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Book review “N.I. Vorobyev. Kazan Tatars. Kazan: Tatgosizdat, 1953”¹

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The work under review is devoted to the characteristics of the material culture of the Kazan Tatars of the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The author set himself the task to identify the main elements of the Kazan Tatars' material culture, trace the history of its formation, and analyse its characteristic territorial and class differences. The work is based on the monograph of the same author, *Material Culture of the Kazan Tatars*, published in 1930. Since that time, the author has accumulated new material, critically revised previous conclusions, and essentially produced a new work (cit.: Smirnov A.P. (1954) N.I. Vorobyev. The Kazan Tatars. Tatgosizdat, Kazan, 1953. *Sovetskaya etnografiya* [Soviet Ethnography]. No. 3: 168–172. (In Russ.)).

Keywords: N.I. Vorobyev, book review, Kazan Tatars.

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Рецензия на книгу «Н.И. Воробьев. Казанские татары. Казань: Татгосиздат, 1953»²

А.П. Смирнов

Рецензируемая работа посвящена характеристике материальной культуры казанских татар конца XIX – начала XX в. Автор поставил перед собой задачу выявить основные элементы материальной культуры казанских татар, проследить историю сложения, проанализировать присущие ей территориальные и классовые различия. Основой работы послужила монография того же автора «Материальная культура казанских татар», опубликованная в 1930 г. С того времени автор накопил новый материал, критически пересмотрел прежние выводы и дал по существу новую работу (цит. по: Смирнов А.П. Н.И. Воробьев. Казанские татары. Татгосиздат, Казань, 1953. *Советская этнография*. М., 1954. №3. С.168–172).

Ключевые слова: Н.И.Воробьев, рецензия на книгу, казанские татары.

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The work under review is devoted to the characteristics of the material culture of the Kazan Tatars of the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The author set himself the task to identify the main elements of the Kazan Tatars’ material culture, trace the history of its formation, and analyse its characteristic territorial and class differences. The work is based on the monograph of the same author, *Material Culture of the Kazan Tatars*, published in 1930. Since that time, the author has accumulated new material, critically revised previous conclusions, and essentially produced a new work.

The positive feature of the given work is involving materials from neighboring peoples of the Volga region and the Russian people, with whom, as indicated in the monograph, the Tatars had been associated for a long time.

The book raises and resolves some key historical issues, in particular the problem of ethnogenesis, the clarification of which involved related historical disciplines – archeology, linguistics, the history of written documents, and anthropology. Such a breadth of coverage of sources makes the author’s constructions more persuasive.

The monograph contains eight chapters. Chapter One, “An essay on the formation of the people and culture,” is devoted to defining the place of the Kazan Tatars in the group of Turkic-speaking peoples. Using materials starting from the Paleolithic era and consistently examining all stages in the history of the local region, the author clearly identifies the main stages of the historical process of the union of tribes formation, the formation of a nationality, the creation of a bourgeois nation and its development up to the Great October Socialist Revolution. Thus, this chapter serves as a kind of introduction to the following chapters.

Some of the author’s statements require clarification. For instance, the author dates the appearance of man in the region to the Upper Paleolithic era (p. 8), while subsequent archaeological research shows that the Volga region was populated by man already in the Lower Paleolithic period, i.e., in the early Pleistocene (Panichkina, 1953: 264). It is also impossible to agree that the first Bulgar inhabitants in the Middle Volga region appeared during the formation of the Azov Bulgar union (p. 9). The appearance of the Bulgars in the Middle Volga region can be dated, according to indirect written data, to the end of the 7th century, and, on the basis of archaeological materials obtained by the Kuibyshev expedition, to the 8th–9th centuries. This can be determined by the Tarkhan burial ground, covered by N.F. Kalinin within the TASSR territory, and in the Kaibel burial ground, where burials from the 8th–9th centuries were discovered.

