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## To be a Muslim in the Penitentiary System of the Russian Empire: Evidence from Tatar Ego-documents of the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** The article sheds light on the experience of being an *inorodets* (a non-Russian, non-Christian subjects of the Russian Empire) in the imperial penitentiary system. The Tatar intellectual elite of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century pondered over the “prison experience” of this period in a number of texts, and the most significant of them are ego-documents written by a new generation of the Tatar elite that reflect new trends in the public discourse of the Muslim community of late imperial Russia. The present publication is based on the texts of private origin (autobiographies, memoirs, diaries) of a number of Muslim prisoners who had a difficult relationship with the authorities as well as with the officially recognized Muslim clergy. The article analyzes three works representing different views of Muslim authors on their prison experience. The prison reality at the turn of the 1870–1880s is depicted in the autobiography of Gabdrashid Ibragimov, who described it from the position of a young Muslim believer. He experienced feelings of shame during in time imprisoned; and at the same he realized that the prison had become for him a “school of life.” The other two writings are the famous work “Prison [Tür’ma]” by Gaiaz Iskhayyi and “Prison Reminiscences [Tiuremnye vospominaniia]” by Iusuf Akchura. They were published in 1907 and describe the prison experience of a Muslim in a Tsarist prison from an alternative perspective. We see that the emerging Tatar intellectual circle was quite seriously incorporated into the political context of the late Russian Empire. Therefore, religious aspects of prison reality occupy a rather modest place in the works of the Tatar political activists, and the personal experience of religious feelings is marginal. This corresponds to the circumstance that personal religious experience did not dominate the general worldview of the authors. At the same time the description of prison experience in the form of a more or less developed literary work reflected the level of the various authors’ “personality as well as cognitive and human maturity.”

**Keywords:** political prisoners, Tatar-speaking prisoners, Kazan province, Muslim subjectivity, memoir literature

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## Мусульманин в пенитенциарной системе Российской империи: свидетельства татарских эго-документов начала XX столетия

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**Аннотация:** Реконструируется положение инородца и иноверца в имперской пенитенциарной системе начала XX столетия. Анализируются описания «тюремного опыта», принадлежавшие перу нового поколения татарской элиты. Выявляются новые тренды в публичном дискурсе



мусульманского сообщества позднеимперской России. Исследование опирается на документы личного происхождения (автобиографии, воспоминания, дневники) ряда заключенных-мусульман, находившихся в непростых взаимоотношениях как с местными властями, так и представителями мусульманского духовенства. В качестве основного объекта анализа выступают три произведения, обнаруженные в 1907 г., в которых нашли отражение взгляды разных мусульманских авторов на свой «тюремный опыт». В частности, в автобиографии Габдрашида Ибрагимова описание тюремной действительности дано с позиции верующего мусульманина, пережившего ощущение стыда от тюремного опыта и одновременно осознание его как «школы жизни». В то же время в произведениях Гаяза Исхаки («Тюрьма») и Юсуфа Акчуры («Тюремные воспоминания») описывается тюремный опыт мусульманина с точки зрения формировавшегося слоя татарских интеллигентов, довольно серьезно инкорпорированных в общероссийский политический контекст позднеимперской России. Поэтому «религиозная сторона» тюремной повседневности занимает в этих произведениях неравнозначное место, отражая уровни «личностной, когнитивной и человеческой зрелости» авторов.

**Ключевые слова:** политические заключенные, татароязычные арестанты, Казанская губерния, мусульманская субъективность, мемуарная литература

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## Introduction

Confessionism, which formed the basis of the state ideology of the Russian Empire, and played an important role in the country's domestic policy, had a serious impact on its penitentiary system. However, up to the end of the imperial system, the status of Islamic cult institutions, as well as representatives of the Muslim clergy in the penitentiary system of the country remained marginal and often legally uncertain. It is likely that the small percentage of Muslims among prisoners in Russian jails allowed the authorities to ignore the religious rights of Muslim prisoners for quite a long time. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the situation gradually began to change, partly de jure in ways, but the majority of these changes were de facto.

It should be acknowledged that the history of the penitentiary system of the Russian Empire in the context of confessional problems has been developed in Russian historiography in an insufficient manner. For example, in one of the latest publications on this issue, the article by L.V. Kangaspuro,<sup>1</sup> only some features of the ethnic minorities' imprisonment in Russian jails are indicated, and with no general quantitative data and qualitative characteristics. At the same time, it is noteworthy that it was the author's conclusion that “national diasporas” were not created in Russian prisons, and that class was more important than the ethnicity. Some problems of the “institutional presence” of Islamic clerics in Russian prisons are highlighted in the works of I.K. Zagidullin.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, historiography extremely poorly covers the issue of the number of Muslim prisoners in Russian jails. In the literature, one can find only fragmentary information on provinces<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> L.V. Kangaspuro, “Tiuremnaia etnopolitika i praktika v Rossiiskoi imperii posle Velikikh reform [Ethno-policy and practice in the prison of the Russian Empire after Great Reforms],” *Peterburgskii istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 4 (2019): 306–316.

