opinion that the musical culture of Muslim nations up to the 20th century was primitive and monotonous. Islam allegedly

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shackled creativity of ethnic groups belonging to the Muslim civilization, and did not allow any development of mental impulses projected through music and singing. However, it is a very unsound opinion.

Musical traditions of the Volga Tatars in late 19th - early 20th centuries could serve as a great example. It was a time of awakening of ethnic consciousness of Tatar people, the period of formation of the bourgeois Tatar ethnic nation. The end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th century is characterized by an extraordinary rise in importance of culture and prestige of education among the Tatars. This fact is confirmed by the following statistics: from 1895 to 1912 the number of Tatar schools in Kazan province increased from 647 to 1,088 and the number of students increased from 33,000 to 85,000 correspondingly (Amirhanov, 2000). According to the preliminary materials of the Special Meeting on Development of Measures to Counter Tatar-Muslim Influence in the Volga Region “the total number of students in secular and religious schools in Kazan province is about 70,000 people, in proportion of one male student per 9 Muslim men and one female student per 12 Muslim women. This information confirms that there were considerably more Muslims with primary education than that among the local Russian population...” (Proceedings of a special meeting on education of eastern outlanders, 1905).

Thus the Muslim Tatars were among the most literate peoples of the Russian Empire. Along with literature, newspapers and historical books folk and original beits contributed to the creation of a sense of unity and blissful elation among the people belonging to different social strata though united by a common historical memory and national identity. It was at this time when social protest beits and historical songs were composed and widely distributed among the Tatars of different social classes. They also expressed sympathy for the plight of the oppressed and hatred towards the oppressors, they called to fight for national liberation and in humorous and satirical manner to ridicule hypocrisy, betrayal and ignorance.

Did the authorities notice it? Of course, both the authorities and Christian missionaries closely watched it and tried to stop these new manifestations of Muslim culture. In their attempt to tread the awakening Tatar consciousness down the government took a number of repressive measures. It forbade circulation of the Quran printed in Russian and imposed strict censorship on all publications in the Tatar language as well as limited participation of the Tatars in the local government, banned Tatar children, who renounced Orthodox Christianity, from attending secular and religious schools, introduced educational qualification for Muslim clergy the basic requirement of which was the ability to speak Russian, and, finally, Muslim religious schools were placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, although they were not state-financed.

But no matter how hard the reactionaries tried there was almost nothing they could do against the songwriting efforts of the entire Tatar population because censorship on songs and poetry was impossible to impose. This kind of folk art was spread by “word of mouth”. At that time, without television or the Internet, people used to gather together in the evenings, talk, and of course, sing. These songs were penned and distributed primarily by Muslim youths, students of Jadid madrassas. That’s how it was reported in the aforementioned report: “These songs are sung by the students in their spare time in schools and at their parents’ homes in front of an audience, and they have become so popular that almost every literate Tatar student has a copy of a collection that can be found in each household having a student attending a madrassa or mektebe. Often students will bring to school songs recorded by their fathers and brothers during their student years, but most songs are composed by senior Shagirds” (Historical and contemporary significance of the Christian missionary, 1894). According to the testimony of a former Shagird, writer Saifi Kudash “at the time, with free from classes, madrassas used to resemble a music school” (Kudash, 1974).

It’s worth noting that Shagird songs eventually turned into Tatar student anthems and were widely used during the first bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1905-1907. Songs like “Беренче сада” (The First Cry), “Икенче сада” (The Second Cry), “The Muslim Marseillaise”, “Шәкертләргә жыры” (Shagird’s Song) based on Tukai’s lines were sang by Shagirds at rallies and demonstrations during the first Russian revolution (Salitova, 2008).

The government responded in a peculiar way. In 1907, a collection of works entitled “Шәкертләргәң сәдәләре” (Shagirds’ Anthems) was published in Orenburg. The entire circulation of 3,000 copies was intercepted by the police and never reached Kazan. The governor of Kazan wrote that the book’s contents were harmful because it called young students to engage in criminal acts and to fight against their teachers (Tukai, 1961).

It was a time of confrontation between the two ideological schools in Tatar intellectual environment: kadimists and jadids who were the supporters of a protective approach to the education system and Westerners. In due course of time there comes an understanding that both movements were advocating further harmonious development of Tatar people and should not be considered in isolation from each other. Yet the confrontation between these two schools is most prominently observed during the period in question. These trends can be demonstrated by Shagird’s

поем “Тыйлем кирэк” (Education is Necessary):

The time has come to recognize and see
That we really need knowledge.
We need to run away from ignorance.
We need to develop arts and education.
For the sake of education, we need to try day and night
To catch up with Europe and America.

