

**“HER NATURE AND EDUCATION WERE
VERY CLOSE AND UNDERSTANDABLE FOR ME”
(ON HOW TATARS REGARDED THE INTERFAITH MARRIAGES
IN THE 19TH–20TH CENTURIES)**

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The aim of the article is to identify the historical features of the inter-ethnic marriages among the Tatars. The number of such marriages has increased significantly during the Soviet era. The problem of mixed marriages during the imperial period has never been researched in historical perspective before. The study of this aspect of the social history of Tatars can help to identify the distribution channels of European culture and integration of Muslims into Russian society. Through the analysis of clerical correspondence, periodical press, Tatar journalism and literature of 19th – 20th centuries, the author concludes that this social problem increased during that period of time. Mixed marriages with representatives of other religions have spread among the Muslim Tatars in the period of bourgeois reforms of the 19th century. They were caused by the processes of transition from the traditional to modernized lifestyle and changes in the value system. In the early 20th century this question was considered as one of the social problems and was actively discussed on the pages of the Tatar press, it became a topic of focus in works of literature. Mixed marriages were a result of the family crisis in the Muslim community.

Keywords: Tatars, family, mixed marriage, bourgeois society, Muslim community

The spread of Europeanized style of life among the Tatar bourgeois environment led to a gradual erosion of ethnoreligious boundaries. This was particularly true for the cities where the Tatars lived in the neighbourhood with other peoples [1, p. 335–345]. One of the results of close communication between representatives of different religions became mixed marriages.

Mixed marriages had happened earlier, but only among the nobility. As a researcher of this issue G. Azamatova notes, in the Tevklevs noble family there were three cases of conversion to Orthodoxy, all of them were due to matrimonial plans. At the beginning of the 19th century, Salima Tevkleva got married to an Ufa nobleman I. Timashev. The story of taking Christianity by this Tatar noble woman is described in *A Family Chronicle* by S. Aksakov. The marriage did not last long; she gave birth to two sons and died of tuberculosis three years later after that.

Tragic was the fate of another Tevkleva – Gaisha, a daughter of Shakhingarey Yusupovich. She was going to get married to a not very wealthy Lieutenant Gavriil Koko. Her father had already died and her relatives were against that marriage. By the way, a blood brother of Geisha was the future mufti from Orenburg Salimgarey. On September 3, 1838, Gaisha Tavkleva accepted the Christian faith through the rite of baptism and took the name Feodosya. However, she never became the wife of G. Koko. Apparently, the reason was due to vested interests of the groom, who needed to improve his financial position immediately, and that was revealed before the wedding. Soon after the adoption of Orthodox Christianity, Gaisha wrote asking to return her to the Mohammedan religion, but all attempts failed.

For some time, newly-baptized Feodosya was even placed in the Annunciation women's monastery to protect her from the influence of relatives. G. Tevkeleva never got married, she failed to return to Islam officially as well. Could Gaisha's poor mother – Zuleykha Tevkeleva, who until her last days had been fighting for bringing back the erring daughter in Islam, know that the history would repeat itself in a few decades. Her grandson – Ahmed Batyrhanovich Tevkelev, who was born in 1862, tied the knot with a Russian girl in the late 19th century. For that reason, he was baptized under the name of Vladimir Nikolaevich. A daughter was born as the result of that marriage [2, p. 117–122, 21].

In a strange land, in a foreign environment, the Tatar-Muslims also sometimes entered mixed marriages. However, these were isolated cases, due to the particular living situations. For example, a Tatar man from Rostov-on-Don, turned out to be on the territory of modern Bulgaria during the Russian-Turkish war in 1877–1878 and married a local woman. A mutual feeling arose between the young Bulgarian woman and the wounded soldier. The former Russian soldier remained to live at his wife's homeland. They had a son – Daniyal, who used to come to Russia and worked on the Volga in the melon-growing farms until the revolution of 1917. Daniyal's daughter and granddaughters married Bulgarians. They profess Christianity.

In addition to marriages with Orthodox Christians, during the reform era they also entered matrimonial unions with representatives of other branches of Christianity. For instance, the youngest son of Kazan merchant Sh. Kazakov – Muhammad, married a German woman in the 1910s. At that time he was living in Berlin where he was sent for merchant affairs by his father and where he had a small business. The family had two children who were given Muslim names – Mahmoud and Maryam. During the war, the Kazakovs moved to Turkey [3, p. 212].