<sup>2</sup> I.K. Zagidullin, *Musul'manskoe bogoslužhenie v uchrezhdeniyakh Rossiiskoi imperii (Evropeiskaia chast' Rossii i Sibiri)* [Muslim structures in institutions of the Russian Empire (European part of Russia and Siberia)] (Kazan: Institut istorii im. Sh. Mardzhani AN RT Publ., 2006), 262–267.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in 1891–92 in 11 district prisons of the Kazan province (officially designed for 750 people), there were at least 599 Russian and 354 Tatar-speaking prisoners. See: S.V. Shebalkov, “Uezdnye tiur'my Kazanskoi gubernii v kontse XIX – nachale XX vv.: organizatsionnoe ustroistvo i arestantskii

or even individual prisons.<sup>4</sup> This may be related to the conciseness of official statistics due to the high “turnover” of the prisoners. One way or another, the available literature lacks both general data on the total number of Muslim prisoners and information on their proportion among the total number of prisoners. The overview of the “representation” of Muslims in Russian prisons of the late imperial period can often only be reconstructed based on indirect data and information of an alternative nature, including the documents “on behalf of” the Muslims.

Whatever the proportion of Muslims among the prisoners of Russian jails was, the obvious process of slow but steady incorporation of Islamic institutions into the imperial penitentiary system was due both to the increase in the proportion of Muslims among prisoners, and that those general processes took place during the era of modernization in Russian society.<sup>5</sup>

It is significant that in the late imperial period, the issue of the position of Muslims in Russian prisons and other places of detention, as well as the issue of the exercise of their religious rights, as well as the representation of Islamic clerics on legal grounds, began to be raised in public spaces. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the periodicals, in debates at public meetings, as well as on the initiative of individuals in the public space, there began to be discussed issues of organizing special prayer rooms for Muslims in prisons, and of more active involvement of Muslim clerics in solving prison problems. Bringing these problems to the public sphere is also related to the emergence of a number of literary texts written by Muslims which reflected their own personal “prison experience.” The more recognizable the author was, the more attention of the Muslim community his texts attracted to the issue of the Muslims’ situation in the places of detention, as well as the problems and the need to protect their religious rights. This evidence sometimes shows the way Muslim prisoners were aware of themselves and their otherness within the existing penitentiary system.

What did being a Muslim in a Russian prison mean? What did the imprisonment experience mean for a Russian Muslim? How comprehensively is this experience reflected in the ego-documents of that era? The problem of understanding such experience, the subjectivity of perception and the complexity of self-reflection in relation to these processes, as well as the reflection of Muslim authors in the context of their religious identity – are the key issues which will be discussed in this article.

### **A Muslim Prisoner in Imperial Prison: Ego-document Evidence**

Literary texts recording of the experience of a Muslim’s imprisonment in Russian jails became a relatively new phenomenon in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is certainly a wide range of sources that make it possible to characterize and analyze the specifics of a Muslim’s imprisonment in places of detention: legislative acts and circulars, official

contingent [County Prisons of the Kazan Province at the end of the XIX – early XX centuries: Organizational device and prison contingent].” *Nauchnyi Tatarstan*, no. 3 (2014): 84–85.

<sup>4</sup> A. Yarkov, “Musul'mane v istorii Tobol'skoi tiur'my [Muslims in the history of the Tobol'sk prison],” *Musul'manskii mir*, no. 3 (2018): 16.

<sup>5</sup> For general theoretical aspects of the functioning of religion and religious institutions in the prison system, see: James A. Beckford, Sophie Gilliat, and Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Religion in Prison. Equal Rites in a Multifaith Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); M. Foucault, *Nadzirat' i nakazyvat'*. *Rozhdenie tiur'my* [Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison] (Moscow: Ad Marginem Publ., 1999).

record keeping documentation, including internal correspondence, numerous petitions of prisoners, prison and other departmental reports, statistical collections, etc. After 1905, they also included the Tatar-language press, which reflected the dominant public discourse of the Muslim community.

