

HISTORY OF THE VOLGA REGION TATARS' CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY IN XVIII -XIX CENTURIES

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The relevance of the problem under study is based on the fact that, although the history of the Tatars' Christianization is described in more than ten scientific, historical and publicistic works, it hasn't still been scientifically interpreted. In addition, in recent years the appearance of an independent nation of the Kryashens has been discussed, which keeps the problem relevant up to date. The purpose of this article is to examine the features of the Christianization which was forcible baptizing of the Muslim Tatars in the Middle Volga region beginning with the reign of Peter the Great and to the end of the 19th century, the time of Ilminskiy's research work. The leading approach to the study of this problem is a system approach. This work widely uses the method of unity of the historical and logical study of processes in the past. In this article we have examined the background and the main stages of Christianization and found that if in the 16th century the Christianization of the Tatars was carried out using economic methods, in the 18th century the Christianization of the Tatars had the form of forcible baptism and was large – scale. The article also studies the problem of an attempt to individualize an independent nation of the Kryashens. Based on the analysis of historical sources, the authors have come to the conclusion that this problem has no scientific basis, because the modern "Kryashens" are the result of forcible Christianization of a part of the Tatar population, consequently, they are an integral part of the Tatar nation.

Keywords: Newly Baptized ; Christianization ; Luka Kanashevich ; Ilminskiy.

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Tatars Christianization, which covered the period from the 16th century to the end of the 19th century, needs to be scientifically studied, moreover, the publications of the past years have not traced the stages of this process. The background and subject matter of the Christianization are not sufficiently studied too. The problem is kept up to date by the attempts to individualize the so-called independent nation of the "Kryashens". The Christianization of the Tatars which occurred as a part of the Russian state after the fall of the Kazan Khanate, especially in the 18th century, which was large scale (in contrast to the earlier baptized Tatars of the 18th century, the old baptized Tatars in the period of Ivan the Terrible were less numerous), turned the destiny of a certain part of Tatar people. Particularly in

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recent years, some representatives of the Kryashens have raised the question of individualizing an independent nation of the Kryashens (the “Kryashens” is a shortened Tatar transcription of the Russian word “Christianization or baptism”). This requirement is absolutely baseless because the Kryashens, who are a sub-ethnic group of Tatar people and have their own cultural identity, don’t have their own language which is the main determinant of the nation, and, like all the Tatars, they speak Tatar.

The problem of the Tatars Christianization is covered or studied in more than ten scientific, historical and publicistic works, among them it is necessary to distinguish the research works of Russian authors including pre-revolutionary authors (Shcherbatov, 1859; Firsov, 1869; Pinegin, 1890; Chicherina, 1907; Efirov, 1913; Gorokhov, 1941).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Objectives of the study

The study has addressed the following objectives: to study the grounds and identify the main stages of the Tatars Christianization in the 18-19th centuries, to examine the problem of ethnicity of the “Kryashens”.

Methods of study

The main approach to the study of this problem is a system approach which has been implemented through the group of the history principles. The compliance with these principles has contributed to the achievement of the scientific nature and objectivity of the above-mentioned problem. The Tatar society is seen as an independent system interacting as a Muslim enclave in the Russian Christian civilization, which made an attempt of forced spiritual assimilation. In our research we have widely used the method of the unity of historical and logical study of the past processes. We have also used the following general theoretical methods of scientific research: analysis, synthesis, comparison and generalization.