The author is clearly mistaken in claiming that in the 9th century the tribal union of the Kama Bulgars was already known as the state of the Kama Bulgars. Meanwhile, the state of the Volga Bulgars arose at the beginning of the 10th century, and it

was at that time that feudal relations were fully formed among the Bulgars. The author repeats the same mistake further (p. 10), mentioning relations with the south during the formation of the Bulgar union of tribes and the state of Kama Bulgaria. The author does not distinguish between the concepts of 'union of tribes' and 'state', while the former is characteristic of a pre-class society, mainly for its last stage, and the latter is typical of a class society. There is also no reason to assume that the state of the Kama Bulgars united neighboring tribes on the principle of union (p. 11). The unification of tribes in those historical conditions could only be carried out on the principle of subordination.

Discussing the ethnic composition of the Bulgarian state, the author touches upon the issue of the Slavic element. Explaining the opinion of Ibn Fadlan, who called the Bulgar ruler the king of the Slavs, he writes, "The presence of Slavic elements in the Bulgars is not excluded, firstly, because they used to live in the Azov region, next to the Slavic Tmutarakan principality". In this case, the chronology is confused. The Bulgars lived in the Azov region at a time when there was no Tmutarakan principality there. True, Slavic tribes lived next to the Bulgars on the Don, and they determined the Slavic touch in the culture of the Azov Bulgars.

In this chapter, the author gave an exhaustive description of the Bulgar economy, which allows us to understand some features in the culture of the Kazan Tatars of the 19th–20th centuries. He also dwells on the political events of the 11th–14th centuries. When describing the Mongol conquest, the issue of the territory occupied by the Bulgars is mentioned. It is indicated that the center of the state remained in Zakamye, the author points out that part of the population moved to new places (p. 15): "Thus, on the right bank of the Volga there are a large number of monuments of this period...". The right bank of the Volga is one of the territories inhabited by the Bulgars from an early time. The Tarkhan burial ground seems to indicate this. Undoubtedly, the Temtyuzi, mentioned in the Russian chronicle, lived on the right bank of the Volga. There was the city of Oshel, destroyed by Russian princes in 1220. The description of the campaign by the Russian chronicler makes it possible to specify the location of this city on the right bank of the river quite accurately. On top of that, the Bulgars appeared in the Pre-Kama region in pre-Mongol times.

The author's interesting point regarding the appearance of new nomads in the territory of Zakamye during the Golden Horde period explains the presence of remnants of nomadic life in the culture of the Kazan Tatars of the 19th–20th centuries. Apparently, the author is right in believing that the issue of the significant cultural influence of the Tatars on their neighbors and their gradual merging with them is not related to the process of Islamisation. Focusing sufficiently on the issue of the influence of Russian culture on the Tatars at different stages of the history of the local region and, in particular, after the annexation of the Volga region to the Russian state, the author points out that the Russians brought higher forms of economy to the region. It is a pity though that he does not expand on this important thesis. Interesting

material is provided to characterise the ties with Khorezm and Bukhara in the 18th–19th centuries, and the conservative nature of those ties is emphasised.

Sufficient attention is paid to the formation of capitalist relations that led to the emergence of the Tatar bourgeois nation. The point about the progressive nature of capitalism of that time and new ideas, which penetrated into the village and weakened the influence of the Muslim clergy and bais, who instilled religious fanaticism in the Tatars, is a valuable observation.

The development of capitalist relations was accompanied by the strengthening of Russia's influence. The working masses of the Tatars were drawing closer to the Russian working class. The author pointed out the great progressive role of Kazan, which was the center of representatives of first democratic and then proletarian ideology in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. This chapter highlights the activities of V.I. Lenin, V.M. Molotov, S.M. Kirov, which found a response in Tatar society and influenced the development of the culture of the Tatar people. Briefly yet comprehensively, the changes that occurred in Tatar society and its culture as a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution have been formulated.

The second chapter provides an overview of research and literature. The author covers all literature from the 10th century to the present day. The works of medieval authors, such as Plano Carpini, Rubruquis, Marco Polo, deserve a more detailed critical assessment. Their descriptions cannot be called thorough, as the author does (p. 34). *The Tale of the Kazan Kingdom* by Prince Kurbsky, as well as the Kazan chronicler, should have been given more attention, revealing what observations concerning the life of the Kazan Tatars are of interest to researchers. The works of a later time, the 16th–19th centuries, are analysed distinctly better.