Among the sources, a special place is occupied by sources of private origin or, as it has been expressed in recent decades, ego-documents.<sup>6</sup> Researchers have always paid attention to such documents. There is extensive historiography containing the classification of various sources of private origin and analyzing the emergence and transformation of basic terms and concepts, as well as indicating the tasks, difficulties and advantages of studying such documents.<sup>7</sup> However, in recent decades, in the study of history, interest in such sources has become overwhelming. As Yu.P. Zaretsky rightly points out, “despite all the doubts and obvious theoretical difficulties related to human subjectivity, this special attraction of autobiographical texts,” source that have haunted many researchers to the point they now resemble a fabulous cannibal carried away by an enticing smell. Describing a historian, the author gives the following figurative comparison, “Where it smells of human flesh, he knows that a prey awaits him there” (Mark Blok), which reflects his clear preference of this kind of evidence.<sup>8</sup>

Currently, historians often refer to sources of private origin, above all, memoirs, diaries, autobiographies, epistolary heritage (mainly private correspondence), etc. Moreover, within the sources included in this wide range, in turn, are more nuanced genre forms. For example, “memoirs” can be divided into memoirs proper, autobiographical notes, autobiographical essays, biographies and obituaries, literary records, etc. In turn, it is in proper autobiographies, letters, diaries, oral stories about life, as well as spiritual autobiographies, family chronicles, etc. that a number of researchers include in autobiographical texts can be define as “a historical and biographical text combining explanation and justification.”<sup>9</sup> Among such sources there stand out diaries which can be considered

<sup>6</sup> See an overview of the origin and spread of this term in the 1950–1990s for example, in the works of Yu.P. Zaretsky: 1) “Ego-dokumenty sovetskogo vremeni: terminy, istoriografiya, metodologiya [Ego-documents of the Soviet Era: Terms, historiography, methodology],” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, no. 3 (2021): 184–199; 2) “Novye podkhody k izucheniiu svidetel'stv o sebe v evropeiskikh issledovaniakh poslednikh let [New approaches to the Study of self-testimonies in European research in the last years],” in *Avtor i biografiya, pis'mo i chtenie: Sb. докладov mezhdistsiplinarnogo issledovatel'skogo seminara Fakul'teta filosofii Natsional'nogo issledovatel'skogo universiteta – Vysshei shkoly ekonomiki*, 24–41 (Moscow: VShE Publ., 2013), 24–41; See on the penetration of the term into the Russian historiographical narrative in: N.V. Surzhikova, ed. *Istoriia v ego-dokumentakh: Issledovaniia i istochniki* [History in ego-documents: Research and sources] (Yekaterinburg: ASPUr Publ., 2014).

<sup>7</sup> The main directions of Russian historiography are briefly but quite succinctly systematized in the following works. See: N.I. Prijmak, and K.O. Valegina, *Memuary, dnevniki, pis'ma kak istoricheskii istochnik: uchebnoe posobie* [Memoirs, diaries, letters as a historical source: Textbook] (St. Petersburg: Lema Publ., 2018); N.M. Filatova, “Podkhody k izucheniiu ego-dokumentov v sovremennoi istoricheskoi nauke v svete ‘lingvisticheskogo povorota’ [Approaches to the study of ego-documents in modern historical science in the context of a ‘linguistic turn’],” in *Dokument i ‘dokumental'noe’ v slavianskikh kul'turakh: mezhdru podlinnym i mnimym. Sb. nauchnykh trudov* (Moscow: Institut slavianovedeniia RAN Publ., 2018), 24–40; I.A. Polyakov, and M.A. Smirnova, “K istorii izucheniia russkoi memuarnoi literatury XVII–XVIII vv.: Problema sistematzatsii [On the history of the study of Russian memoir literature of XVII–XVIII centuries: the problem of systematization],” *Studia Litterarum* 6, no. 4 (2021): 400–445.

<sup>8</sup> Yu. Zaretsky, “Ego-dokumenty sovetskogo vremeni: terminy, istoriografiia, metodologiia [Ego-documents of the Soviet Era: Terms, historiography, methodology],” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, no. 3 (2021): 189.

<sup>9</sup> I.A. Polyakov, and M.A. Smirnova, “K istorii izucheniia russkoi memuarnoi literatury XVII–XVIII vv.: Problema sistematzatsii [On the history of the study of Russian memoir literature of XVII–XVIII centuries: the Problem of systematization],” *Studia Litterarum* 6, no. 4 (2021): 415, 426; Yu.P. Zaretskii, “Avtobiografiia

as “pre-texts,” that is, unfinished works, to which the author was about to return to, and “ego-texts,” that is, finished works in the middle of a which is the author’s life path.<sup>10</sup> In the latter case, diaries come close to memoir literature (M.Yu. Mikheev), which makes it possible to classify the diaries as an apart of borderline or syncretic genres.