RESULTS

Peter the Great supported the endeavor to spread Orthodoxy among Muslims and pagans, although he knew that in this issue he had to be based on the principles of voluntariness. However, the militant church and the ideology of the new merchant class demanded more radical measures. These attitudes and requirements are most vividly reflected in the “Testament of a Father” by a publicist and ideologist of the emerging class of merchants I.T. Pososhkov drawn up in 1712-1714 (Pososhkov, 1893). The Tatars Christianization mission was entrusted by Peter the Great to His Eminence Tikhon who was appointed in 1699 for the Eparchy of Kazan. The new Archbishop held his post for a long period of time (25 years) until his death in

1724. He eagerly started the reform and turned “aliens”, mainly the Tatars, into Orthodoxy. At the same time Tikhon faced a number of difficulties in his “educational” activity in Kazan: out of 30 thousand of Tatars baptized in the 16th century, a lot of Tatars fell apart from Christianity, as it was reported by the Archbishop to the Synod in 1722. At the very beginning of his prelacy from 1701 to 1705, Tikhon was able to baptize 3683 non-Christians. Later, together with his assistant, a celibate priest Alexey Raifskiy, he baptized a lot of Mari and Udmurts in the Kazan and Vyatka provinces. In 1725 Silvester, the Metropolitan of Ryazan, was appointed for the Eparchy of Kazan. Seven years later he was replaced by Hilarion from Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy. However, he was transferred to Chernigov and Gabriel, the Bishop of Suzdal, was appointed for Kazan. He turned out to oppose new initiatives including the issue of foreign schools. He was accused of unauthorized dismissal of students from schools and was transferred to Ustyug, whereas Bishop Konashevich of Ustyug was put in charge of the Eparchy of Kazan (Fakhrutdinov, 2015).

A completely new and unprecedented stage of Christianization of non-Russian people who lived in the Middle Volga Region, especially the Tatars, started. It was the stage of forced Christianization. Russifiers understood that the situation with Tatars and other peoples of the Volga Region Christianization was getting worse. For example, if over the period from 1719 to 1724 2184 people were baptized, then in subsequent years, until 1731, only 811 people were baptized. In order to change the situation the “Christianization Commission of Muslims and other non-Christians in Kazan and Nizhny Novgorod” was organized in 1731 in Sviyazhsk. In 1740 it was reformed into the “office of newly baptized affairs” better known as “Novokreschenskaya office”. These changes took place in the period of Bishop Konashevich who started his missionary activity in the 40’s - middle 50’s of the 18th century. If previously, even under the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the Tatars were baptized under mainly economic pressure, with some benefits allotted to the baptized, now they were forcibly baptized by battering and other forms of physical violence.

The “Novokreschenskaya office” had its own military units. Konashevich had assistants who were fanatical missionaries. Among them we can especially distinguish, for example, Archimandrite Dmitry Sechenov, who was in charge of the mission and who was directly involved in Christianization of non-Russian peoples. It was him who baptized more than 10,000 people over the period of more than two years (1740-1742); then he was transferred to Nizhny Novgorod as the Bishop where during four years he turned more than 30,000 non-Christians into Christianity. Boris Yartsev, the Advisor of the Novokreschenskaya office, baptized 10,000 non-Russian people (The history of Tatarstan in Materials and Documents, 1937).

The 30-40’s of the 18th century can be characterized by a large-scale retreat of the Christianized Tatars of the Kazan province from Orthodoxy despite the fact that it was in the 40’s and the first half of the 50’s when Konashevich, the principal

missionary of the Eparchy, started his violent activity and baptized the peoples of the region, he was especially violent baptizing the Tatars. It was in 15-16 years, i.e., during the peak of the forced Christianization, when the Orthodox Church received 400 thousand new members. However, as before, the Tatars came back to Islam again and again. Therefore, it is very hard to give the precise figures for the following years; there is no study that gives such information.

Those four foreign schools which were opened in 1735 in Kazan, Yelabuga, Tsvil'sk Tsarevokokshaisk didn't give the expected results, and in 1753 Luke Konashevich had to join them into one same school in Kazan. But it also degraded soon.

