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## Gender Modernization or Cultural Deformation

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**Abstract:**

*The article is devoted to social-cultural transformations in the Russian village, mediated by the modernization processes caused by the participation of Russia in the Great War. The militarization of industry and the mobilization of the rear led to the need to involve women in the production process. This, in its turn, stimulated the increase of the woman authority in traditional social structures.*

*These processes, characteristic of the whole country, affected, among other things, the Muslim settlements of the Middle Volga region. The First World War was a serious social-cultural challenge for the Islamic social enclaves, which experienced a cultural shock in 1916 caused by the influx of carriers of other forms of culture, represented by disabled people, wounded and soldiers on leave, as well as the refugees and evacuees. The obvious result of this cultural expansion was the public and the widespread use of self-made alcoholic beverages at Sabantuy in 1916.*

*This kind of modernization process, characteristic of the broad stratum of the population, has come into some contradiction with the movement of cultural woman emancipation, which in the early 20th century was spread among enlightened Muslims. Ultimately, following the Second Russian Troubles, the conflict between enlightened Islam and the people's modernizations was removed, as the result of the Bolsheviks victory and a radical change in the political and social-cultural situation in the country.*

**Keywords:** *Great War, Second Russian Troubles, Muslims, Women, Modernization, Transformation.*

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## **1. Introduction**

The length and the dramatic nature of the historical collisions of the Second Russian Troubles make it possible to assert that the social structure of Russia in the early twentieth century was unstable and vulnerable to external challenges.

However, the conclusion about the agony of the empire or the exhaustion of its life potential, which is obvious for the discourse of Soviet and post-Soviet historiography, is not unconditional, because the Russian leadership with the support of the population, insistently declares the continuity and the integral character of Russian politics and geopolitical doctrine throughout more than a thousand and hundred years.

At the same time, not only the scale, but also the degree of activity among the participants show that social institutions and state mechanisms were in a state of some contradiction, which urgently demanded permission. In this regard, the issue about the potential for social-political consensus is of particular importance. His exhaustion threatened the uncompromising struggle of political actors. At the same time the preservation made it possible to count on the peaceful course of the historical process at the beginning of the last century.

One of the most striking subjects is the analysis of the feminist movement and the degree of its integration into the overall flow of modernization projects.

## **2. Methods**

The solution of this article problems involves the use of classical methods of historical analysis, such as chronological, retrospective, comparative, problem-chronological one, etc.

## **3. Results**

Among the social-cultural and political presentations by which the first decades of the twentieth century were so rich, the ideas of gender equality in the Islamic society are notable, and in the Russian version they make a very original story. The ideas of woman emancipation in the Muslim environment arose in the context of the social-cultural structure of Muslim society modernization. The Europeanization of the Kazan Tatars life (who were, like the Turks in the zone of an active contact of the European and Asian cultural traditions) accompanied a certain emancipation of manners. The systematic communication with the Russian population, trips abroad (including the centers of Muslim modernism) contributed to a greater emancipation of views and a critical perception of the customs established in everyday life of the Muslim family. For example, by the beginning of the last century the Tatar woman costume (under the influence of Russian acculturation) had gradually lost its archaic features. Numerous shops and shops selling clothing from Europe become very popular in the Tatar environment.

But although the indicators of identity and self-identity indicate the presence of mutations in the self-consciousness of Muslim women, their social status and place in a family were still determined by Sharia practices, which have been preserved since the time of "Patsha-apy" (the everyday name of Catherine II by Russian Muslims). Severe and heated debates on the woman issue in the pages of the Muslim press and at the First All-Russian Muslim Congress (in Moscow, 1917) show that the first sprouts of woman emancipation in the Muslim environment were not enthusiastically welcomed by the Russian ummah.

The development of the social-political consciousness of Russian Muslim women was influenced by Eastern and European enlightenment literature. However, a powerful catalyst was the development of the social movement during the First Russian Revolution. "Russian Women's Mutually Charitable Society", "Women's Equality Alliance", "Women's Progressive Party", "Russian League of Women's Equality", emerged on the wave of social-modernization activism attracted the attention of Muslim activists, mostly the representatives of liberal-democratic groups. The most important factor in the development of the women's Muslim movement was the development of the secular education system. Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, the type and the image of Muslim feminist was developed gradually.

A new impetus for the development of women's organizations among Muslim women was received during the First World War. Beginning with the societies for helping the wounded during World War I, the movement for the emancipation of Muslim women fully manifested itself in 1917. It became all-Russian with its program and national bodies. It is noteworthy that the activists from Moscow and Kazan acted as the pioneers in the matter of Muslim women emancipation, who at the end of April of the seventeenth year managed to hold the All-Russian congress of Muslim women in Kazan. More than eighty delegates and more than three hundred guests from two capitals, the Volga region, the Crimea, the Caucasus, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Siberia and Turkestan, from the Urals, developed the main slogans of the women's Muslim movement on 24 - 27 of April. According to the contemporary's testimony, "there were women of old age, educators and intellectuals, the students of authoritative educational institutions, the graduates of educational institutions, and the representatives of working women who learned the experience of life" (All-Russia Congress of Muslim Women, 2009).