Obviously, the extensive body of “sources of private origin” includes various texts, both in content and addressee, social functions and even formal features, and their classification and typology are highly dependent on the research field and specific research tasks. However, another thing is important: the change (or rather partial displacement) of the term “sources of private origin” for the term “ego-documents” reflects an important conceptual turn towards the study of subjectivity, a reassessment of the very idea of the subjectivity of a source. What was previously perceived by most historians as a flaw or shortcoming can now be interpreted as an additional advantage of a source. This terminological change also reflects such a paradigm shift as the shift of historians’ interest from the study of specific events to the study of states and meanings.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, in the postmodern interpretation, the emphasis shifts from the traditional dichotomy of truth/fiction of an autobiographical (memoir) text to an analysis of the features of an autobiographical discourse or the study of the peculiarities of readers’ perception of a text.<sup>12</sup>

With regard to the problem stated in this article, it should be said that at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were a few memoirs and autobiographical texts in the Tatar language. While during at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Russia there were published numerous memoirs and notes of former prisoners in Russian; there was being formed a tradition of purposeful study and description of prison everyday life reflecting both the experience and the ideology and mentality of the prison subculture.<sup>13</sup> Very little of such literature has been preserved in the Tatar language. Probably, the fact of the paucity of such texts only partly reflects the small number of Muslims among the prisoners of Russian jails. It also testifies to the state of the literary field, and the rare appeal of people writing in Tatar to such marginal and even “shameful” subjects from the point of view of an average man.

In a broader context, the paucity of this kind of ego texts introspecting the “prison experience” reflects the underdevelopment of such a literary tradition and its especially insufficient representation in the public discourse of the Muslim community of late imperial Russia. As Yu.E. Zaytseva writes, probably this is due to the fact that

life path as a meaningful whole that exists for others in the form of completed stories is an existential phenomenon that requires an author’s certain level of personal, cognitive and human maturity.<sup>14</sup>

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[Autobiography],” in *Rossiiskaia istoricheskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 1 (Moscow: OLMA media grupp Publ., 2011), 104–110.

<sup>10</sup> M.Yu. Mikheev, *Dnevnik v Rossii XIX–XX veka – ego-tekst, ili pred-tekst* [The diaries of Russia of the XIX–XX centuries – a text or a pretext] (Moscow: [N.s.], 2006).

<sup>11</sup> N.V. Surzhikova, ed. *Istoriia v ego-dokumentakh*, 6–7.

<sup>12</sup> See more: Yu.P. Zaretsky, “Avtobiografiia,” 104–110.

<sup>13</sup> See more: E.S. Efimova, *Sovremennaia tiur'ma: byt, tradicii i fol'klor* [Modern prison: Life, traditions and folklore] (Moscow: OGI Publ., 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in: Yu.Ye. Zaytseva, “Avtobiograficheskii Ia-narrativ kak instrument konstruirovaniia identichnosti: kommunikativnyi, narrativnyi i ekzistentsial'nyi aspekty [Autobiographical self-narrative as a tool for identity construction: Communicative, narrative and existential aspects],” *Avtobiograficheskie sochineniia v mezhdistsiplinarnom issledovatel'skom prostranstve: Lyudi, teksty, praktiki* [Autobiographical writings in the interdisciplinary research space: People, texts, practices] (Moscow: Biblio-Globus Publ., 2017), 33–34.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the memoir genre among Russian Muslims was just a nascent genre, often written in an edifying and didactic vein or through a tradition of describing “heroic deeds” and achievements. In general, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century edification and didacticism in Tatar literature were extremely pronounced. Among these rare Tatar-language ego-documents, there were even fewer texts reflecting prison experience of an author and describing prison everyday life in some detail. However, this paucity is not evidence of their “little value” as historical evidence. Moreover, referring to such few examples of “understanding one’s life path” or even a single complex “dishonorable” episode is quite informative for understanding old/new trends in the life of Russian Muslims, and it is important for analyzing the processes that took place in the Muslim community of the country.

### “Prison Experience” in Autobiography of Tatar Ulamas

We should also mention several prominent representatives of the Muslim *ummah* who stood out for their intellectual and literary abilities, and left, or hypothetically could have left extremely interesting written evidence of their perception of imprisonment. In particular, on 4 June 1872, Zainulla Rasulev (1833–1917), a prominent Troitsk ishan was arrested on charges of “religious extremism.”<sup>15</sup> After eight months of imprisonment in Zlatoust, he was transferred to Ufa for a short time, and then exiled to the Vologda province (1873–1875). Then he moved to the city of Kostroma (1875–1880), where he lived with his family in the Tatar settlement. He was able to return to his native land only at the very end of 1880. But even there, for almost two more years he was under overt surveillance.