The Europeanization of the Tatar Muslim society created a type of people who found themselves at the crossroads. As the result of integrating into the Russian society they often lost their identity. The Tatars at the beginning of the 20th century are characterized by a certain duality. "I'm not a European or an Asian. I stand between them," a publicist Fatikh Karimi wrote [4, p. 89]. This duality hindered them when choosing a life partner. During his journey around

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Europe, he became acquainted with a French governess. The woman was ready to marry him. Curiously, the young man was supported by the gold industry entrepreneur Shakir Rameyev (F. Karimi accompanied him as an interpreter). However, Fatikh changed his mind. “Her nature and education were very close and understandable for me”, admitted “the groom” later. It is not religious or national differences with the French woman that prevented him from marriage. “How could I bring a woman who got a good education to the society where slavery and deprivation prevail”, he noted. No one knows what interethnic and interreligious conflicts could appear due to the marriage, but some years later F. Karimi got married to a Tatar merchant’s daughter Saida [4, p. 91].

The Tatar community condemned mixed marriages. For example, at the beginning of the 20th century, a resident of the Tatar Sloboda of Kazan, representative of the famous merchant family, Ibrahim Aituganov married a Russian woman. However, soon he moved to another part of the city because the coreligionists condemned his marriage. “It is a small event, but for the Tatar youth it is a black event”, a writer Fatikh Amirkhan commented the occasion in a private letter [5, p. 209]. Although the Qur'an allowed mixed marriages, a Muslim was allowed to marry a Christian and a Jewish woman. For example, after a series of conflict situations related to Jewish brides, in 1898 the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly officially allowed the marriage of a Muslim with a Jewess. However, this did not mean the approval of such marriages by the society. They still condemned the ties with the adherents of different faiths.

Marriages with Christians were strictly punishable by the law and, therefore, happened rarely. Nevertheless, mullahs, in spite of the prohibition of such marriages by the Russian law, conducted marriages with Christians. In 1910, as the result of the audit of the Orenburg Mohammedan Spiritual Assembly, it was revealed that the leadership of religious institutions repeatedly covered up cases of mullahs who concluded marriages between Mohammedans and Orthodox Christians. Most likely, a merchant I. Aituganov also got married according to the Muslim tradition (nikah), but under the Russian law, his marriage was considered to be a cohabitation.

For over ten years the marriage of a representative of the famous business family from Simbirsk Governorate, a hereditary honorary citizen, Yakub Akchurin, and a peasant woman from the village of Silaevka of the Karsun district of the same Governorate, Vasilisa Rozhdestvina, was considered to be a cohabitation. In 1899, they had a daughter Alexandra. At the time of their marriage in 1910, the family had already raised six children: Alexandra, Klavdiya, Vladimir, Georgy, Elizaveta, and Victor. All of them were registered as illegitimate children of V. Rozhdestvina and were baptized in the Trinity Church in the village of the Trinity Karsun County [6, p. 1–10, 13–14]. Vasilisa and Yakub could register their marriage only by the Lutheran tradition. On 7 June 1910, they were married in the Evangelical Lutheran St. Mary's Church in Simbirsk. At the time, the 'newlyweds' were both 35 years old. The groom was recorded as a Mohammedan and the bride – as a representative of the Evangeli-

cal Lutheran confession. When adopting their own children, the couple gave a written promise that would raise them only in the Orthodox tradition and in no way would 'seduce' them with their own religions [6, p. 6, 12]. Only under those conditions, this family became legitimate.

If marriages of a Muslim man with a non-Muslim women were acceptable within the religious tradition, the marriages of a Tatar woman with representatives of different faiths were completely prohibited. Very significant is the story by Fatih Amirkhan *Hayat*. A merchant's daughter Hayat falls in love with a Russian student Mikhail but finds the strength to overcome love by putting her own faith above it.

The issue of the relationships between Muslim men and young Russian women was brought up repeatedly in the Tatar press. The problem was discussed in 1906 on the pages of the newspapers *Vakyt*, *Bayanel-khak*, and *Kazan Mokhbire*. In *Vakyt*, a writer and theologian Rizaetdin Fakhretdin was published under the pseudonym of Dervish effendi; he was concerned that educated Tatar young men were choosing young women of another faith as wives.