At the Moscow All-Russia Congress, feminists and their supporters from liberals and socialists managed to convince most delegates on the legitimacy of the demands for the equality of men and women recognition. However, an apparent contradiction of the Moscow Congress resolution to many ayats the 282nd Sura 2 (about the witnessing at a trial), the 11th Sura 4 (about the inheritance) and 34th Sura 4 (about the husband guardianship over wives)) caused a stormy polemic at the Second (July) general Muslim congress in Kazan. Thus, the feminist program was turned down, and accordingly, the attempt taken by Muslim activists to work out their own modernist project that, without questioning the Muslim identity, would formulate a new identity

based on the principles of democracy and civil society. Later, during the transformation of the political crisis into a brutal conflict of the Second Russian Troubles, the essential modernizing projects, including Islamic feminism, were removed from the agenda of the society in which, under the shadow of utopia, the practices of social bricolage were developed, involving the reduction of civil feeling to the state of its complete atrophy.

There was a lot of trouble signs and crisis symbols, many of them are widely known and even studied (Rasputin phenomenon, flourishing of occultism, nihilism, etc.), others still wait for their researchers. But all these phenomena, seemingly unthinkable in the cultural aura of Russia, alien to the traditions of the peoples inhabiting it, were the symptoms of the disease that struck the state and society, the disease that seriously undermined the strength of the imperial body on the eve of a decisive battle with the liberals.

It seems that in the early twentieth century, the crisis in the Russian Empire was really brewing, and not economic or political one, but an unnoticed and therefore the most dangerous i.e. the cultural one. The identity crisis, aptly named systemic one, as the elements of the system ceased to understand each other. Although the fatal outcome for the empire was almost inevitable, were it not for this ill-fated war in which Russia, in its misfortune, tried to enter with a sober head, befuddled by the dreams of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. However, no one seems to have imagined that the "communal revolution" will be the solution to this crisis, during which the "black redistribution" advocated by the community peasants will be only the first step on the way to Russia plunging into the second troubled epoch.

The war of 1914-1918 revealed and convincingly showed not only the vices and the weaknesses of the Russian bureaucracy, but also the inability of the social organism of the empire to function in the social space that was modernized during the years of the world slaughter. This should have alerted the shakers of the foundations from the liberal camp, who were eager to push the monarch, tired of the autocracy, from throne. This did not wary them - they decided to try their luck, hurrying to grab at the helm of state power and remained overboard.

In modern discussions, not the problem of a sociocultural crisis symptom presence is principal, but the issue of an honest mistake by the Russian "modernists" and their partners, overestimating the size of the modernization platform on which Westernized democratic practices and civil society structures were going to be rooted. In our article we do not intended - and this is hardly possible outside the framework of a solid scientific discussion - to list all the signs of social attitudes on the eve of the monarchy fall. Let us pay attention only to two noteworthy changes in the social status and the role of peasant women. Let's note that, although these trends were characteristic of all confessional communities of the Middle Volga region, the greatest resonance was caused by their incarnations in Islamic enclaves.

So, in the spring of 1916 gendarme analysts celebrate noted the drinking of Muslims during Sabantuy. It is well known that sobriety was one of the principles of the Muslim village. In the social communication of the beginning of the 20th century, Muslim sobriety served as a kind of indicator that allowed to separate Orthodox from non-Russians. The stereotypical image of a Tatar is a sober Tatar. Accordingly, the consciousness of those who drank at Sabantuy, should have undergone a significant transformation. It can be said that drunken Tatars in provincial Russia should have been much more afraid than sober ones, since this type of subjects was unknown. They did not fit into any of the niches of the imperial social structure, and there was no place for them in the traditional social organization. However, these new Muslims have already come and lived among ordinary people, immanently creating some new cultural aura with unknown, and therefore - frightening parameters. Gubernia gendarmes, strictly speaking, were initially interested not so much in the social-cultural paradox of Muslim drunkenness as in the fact of "dry law" violation, however, having ascertained in the patriotic moods of the drunken Muslim population (Fund 199), the authorities did not begin to delve into the clarification of the reasons for the Mamadysh spree (the Mohammedans of the Mamadyshky uyezd of the Kazan province were the first ones who began to praise Dionysus).