Thus, Iskhan Z. Rasulev served an eight-month sentence of imprisonment and eight years of exile under police overt surveillance in a strange and alien, i.e. foreign language and heterodox, environment. However, this was a very painful, but at the same time unique experience, there no written evidence of it, and is practically not reflected in known documents. Among the published written heritage there are no descriptions of the this “prison experience,” and the few surviving archival documents and epistolary heritage have only provided only indirect evidence of deprivation and suffering of the disgraced ishan, but they do not contain any reflection on the experience.

From this point of view, another example is especially interesting and valuable. Among the unusually meaningful texts, one can name the autobiography (“My autobiography”) by famous Tatar theologian and politician Gabdrashid Ibragimov (1857–1944) published in 1907.<sup>16</sup> In the memoirs concerning the events of the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (from his birth until at least 1885), the episode of his “prison experience” is reflected in great detail. The mentioned autobiography is, in fact, the only detailed description of the “prison ordeals” made on behalf of a young Russian Muslim. G.-R. Ibragimov’s memories are among the most detailed and nuanced ego-documents of this kind in terms

<sup>15</sup> M.N. Farhshatov, *‘Delo’ sheikha Zainully Rasuleva (1872–1917). Vlast’ i sufizm v poreformennoi Bashkirii. Sbornik dokumentov* [Case of Sheikh Zaiulla Rasulev (1872–1917). Power and Sufism in post-reform Bashkiria. Collection of documents] (Ufa: IJJaL UNC RAN Publ., 2009), 73–76.

<sup>16</sup> G. Ibrahimov, *Tärjemä-i hälem yaki bashyma kilgännär* [Autobiography or experienced] (St. Petersburg: [N.s.], 1907); Modern adapted reissue in Cyrillic: G. Ibragimov, *Tärjemä-i hälem* [Autobiography] (Kazan: Iman nāshriyatı Publ., 2001); See the information about G. Ibragimov in: M. Gosmanov, and F. Galimullin, eds. *Gabderāshit Ibrahim: fänni-biografiya jyentyq* [Gabdrashit Ibragimov: Scientific and biographical collection] (Kazan: Jyen Publ., 2011).

of describing prison life (more precisely, the everyday life of the transit prison), as well as in terms of expressing experiences and then reflecting on experienced sensations. Certainly, these memoirs were published many years later – almost 29 years had passed between the arrest and the publication of the memoirs, which suggests a significant literary framing of the text. Probably, at the time of writing the text of “My autobiography,” the author relied on earlier authentic records, since in this autobiography he mentions that he previously described his “prison experience” in more detail in the work called “Secrets of Confinement” (or “Prison Secrets”) which was being prepared to be published. However, this book was probably never published, because there is no evidence of the existence of such a publication in imperial Russia, as well as due to the unfinished nature of the manuscript of this work.

The actual outline of the events was as follows: being a native of Western Siberia, from the spring of 1877 young G.-R. Ibragimov was studying in the Kazan province in the famous madrasah “Kshkar” (village of Kyshkar). In the summer of 1878, he left for his native land, but en route he was arrested with expired documents on suspicion of “vagrancy.” Naturally, the police sent the “tramp” to Siberia to find out the personal data. Therefore, he travelled a significant as a prisoner from the Volga region to his native Siberian village, and was in transit in prisons in Nizhny Novgorod, Cheboksary, Kazan, Perm, Yekaterinburg, Tyumen and, finally, his native Tara. This very stage which took several months and became, according to the author, “the school of life,” is described in the aforementioned memoirs.<sup>17</sup>

The author describes in detail the composition of the prisoners that made a strong impression on him, as he was then still a young man. Among the prisoners there were many criminals, murderers and robbers who had intimidating appearance, half-shaven heads, and fetters. There were many other dangerous people prone to deviant behavior, from the point of view of a true Muslim: drunkenness, gambling, etc.<sup>18</sup> Once in a new, unusual and alien social environment, a young Muslim, on the one hand, had to experience psychological shock and crisis, akin to feelings of chaos and “temporary death,” and only then had adapt to an unusual environment he had found himself.

In numerous texts of contemporaries, a prison is often described in terms of “life/death” (prison as the “dead house” of F.M. Dostoevsky or as Turati’s “cemetery of the living”).<sup>19</sup> In the notes of G.-R. Ibragimov, we do not see such comparisons and epithets, probably because his the multi-month transit favorably differed from regular imprisonment due constant movement, regular changes of places and people. This did not allow one to reason in terms of death. On the contrary, constant movement symbolized the path of life. It is this metaphor that was most often used by the author. This is probably not accidental – G.-R. Ibragimov stands out among his contemporaries for his tendency to constantly change places. Probably, none of his compatriots could compete with him in the quantity and quality of travel, as well as in the presentation of the travels

<sup>17</sup> G. Ibrahimov, *Tärjemä-i hälem iaki...* 20–31; G. Ibrahimov, *Tärjemä-i hälem* [Autobiography] (Kazan: Iman nāshriyatı Publ., 2001), 33–46.