Among the Tatars there was a rebellion struggling against the ongoing Christianization and destruction of mosques. The tsarist government was forced to soften its anti-Muslim and anti-Tatar policy. In 1756 it was allowed to build mosques and open mosque schools but only in those villages where less than 10% of population was baptized (The history of Tatarstan in Materials and Documents, 1937). The forcible migrations of the Tatars to Russian villages were also suspended, the Tatars were exempted from recruitment for one year. In 1755 Luke Konashevich left the post of Kazan Bishop and was sent to Belgorod to occupy the same position. The Novokreschenskaya office was closed in 1764. The Muslim assembly was established in 1782 in Ufa, it was headed by the first mufti Mukhamedzhan Husain. These concessions in favor of the Muslims were also promoted by the visit of the Empress Catherine the Second to Kazan in 1767. It was after her visit to Kazan when they began to build brick masonry mosques including fundamental, cathedral mosques. Among the first mosques, the following must be mentioned: the famous Marjani mosque in Kazan (1770) which has been continuously functioning since then and to the present time. In those years the three madrasahs (Muslim secondary school) - Akhunovskoe and Apanaevskoe (1771) were opened in Kazan in Amirkhanov's house (1782).

The Tsarist policy of the Tatars Christianization didn't come to the end in the 18th century, it kept to be implemented in the following 19th century but in a more delicate way by using propaganda during Christian sermons in their own Tatar language.

Under the influence of "great reforms", in the 60-70's of the 19th century the Russian state policy towards national minorities, including the Tatar people, changed. It seemed that the policy of the forced Christianization went into the past. Russia shifted to the path of political modernization, the way to create a civilized multi-ethnic state.

However, with the enthronement of Alexander the Third and the beginning of the counter-reforms period, the Russian authorities tightened the policy towards non-Russian peoples. Under the changed conditions, more "modern", sophisticated means started to be used which by their nature pursued the goal of the

Christianization of creeds. The change of tactics was also enabled by the educational activity of Tatar thinkers (J. Faizhanov, S. Mardzhani, K. Nasyri) who tried to set the consciousness of the Tatar people free from the clutches of a medieval scholastic thought and prepared the foundation which reflected the striving of the advanced part of the Tatar society for changes in the spiritual life of the people and for perception of European cultural achievements.

Advances of Tatar educators made Russian officials feel worried. There as it was pointed out by Count D.A. Tolstoy, the Minister of Internal Affairs, in 1887, “[...] to cool down the eagerness of propagandists (we mean the activity of the Tatar educators - R.F.), make apostates understand and prevent further propagation, in my opinion, it is necessary to appeal to the administrative repressive measures [...]” (Chicherina, 1906). By consent of the government a new wave of Christianization began which received its ideological expression in the form of the “Ilminskiy’s system”. N.I. Ilminskiy (1822-1891) was a professor at the Ecclesiastical Academy and Kazan University, he worked with the Chief Procurator Pobedonostsev. Being a person who had been studying Islamic Studies for fifteen years, and who had known the history of the forcible Christianization and Russification of the Tatar people, Ilminskiy developed a new, more “flexible” system of Christianization using the Tatar language which was used by missionaries and teachers, mostly for Christianization of indigenous peoples. For this purpose in Kazan, on the initiative of Ilminskiy they organized a baptized Tatar School (1865), the missionary “St. Guriy’s Brotherhood” (1867), foreign teachers’ seminary (1872), and since the 60’s of the 19th century Russian-Tatar schools, where missionaries trained, opened. By 1870 there were more than 60 of such “brotherhood” missionary schools. According to Ilminskiy, the objective of such schools was “[...] to bring up religion and moral to people in the forms of the Orthodox Church and the Russian national character” (Ilminskiy, 1911). He adhered to his principles and opposed teaching secular subjects in Tatar schools. Ilminskiy believed that “a fanatic without Russian education is comparatively better than a Tatar civilized in a Russian way [...]” (Ilminsky, 1904).