“As a result, children in their families are brought up in the Russian, Polish and Jewish spirit. In order to prevent this, it is necessary to improve an educational level of the Tatar women”, Fakhretdin believed [7].

According to merchant Akhmetzyan Saidashev, the editor of the *Bayanel-khak* newspaper, the marriages between the Tatars and Russian women were no threat and could even contribute to the further spread of Islam. Joint education of Russian and Tatar girls seemed to be a greater danger to Saidashev. He believed that this could lead to the downfall of the religious-moral foundations of the Muslim women.

The topic was developed in the article by Gafur Kulakhmetov “Muslim young man and Russian young women”, which was published in the *Kazan Mokhbire* newspaper. The author supported neither Fakhretdin, nor Saidashev. The main idea in the article by G. Kulakhmetov boiled down to the fact that among the Tatars there were few equal marriages in terms of intellectual development of the spouses [8, p. 156–159].

In his article published in the *Vakyt* newspaper in 1909, Gabelbari Battal wrote that after the revolution of 1905 the number of mixed marriages of Tatar men with Russian women increased, as well as with Polish, French, and Jewish women. To counter that phenomenon, he offered to organize a decent education for the Tatar women that would be no worse than the education for men [9, p. 98].

The fact that young men and women were not able to communicate with each other before the wedding sometimes prevented happy marriages. The bride and the groom often met for the first time at the Muslim marriage ceremony – the *nikah*, and in some cases even after that. The situation slightly changed when photography was invented. Young people, women in particular, were sometimes showed a portrait of the potential spouse. In some cases, it could influence the family's final decision about marriage.

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However, no photo could replace face-to-face contact. Therefore, some future spouses got acquainted with each other through letters. For instance, theologian Musa Bigiev held correspondence with his future wife. Due to such factors, some of the Tatar men preferred to have relationships with more emancipated Russian women.

Perhaps, the most outstanding work on the issue of mixed marriages is the story by Gayaz Iskhaki *He was still not married* written in 1916 in Moscow. The protagonist, Shamsetdin, falls in love with a Russian widow Anna Vasilyevna. He grew up in a Tatar village, but after the madrasah graduation he moved to St. Petersburg, where he worked as a counterman in a Tatar shop. Shamsetdin and Anna began living together, young people like spending time together. It should be noted that even judging by the title of the story, the protagonist does not perceive cohabitation as normal marriage, he feels that someday he will marry a Tatar woman and he will have a real family.

However, several years later, the couple had their firstborn baby and it became clear for the young man that the relationships with Anna was not a temporary phenomenon. There were no psychological or intellectual barriers between the young people, but there was the unchanged facet – religion which brought up the question of children upbringing. Anna, who had tried for many years not to stick out her faith in front of her beloved, eventually brought the children to Church and baptized them. G. Iskhaki describes the complicated spiritual struggle of Shamsetdin: love to his roots and feelings for the woman of another faith intertwine in him. He suddenly feels the rejection of her culture and the beloved children turn out to be far from him. Because of his regular business, Shamseddin failed to teach daughters to speak the Tatar language, to pray as he prays, and to understand his world.

In that manner, the writer warned about the consequences of education and integration in the Russian environment – first and foremost, it is children who suffer in mixed unions. G. Iskhaki commented this issue in the press. He urged to pay more attention to the upbringing of youth, particularly the organization of their cultural leisure activities.

A social activist and editor of the children’s magazine *Ak Yul*, Fakhreislam Agiev, was passionate about a Russian girl Margaret at the dawn of his youth, she was from a family of poor nobles. They had known each other from childhood, because the future editor was growing up in the Penza Governorate. His parents – father-mullah and mother-abystai – were very worried about this fact, but the lovesick young man was adamant. In the end, F. Agiev married another woman.

Looking back at his youthful passion, Agiev recognised later that the opinion of a writer and historian Gaziz Gubaidullin had a great impact on him. He managed to convince the romantic young man that Margarita loved only Fakhreislam, but she would never be able to love his people, the culture and even to talk about such matters as, for example, the Tatar magazine *Ak Yul*, in

his own home he would have to speak in Russian not to offend his beloved with speech which she does not understand

As his last argument, the son of a Kazan merchant Gubaidullin cited the class contradictions between the spouses. According to him, he would not have dared to get married not only a Russian aristocrat Margarita, but a daughter of a Tatar mirza-nobleman of Maryam. The spouses had too different views on the world and on private life of spouses [10, p. 246–247]. Obviously, for F.I. Agiev, who was fascinated by the ideas of national progress and the development of the Tatar culture, the words of Gubaidullin seemed more persuasive than the entreaties of his parents. Some time later, he married Sufiya Kulakhmetova, sister of a writer Gafur Kulakhmetov.