The third chapter, "Natural conditions of the habitats of the Tatars and demographic data on the nationality", examines the influence of the natural environment on the formation of the culture of the people. However, when assessing the phenomena, the author took into account the modern natural environment, without taking into account the historical changes that were revealed in special studies devoted to the given issue. In particular, the work of V.D. Avdeev *On the Origin and Nature of Modern Steppe Vegetation in Western Zakamye* (Moscow, 1952), which provides a history of the natural environment over a long period of time, beginning with the Bronze Age. It is worth noting the wealth of material provided by the author of the reviewed work when characterising demographic data.

The fourth chapter, "The main economic base of the Kazan Tatars", is devoted to the economy during the period of capitalism. Much emphasis is given to agriculture, the process of ruin of the working peasantry has been outlined clearly. The statistical data illustrating the author's main points are of great interest. Less attention is paid to trades. The chapter ends with a brief description of the changes that occurred as a result of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Chapter five describes the technology of agriculture and trades to a quite full extent and reveals their national characteristics. Unfortunately, the author did not take into account new data obtained by archaeologists and historians who studied the technology of agriculture among the Bulgars and in the Kazan Khanate. It has now been established that the fallow system started to be used as early as the Golden Horde era. This is supported by the finds of weed seeds typical of old arable soils, together with cereals. Therefore, it is completely wrong to assert, as was done on page 98, that only in the 16th century, with the advent of the Russians, new methods of farming (three-field system) appeared, replacing the fallow system that was dominant in the Volga-Kama region and was used when there were large reserves of land. Certainly, one cannot assume that the three-field system was applied everywhere already in the era of the Golden Horde. Undoubtedly there were areas where more primitive farming systems were practiced – these were the outskirts of the Bulgar Kingdom. More advanced technology is typical of only the central regions.

The pages devoted to the characteristics of the crafts are noteworthy. Shoemaking, weaving, embroidery, metal and wood processing are described in detail. It is hardly possible to agree with the author's assertion that the plant ornament used in embroidery was brought to the Middle Volga region from the steppe regions by the Turks. Plant ornaments are not uniform in their nature. Along with the oriental ornament, typical for the monuments of applied art of the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, the Tatars widely used an ornament adopted from the Russians back in the 12th–13th centuries.

The assertion that zoomorphic ornamentation could not have been preserved by the Tatars is also faulty. The reference to archaeological materials allegedly showing that such ornamentation disappeared under the influence of Islam is incorrect (p. 124). The latest excavations in Bulgar have provided irrefutable evidence of the use of various zoomorphic motifs in the applied art of the Bulgars of the 14th century. Among them, one can notice, for example, a plate with a realistic image of a reindeer (Brief Communications..., 1951: 22, fig.3), images of birds on the walls of vessels (collections of the State Historical Museum and the Museum of the TASSR). All this gives grounds to assert that images of animals in the applied art of the Kazan Tatars were used as early as the end of the 14th – beginning of the 15th centuries, although Islam was reluctant to allow these motifs.

Chapter six describes the dwellings and settlements of Tatars. The territorial features of the settlements are specified and the dwellings of various social groups are shown. Comparative data from history and archaeology are given, indicating the deep local roots of the types of dwellings. A great deal of material is provided to characterise the decorative elements that reveal a connection to the city's building art. Unfortunately, having given a detailed description of numerous elements that have no prototypes in earlier building art, the author does not reveal their origin. Such elements include the following: complete sheathing of walls with horizontal boards and dormer

windows on the pediments. These windows are decorated with architraves, often they look like balconies with a beautiful lattice, columns and aisles above the semicircular middle part. Dormer windows were usually larger than a normal window in the house (pp. 172–173). This ornamental motif is typical of wealthy houses and was widespread in Zakamye. The author suggests that the introduction of such architectural details is due to the presence of high fences, from behind which only the pediments and upper part of the windows are usually visible, that is why they were decorated in the most sophisticated way. This explanation is hardly fair. It would be more correct to consider this method of decorating a building as the influence of urban architecture in the Empire style, which is characterised by this kind of balconies with arches. Wall paneling with horizontal boards is also typical of urban houses. Certainly, in village architecture all the techniques were simplified. The porches of rich houses, decorated with two columns on the sides, also reflect the influence of the Empire style. Decorative techniques in the Empire style became known to village builders from the Russians. It would be important to identify the degree of influence of the neighboring peoples' architecture and the nature of the processing of borrowed motifs in order to get a clear picture of the uniqueness of the Tatar village 'Empire style'.