Ilminskiy’s associates spoke out the same way. In 1905 the Ministry of Education held a “Special Conference on Education of eastern foreigners” under the chairmanship of the member of the Council of Ministers, the Privy Councillor A. Budlovich, where special attention was paid to the activity of Ilminskiy. The position of the government was reflected in the statement of A. Budlovich: “This school (... that is the school system of Ilminskiy – R.F.) is to arouse the Christian feelings and attitudes [...]. For moral transformation of a Tatar, Chuvash, Cheremis and Ural-Altai creeds in general into a true Christian, a school could be a powerful tool if it was possible to give it a strong religious and ethical spirit. This purpose was achieved in the Christian school of Ilminskiy” (Special Conference Proceedings on the Education of Eastern Creeds, 1905). The official press organ of the Ministry

of Education announced that: “The ultimate goal of education for all foreigners living within our country must indisputably be their Russification and integration with Russian people (underlined by us – R.F.)” This system was officially legalized by the Government publication of the rules dated March 26th, 1870 “On measures for education of creeds inhabiting Russia “, the main purpose of these rules was to destroy the national system of education and the growth of Russian-Tatar schools. The charter established that: “Russification of the Tatar Muslims can only be achieved after the spread of the Russian language and education” (Efirov, 1948).

DISCUSSIONS

The problem of the Tatars Christianization was to a varying degree addressed in the studies of Ilminskiy (1904, 1911), Chicherina (1906), Pinegin (1890), Efirov (1948), Gorokhov (1941), Glukhov (1993), Iskhakov (2002), Fakhrutdinov (2015) and other representatives of the national historical and publicistic literature.

For example, the Professor of Kazan Pedagogical Institute, a prominent expert in the history of pedagogy, V.M. Gorokhov (who belongs to the baptized Tatars) wrote in his book “The Reactionary School Policy of Tzarism Towards the Volga Region Tatars”: “The content, teaching methods, conditions of keeping children in newly baptized schools have been a dread for children and their parents. Newly baptized schools terrified the local population” (Gorokhov, 1941). It is necessary to discuss the ethnicity of the Kryashen nation. Recently some representatives of the Kryashens have raised the question of identification of Kryashens as an independent nation (Glukhov, 1993). Such a requirement is absolutely baseless because the Kryashens, who are a sub-ethnic group of the Tatar people, don't have their own language which is the main determinant of a nation, and like all the Tatars, they speak Tatar.

The Kryashens are the result of the hereditary Christianization of Muslim Tatars tatarized Finns in Volga and Kama regions after the conquest of the Kazan Khanate carried out by the tsarist autocracy for the purpose of gradual assimilation of the Tatars and Volga region peoples. According to some sources, the number of the earlier baptized Tatars was about 30 thousand but some of them, and the exact number is unknown, returned to Islam. There is no information about the number of the newly baptized; a lot of them became Muslims again in the 30-40's and since the 60's of the 18th century; a part of them were becoming Muslims gradually - throughout the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century. The Kryashens, who remained Orthodox believers in the 20-30's of the 20th century, accounted for 4.8% of the total number of all Tatars (Iskhakov, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The Tatars Christianization which took place as a part of the Russian state after the fall of the Kazan Khanate passed several stages:

Stage I – the 16-17th centuries. The Tatars Christianization was performed using mainly economic pressure, with some benefits allotted to the newly baptized;

Stage II – the 18th century. It was the stage of the large-scale forced Christianization and Russification (the earlier baptized people in the period of Ivan the Terrible reign in contrast to the newly baptized of the 18th century).

Stage III - the end of the 19th century when the policy towards non-Russian peoples was tightened again. Under the changed conditions, more “modern”, sophisticated means started to be used when during the Christianization the native language was widely used.

The Tatars Christianization turned the destiny of a certain part of the Tatar people. The Kryashens were the result of the forced Christianization of Tatars in Kazan after the conquest of the Kazan Khanate which was carried out by the autocracy for the purpose of cultural and spiritual assimilation of the Tatars.

Recommendations

The materials and conclusions contained in this article can be used for preparation of general and specialized courses on the history of Russia as well as other history-related sciences.

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