Moreover, there were not enough gendarmes even for a serious fight against spies and revolutionaries. In 1917, the geography of the holiday libations on Sabantuy expanded (sabantuy (plow holiday), the holiday of spring field work beginning in Tatar villages. The holiday has pagan roots. Currently it is celebrated officially in the Republic of Tatarstan. It is accompanied by sports competitions and mass festivities. It is international one for a long time), and by the end of the year even Tatar young ladies did not hesitate to take a shot or two in some places. According to gendarme data, they even began to master the oldest profession in the cities (Fund 199; Fund 1246). Men, on the other hand, took the rule of exhilarating themselves with hot drinks (Fund 1246). The cases of public and open drinking can be regarded as paradoxical facts of Islamic everyday life, but the reaction of communities and mullahs to the events is no less surprising. More precisely it was the absence of this very reaction. The fact that the Muslim clergy did not come out with a strong condemnation of this behavior testifies not only to the mass but also to the profound nature of social deformation processes in Islamic communities that did not have the strength to condemn women and men who drink.

Another indicator of the social-cultural crisis of the Muslim village architecture is the departure of women to the crafts. Without waiting for the outcome of social and political disputes, Tatar peasant women from the same Mamadysh Uyezd were working on docks loading timber since the spring of 1915, and, judging by the gendarme reports, they earned very well (Fund 199). Besides, women - mostly widows and soldier wives - worked on the construction of the railway (Fund 199). It is noteworthy that the reward received (1 ruble 80 kopecks a day, that is, 30 kopecks more than a peasant with a horse), allowed the soldier wives not to pay attention, in some cases deliberately, to the restrictions on the norms of ethics in survival, and to

ignore worldly claims for the appreciation and the compensation concerning the expended labor resources. However, the emancipation of the Volga Muslims was by no means the fruit of their dreams. The changes in their status and the dynamics of the environment was considered by them as a temporary phenomenon. Thus, the report of the non-commissioned officer Ivan Akutin, who in 1915 observed the situation in the Cheboksary Uyezd, states: "soldiers' wives refuse to leave the community until the end of the war" (Fund 199).

It seems, however, that the experience of gender autonomy received during the war could scarcely have been left to chance. The liberation of Muslim women, their social equality and legal personality, still constituting an object of theoretical discussions, became the element of everyday life structures, regardless of reflection degree concerning these novels.

#### **4. Discussion**

Strictly speaking, the topic of Islamic feminism in Russia has not yet become the object of serious discussion as well as the gender theme in general, which is still exotic for the Russian scientific community. However, various aspects of this problem are mentioned in the works of Russian and foreign researchers, in particular: ethnic-confessional processes in the European East, the peculiarities of the regional national-religious policy in the Volga-Urals region, are explored in scientific publications by Yunusova (1999), Nabiev (2002), Khabutdinov (2006), etc. Separate aspects of social cultural communication in Islamic communities are considered in the works by Moritsch (1986), Galeyeva, Lyukshin & Fazliyev (2016), Lyukshina (2005), etc., however, even the most original (Shanin, 1990) and detailed studies (Figes, 1997) of the Red Troubles events do not contain in any degree the analysts of the causes and the significance of Islamic feminism in the social-political processes of Russian history at the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The beginning of the twentieth century is the time for the development and the presentation of the women's movement in the community of Russian Muslims. One of the national centers of Islamic feminist movement in Russia is the region of the Middle Volga, with its traditions of intercultural communication, Dzhadidist education and ethnic-confessional tolerance.

The feature of the women's movement in the Ummah is the lack of a broad social base, because of the contradiction between the idea of gender equality and the foundations of Islam, and because of opposition from the clergy and most part of the Muslim community.

The movement of Muslim women was characterized by the lack of segmentation in respect of social-civil and legal ideas, the combination of Islamic identity and the

contradiction with the Qur'an verses. In general, Islamic feminism remained a small but vigorous trend of the Jadid tradition, which was activated during the Great War, and especially after the fall of the monarchy in Russia.

Regardless of the institutionalized (or, at least, reflexed) feminist movement, women's emancipation takes place in the Islamic communities of the Middle Volga region conditioned to a drastic change in the social-economic status of some Muslim women. The participation of Muslim women in the processes of modernization and the intensification of Russian economy, conditioned by the Great War, acquired a mass character, which, in its turn mediated the development of a marginal social-cultural environment where confessional self-identity retreated to the periphery of consciousness, while civil identity had not developed yet.

In general, these autonomous trends in Islamic feminism were not in a state of a conflict communication historically. Later, both trends were destructured by the Soviet government, which purposefully opposed Jadidist feminism. The Soviet version of gender equality also far surpassed the program of everyday emancipation, planned during the Great War. However, this did not solve the issues of gender equality in the Islamic community, but removed them through the elimination of the Ummah as a social institution.

## **6. Summary**

Islamic feminism remains, more likely, an escaping image than a social-political trend deserving close attention of researchers for domestic and foreign historiography; the beginning of the twentieth century can probably be defined as conditional border, beyond which the systematic struggle starts for civil and social rights among Muslim women in Russia.

This unique story of Russian history, which for a long time has remained virtually out of the attention of professional historians, deserves a detailed and a careful study. The fact that this movement did not act as a single political force, as well as the destruction of all its trends during the years of Soviet power, cannot at all serve as the evidence of the insufficient influence of Islamic feminist movement on the course and the outcome of the social-political processes in 1917.

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