<sup>18</sup> For more information about the most common entertainment in Russian prisons, see: M.N. Gernet, *V tiur'me. Ocherki tiurennoi psikhologii* [In prison: Essays on prison’s psychology] (Moscow: Pravo i zhizn’ Publ., 1925).

<sup>19</sup> E.S. Efimova, *Sovremennaiia tiur'ma: Byt, tradicii i fol'klor* [Modern prison: Life, traditions and folklore] (Moscow: OGI Publ., 2004), 23.

in literary form. One can say that the transit prison described in this autobiography was his first, albeit forced, significant journey.

Over several pages of the description of transit prison, the author gives a clear picture of various prisoners whom he was destined to meet on such a long transit route. For example, he described in detail the story of a Russian girl from Tyumen who followed her beloved man to Nizhny Novgorod. Being abandoned, she found herself in a foreign land in a difficult life situation, without identification documents, and therefore she was forced to “return” to her native land among the prisoners. The author also told the story of a certain old Circassian named Galibek who prayed zealously night after night. Witnessing such passionate communication with Allah, G.-R. Ibragimov notes that

in the madrasah, neither shakirds, nor even teachers (mudarrises) were so zealous in prayers<sup>20</sup>.

Indicative is the unenviable fate of another Muslim prisoner – a certain Nizhny Novgorod mullah Gainulla accused of illegal missionary work and after four years in prison was sent to a long Siberian exile. The words of this gray-haired old Muslim man were like parting words and consoled the agitated author a little:

didn't you read when you were a shakird how long our prophet Muhammad was imprisoned? Don't worry son, it will be a good experience for you. You learned a lesson from this situation. Even grey-haired elders like me can find themselves in such a situation...<sup>21</sup>

Other prisoners are also noteworthy. Seeing a well-dressed man on the prison balcony who was proudly having afternoon tea at a samovar, the author was surprised to recognize him as Murtaza-bai from the village of “Kshkar.” Apparently, the well-known rich man went to jail as due to fact that he was bankrupt, a fraudster, or for other financial reasons. At the same time, in the description of Murtaza-bai, there are sharp remarks about his wealth and the resulting special status: the prisoner was sitting in a rich head-dress on the prison balcony with the prison governor and a woman. G.-R. Ibragimov was not so much struck by this fact (as well as other acquaintances), but rather he found reasons for a degree of complacency. According to him, if not only murderers and criminals, but also random people, as well as highly respected rich people were imprisoned, perhaps you should not be ashamed of your position? As a result, fear and agonizing shame at the fact that Muslim acquaintances might see him in Kazan (“what will they think when they see me among prisoners?”) were replaced by awareness of the vicissitudes of fate.

It is also noteworthy that the author of the notes observed that almost along the entire route to the prison, compassionate citizens came to prisons and places of detention, where they fed the prisoners and gave alms. The author equates five nights in the Kazan prison to five years of ordinary life, and with regard to the entire route to prison which lasted for several months he repeatedly uses the phrase “school of life” to describe the place. The author notes with bitterness that due to his youth (20–21 years old), inexperience and poor knowledge of the Russian language, that he could not communicate adequately with many worthy and noble people that he met among the prisoners.

Obviously, from the point of view of arranging the life of prisoners, transit prisons were in no way tolerant of the religious views of Muslims. But the aforementioned text

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from: G. Ibragimov, *Tärjemä-i hälem iaki*, 26–27.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



illustrates the impression, that in general, a considerable element of the prisoners was indifferent to religion and rather benevolent towards religious otherness. Religious views and beliefs did not play a special role in building contacts among the prisoners, and did not really bother the guards either. Much more important were the language problems and cultural characteristics of various prisoners, which prevented him from building the correct communication so necessary in a closed community.

A quarter of a century later, after returning to his native land (1904), Gabdrashid Ibragimov was arrested in Odessa, but he was imprisoned for only a short time and after numerous petitions and protests of the Muslim community he was released. Finally, after another ten years, the former shakird and village imam, who had been a Kazi of the Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly for a short time, had matured considerably in meantime, and by that point, had experienced a lot in his life.<sup>22</sup> He was imprisoned again: in 1915–1917, during the First World War, when he arrived in Germany, there was a special camp for prisoners of war and he became an imam of the Wünsdorf mosque, which was specially built for Muslim prisoners of war and was the first mosque in Germany. Although this was a completely different life experience, it is noteworthy that probably G.-R. Ibragimov was a rare Tatar who had the experience of being on both sides of the “barbed wire.”