Such aspirations of the youth are reflected in dozens of Shagird poems and songs, for example, “Укыйк, шәкертләр” (Let us learn, Shagirds), “Вакыт житте” (It’s time), beits “Кояш чыкты, нур балыкты” (The sun rises, its rays scatter), “Уяну байте” (Bait on awakening) etc. According to R. Iskhakova-Wamba this topic did not bypass even Tukai who in 1907, in a response to the movement of Shagirds wrote his famous poem “Мәдрәсәдән чыккан шәкертләр ни диләр” (What the Shagirds from madrassas have to say) in which he described the difficult and joyless life of the Shagirds in old madrassas and called on them to throw off shackles and to use their knowledge to serve people (Iskhakova –Wamba, 1997).

Satirical songs which made fun of the outdated order of things and traditional teaching methods came next. One of the songs composed by Shagirds and set to a poem by G. Tukai “Куп яттык без мәдрәсәдә” (We have lived in madrassas for a long time) clearly reflects a new creative direction of the Muslim youth.

During the Revolution of 1905-1907 Shagirds’ work and songs took on a revolutionary flavor. From the published sources we know of two versions of Varshavianka, three versions of La Marseillaise, “Кыюатлагыз, иптәшләр” (Be brave, Comrades, let’s keep pace), “Төрмәдән” (From Prison), “Сөз корбанбулдыгыз” (You became victims) etc. The second version of the Marseillaise in the Tatar language published in the collection of Tatar folk art historical and lyrical songs in 1988 (Salitova, 2008) is of particular interest. Unlike the Marseillaise in the Russian language, the ‘Tatar Marseillaise’ reflected class hatred towards the elite and the authority but also called on people to fight for the freedom and independence of the Tatar people.

For hundreds of years Tatars
Have been suffering from hardships.
We have not known happy days,
And have been feeling hurt.
Enduring humiliation and deprivation
We cried, outraged, sputtering curses.
Let us suffer no more
Long live, Free Motherland!

The song reflected aspirations that Tatar people had for many centuries, it represents an appeal for a unity in a battle for independence, and it carried hope for a brighter future of Tatar people.

Әйдәгез, әйдәгез, и туганнар,	Come on, come on, my friends,
Әйдәгез, берләшик, мөселманнар,	We Muslims must be united,
Кычкырыйк дөньяга иркен аваздан:	We will tell the entire world freely
“Яшәсен, яшәсен, хөррият яшәсен!”	Here’s to our freedom, here’s to it!

Such songs touched the most delicate strings of a human soul, echoed in people’s hearts and gave meaning to their lives. The best representatives of the Tatar intelligentsia sought to make these songs as popular as possible. We have discovered historical evidence about the Hussainiya madrassas instructor, Sagitta Rameev, a poet, who secretly from the madrassas administration taught Shagirds to sing La Marseillaise (Abushaev, 1987). And then there are records of Shagirds’ own memories. For example, Fathulla Kurbangaiev who in 1905-1907 was a student at Galia

madrassas, recalled: “We all knew well La Marseillaise and the Shagird Battle-Cry”. In the evenings we would gather together in the madrassas and sing loudly. It (singing) gave us energy and spiritual pleasure that was hard to express in words, it was calling (us) to fight, it `drafted us into an unknown but very addictive brighter future” (Korbangaliev, 1966).

However, conservative representatives of Tatar intelligentsia often were the ones to inform the authorities about jadid political activity. Thus in a letter written on December 30, 1905 by an Apanaev madrassa teacher Salimov, and addressed to a director of public schools of Kazan province, he reported that “Shagirds living on the ground floor of the building of Apanaev madrassas sang La Marseillaise so loudly that one could hear it on the street” (Valiahmetova, 2007). A letter written by a Kazan governor in May 1911 informs the Administration of Kazan school district that teachers and trainees of Tetyushy Russian-Tatar two-year College (listing a dozen names) “are learning and spreading anti-government songs among students of Russian-Tatar schools and forcing them to write them down in their notebooks”.

For Tatars the end of the 19th century was, according to Anderson, a time of creation of “national artifacts” that have “profound emotional legitimacy”. (Anderson, 2003). Tatar songs of social protest with great confidence can be attributed to this phenomenon.

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