The data on the colouring of Tatar houses with a unique selection of colours, which created the so-called 'Tatar taste', is of interest. The author noted the typical features of this method of decorating a building, expressed not only in the selection of colours, but also in the manner of avoiding halftones. For some reason, he sees this as the influence of the medieval urban culture of Turkestan with its unique colouring of buildings. In our opinion, there is no need to go such a long way to look for comparative data. Bulgar architecture provides the same set of colors, which is defined as characteristic of Tatar architecture. At the same time, Bulgar architecture had its own unique features and was different from Central Asian.

Considerable attention is paid to the analysis of the internal structure of the home and the description of its decoration. The author specifies the characteristic details that determine the uniqueness of the Tatar culture. In the analysis of the architecture of the home and its decoration, the emphasis is placed on the social differences of the owners.

Chapter seven, “Clothing and decorations”, provides a detailed analysis of fabrics, clothing, and manufacturing techniques, with indication of social differences. Changes observed in clothing types during the 19th–20th centuries have been pointed out. The distinctive features of clothing in different regions of Tatarstan and differences from the corresponding clothing types of neighboring peoples of the Volga region have been shown.

To clarify the origin of Tatar headdresses, materials collected by Georgi, as well as data from archaeological excavations, are provided. Comparisons with the cap from the Ananyinsky burial ground and with headdresses on embroidery from Bulgaria and on Kyiv frescoes are well-executed. The author also pointed out that the

headaddresses of the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Turks of Eastern Turkestan are close to them.

The materials which characterise the jewelry are of particular interest. Many of them have prototypes in archaeological finds. For instance, the braids, reminiscent of similar jewelry of the 13th–14th centuries, earrings, close to those found in the burial ground ‘Babiy Bugor’ in Bulgar, dating back to the 11th–12th centuries (Brief communications ..., 1947: 102). The same applies to bracelets and clasps. Undoubtedly, with the early jewelry known in the culture of local tribes, one can compare the ‘yaka chylbyry’, reminiscent of rustling jewelry, which became especially widespread in the 10th century AD. Their manufacturing technique is no different from the techniques of Bulgar artisans.

Chapter eight, “Food”, contains a description of the diet of various classes of Tatar society in the 19th–20th centuries. Data are provided characterising the everyday and festive cuisine of various social groups of Tatars. The author mentioned cult prohibitions in food.

The conclusion formulates the main findings drawn by the researcher. He indicates that the main components of the Tatar culture are the Bulgar and Alan-Sarmatian, which developed from the earlier cultures of the Volga region – the Srubnaya and Andronovo. The author points out nomadic invasions over a long period, which left their mark on the culture of the Volga Bulgars, and then the Kazan Tatars. Quite a lot of attention is given to the issue of the penetration of Russian influence and the close connection of the working classes of the Russian and Tatar peoples, which especially intensified during the era of capitalism. The historical prerequisites for the development of the Tatar socialist culture, which has much in common with the culture of the Russian people, which became the basis of the socialist culture of all the peoples of the USSR, have been well identified.

The book by N.I. Vorobyev *The Kazan Tatars*, despite some shortcomings, gives a fair idea of the development of the culture of the Kazan Tatars and contains valuable material for clarifying the ethnogenesis of the peoples of the Volga region. Unfortunately, Tatgosizdat did not pay due attention to the design of the publication. The book is printed on poor paper. The illustrations are grey and inexpressive. Particularly disadvantageous are drawings 18 and 19, which do not create any impression of the difference between the old and modern villages.

Transl. by D.R. Sharifullina

Перевод на англ. Д.Р. Шарифуллиной

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ЛИТЕРАТУРА

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