Major part of the Tatars avoided mixed marriages, trying to preserve their religious and ethnic identity. In the cities, where Russian population dominated, for example, in the two capitals, the Tatars-migrants played a considerable role. For example, the second generation of the Tatars who grew up in St. Petersburg in the late 19th – early 20th century married women from a national depth of the country, and thus removed a danger of assimilation [11, p. 150]. Overall, in the late 19th – early 20th century, mixed couples among the Tatars were rare, although had already caused panic among the public. This attitude was reinforced by the state policy, initiated by Muslim clerics and Christian priests. The sentiments of the Tatar Muslim society were reflected in the literature of the early 20th century, where the family was considered not only as a union of two loving people but also as a place of preservation of cultural and religious traditions.

However, the time after 1917 showed how fragile these ideas about the traditional marriage were. Already in the years of the Soviet power, after the abolition of all legal restrictions many mixed unions were concluded. In particular, they were typical of educated Tatars, who were usually the descendants of merchants and clergy. For example, even the son of a famous theologian Musa Bigeyev, Ahmed, in the early 1930s married Tatyana Pastukhova, the woman of a noble-merchant origin. The religious leader at that time was not living in the USSR, he emigrated. His wife, A. Kamalova, was against that marriage, but A. Bigeyev did not listen to his mother. The couple had sons – Iskander and Boris, and later they divorced [12, p. 299].

The marriages of Muslims with Christians happened before the revolution, however, there were virtually no examples of marriages of Tatar women from rich merchant families with representatives of not their faith. However, in the first years of the Soviet power, religious prohibitions began to be violated. For example, one of the daughters of a Moscow merchant A. Burnashev married M. Lutsky, a secretary of F. Dzerzhinsky, the other one married a nephew of Mikhail Kalinin [13, p. 7]. The first Tatar actress S. Gizzatullina-Volzhsкая married V. Rusinov from Izhevsk in the 1920s [14, p. 164, 172]. There are many such examples, Tatars readily integrated into the Russian-Soviet society (they gave their children international names and raised them in the same spirit) and adopted the laws of assimilation. Entire Tatar villages gradually disap-

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peared. Especially sad is the fate of the Tatars living in the former Kasimov Uyezd of the Ryazan Governorate, which almost dissolved in the Russian environment.

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**«ЕЕ НАТУРА И ВОСПИТАНИЕ БЫЛИ МНЕ БЛИЗКИ И ПОНЯТНЫ»:
СМЕШАННЫЕ БРАКИ В ТАТАРСКОМ ОБЩЕСТВЕ В XIX–XX ВВ.**

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В статье анализируются исторические особенности распространения межэтнических браков среди татар. Они получили заметное распространение в советское время. Проблема смешанных браков среди татар Волго-Уральского региона никогда не изучалась с исторической точки зрения. Изучение данного аспекта социальной истории татар необходимо для исследования каналов распространения европейской культуры в мусульманской среде, процессов их интеграции в общероссийское экономическое, культурное и социально-правовое пространство. На основе анализа делопроизводственной документации Оренбургского магометанского духовного собрания, татарской национальной периодической печати и художественной литературы конца XIX – начала XX в., автор приходит к выводу, что смешанные браки как социальная проблема возникли еще в период царской России. Вступление в смешанный брак с представителями других конфессий получило развитие среди татар-мусульман в период буржуазных реформ второй половины XIX в. Смешанные браки были обусловлены процессами перехода от традиционного уклада к модернизированному образу жизни, переменами в системе ценностей татар. В начале XX в. данный вопрос рассматривался в качестве одной из социальных проблем и активно обсуждался на страницах татарских газет, поднимался в художественных произведениях. Смешанные браки стали результатом кризиса семьи в самой татарской мусульманской общине.

Ключевые слова: татары, семья, смешанный брак, буржуазное общество, мусульманская община

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