Obviously, even in the late imperial period, the prison experience of prominent representatives of the Muslim ummah was a relatively rare phenomenon. In all appearances, those representatives of the Tatar-Muslim clergy who were accused of unlawful “proselytism,” especially during the waves of baptized Tatars’ “moving away” from Orthodoxy, could and did find themselves in prison. Also, it was economic crimes (we should recall the descriptions of Murtazy-bai in the analyzed autobiography) or clashes with representatives of local authorities that could have been the reason for their imprisonment. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people were also detained on charges of illegal anti-government acts (imams Galimdzhan Barudi, Najip Amir Khanov, etc.). But in general, “prison experience” for representatives of the official clergy was a rare phenomenon. But even rarer, even unique, incidents were when this experience and the experiences related to it were comprehended, reflected on and recorded in written testimonies “first hand.” The paucity of this kind of evidence increases the value of Gabdrashid Ibragimov’s very meaningful and vivid memoirs, which further highlighted his figure from among the general background of the representatives of the Islamic Ummah of Russia.

With regard to other representatives of the Tatar clergy who had literary talent, were active in the public space and, most importantly, had prison experience, we can mention some more famous people.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at least 10,000 political prisoners were in the Vologda exile,<sup>23</sup> among whom Muslims were an insignificant minority. At the same time, among the exiled Muslims there were some quite eminent individuals. In March 1908, at the height of the struggle against pan-Islamism (1907–1910), Imam Galimdzhan Barudi (Galimzyan Galiev, 1857–1921),<sup>24</sup> his brother Salikhdzhan Galiev, as well as Imam Gab-

<sup>22</sup> Evidence of this is not only the mentioned autobiography, but also the famous travelog about the world journey of 1909–1910.

<sup>23</sup> See: Vologodskaia ssylka (XIX – nachalo XX v.) [Vologda exile (XIX – early XX century).] (Vologda: Vologjanin Publ., 2009).

<sup>24</sup> See more: M. Yusupov, *Galimdzhan Barudi* (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izd-vo Publ., 2003); L.S. Khisamutdinova, “Obshchestvenno-politicheskie vzglyady tatarskogo prosvetitelia Galimdzhana Barudi

dulla Apanaev (1862–1919) were administratively deported from Kazan. The place of their exile for the next two years was the Vologda province. After spending four months there, the administrative exiles received some type of “easing” in their constraints in the form of a foreign passport and the permission to leave on a long pilgrimage. As a result, G. Barudi passed through Vienna and Budapest, came to the Middle East (Istanbul, Damascus, Beirut and Tripoli), where he spent the rest of his two-year term of exile.<sup>25</sup> The disgraced imam was able to return to Kazan in 1910, and only in 1912 did he fully resume his religious and pedagogical activity.<sup>26</sup>

G. Barudi was an extremely influential and authoritative Kazan imam, which was later confirmed by his election in 1917 as the first mufti of the reformed Orenburg Muslim Spiritual Assembly/Russia's Central Spiritual Governance for Muslims. It is important that throughout almost his entire life he kept diaries. Only a small part of the possible diary heritage of G. Barudi was preserved and published in the press, and also included in scientific use: mostly records dating from 1920–1921 are known.<sup>27</sup> In the published diaries there are only a few phrases and a couple of paragraphs about the period of exile which do not convey the fullness and severity of the experience. Thus, the fact of recording the experience of a four-month exile in the preserved parts of the diaries remains a significant mystery. However, there is no doubt that it had a strong influence on the outlook of the Kazan Imam-Jadid and his subsequent “swing to the right”; the tactful and cautious G. Barudi became even more careful both in his statements and actions as well. It is no coincidence that after arriving in Kazan from exile and returning to his official status (imam-khatip and mudarris), G. Barudi manifested himself as a politician who was quite moderate and loyal to the authorities, which caused significant criticism and accusations for abandoning the position of a Jadid reformer. In his public speeches, G. Barudi stood for the moderation of the claims of Muslims, for the preservation of faithfulness and even loyal sentiments. All this and subsequent cautiousness of the prominent imam-jadid was certainly the result of psychological trauma from the experienced repressions and administrative exile.

Thus, neither the eight-month imprisonment and the eight-year exile of Ishan Z. Rasulev, nor the four-month exile of G. Barudi, which happened 35 years later, were described in detail and became the subject of deep self-reflection, despite the impressive writing and intellectual experience of both persons. It is obvious that both in the texts of G. Barudi, and in modern recent studies of his biography, which are quite detailed and

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[The socio-political views of the Tatar enlightener Galimjan Barudi],” PhD diss., Kazan State University, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that G. Barudi published the memoirs about his trip to Istanbul in 1907 in the journal *Din və ədəp* (Religion and Morality) published by him. See: G. Barudi, *Istanbulğa səiaxhätäm* [My trip to Istanbul],” *Ad-din wal-adab*, no. 1–3, 5–7 (1908); However, the second, “forced” travel was not reflected in his diaries or other notes, including the journal he edited. However, it would be very interesting to compare these two travels made with a small time lag, but in different life situations.

<sup>26</sup> M. Yusupov, *Galimdzhan Barudi*, 55–57.

<sup>27</sup> G. Barudi, “*Khatirä däftäre* [Diaries],” *Kazan*, no. 10–11 (1997): 71–89 ; *Ibid.*, no. 12 (1997): 118–158; *Ibid.*, no. 1 (1998): 21–48; *Ibid.*, no. 2 (1998): 66–86; *Ibid.* in Russian: G. Barudi, *Раміатнаіа knіgka* [Memory book],” *Kazan*, no. 10–11, 12 (1997); *Ibid.*, no. 1, 2 (1998); G. Barudi, [=Галимжан Эл-Баруди] 1) *Khatirä däftäre* [Diaries] (Kazan: Iman Publ., 2007); 2) *Khatirä däftäre: 1920 elnyn 12 iyunennän alyp sentyabr' akhyryna kadär* [Notebooks: from June 12 to the End of September 1920] (Kazan: TR FA Sh. Märjani isemendäge Tarih instituty Publ., 2017); 3) *Khatirä däftäre: 1920 elnyn oktyabrennän alyp 1921 elnyn noyabrenä kadär* [Notebooks: from October to November 1920] (Kazan: TR FA Sh. Märjani isemendäge Tarih instituty Publ., 2018).

thorough, that the imprisonment and exile is only briefly indicated, without a detailed description or analysis.<sup>28</sup>

In May 1912, there took place a trial of the leaders of the famous Izh-Bubi madrasah, as a result of which, brothers Gabdulla and Gubaidulla Bubi (Nigmatullin) were sentenced to six and two months of imprisonment; there was a destruction of the madrasah by authorities, the expulsion of teaching staff, etc. In addition to the teaching activities, both brothers are known for their writings and publications in the press. It is also known that during the First World War, Murad Ramzi (1853–1934), another prominent Tatar theologian and publicist, served a several-month sentence of imprisonment.<sup>29</sup> But their bitter experience of imprisonment is not recorded in writing.

These facts once again confirm the attitude of both contemporaries and researchers to the prison experience, regardless of its causes and even consequences, as a marginal and shameful episode of his biography, which overshadows the author's otherwise noble image. Perhaps, while working on their memoirs (written in the genre of autobiography), Muslims, even those who had experience of imprisonment, tried not to focus on the dark side of their past realizing the reputational costs of such negative experience.

In case such experience could be converted into additional symbolic capital, predominantly the political one, as it became a literary work and was released to the public. The most striking examples of this approach are the cases of Yusuf Akchura and Gaiaz Iskhaki. This shift in the dominant trends occurred during the period of the first Russian revolution.

### **Y. Akchura and G. Iskhaki: Subjective View of Tatar Politician**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, among the political prisoners of Kazan jails there were two very important Muslim Tatars who would play a prominent role in the development of an Tatar national movement – Iusuf Akchura (1876–1935) and Gaiaz Iskhaki (1878–1954). They were from different political camps – Yusuf Akchura participated in the liberal movement<sup>30</sup> and even was for a short time one of the leaders of the Kadet Party (he was elected to the Central Committee of the Kadet Party at the 2<sup>nd</sup> congress in January 1906<sup>31</sup>), whereas Gaiaz Iskhaki and his associates-tangists<sup>32</sup> supported the socialists and neo-populists.

<sup>28</sup> M. Yusupov, *Galimdzhan Barudi*; L.S. Khisamutdinova, “Obshchestvenno-politicheskie vzglyady.”

<sup>29</sup> D.M. Usmanova, “Murad Ramzi (1853–1934): biografiia islamskogo uchenogo v svete novykh svidetel'stv [Murad Ramsi (1853–1934): Biography of an Islamic scientist in the light of new documents].” *Gasyrlar avazy – Ekho vekov*, no. 2 (2019): 93–114.

<sup>30</sup> A.V. Ahtyamova, “Politicheskaiia deiatel'nost' Yu.Kh. Akchurina v gody Pervoi rossiiskoi revoliutsii [Yu.Kh. Akchurin's Political activities during the First Russian Revolution].” *Simbirskii nauchnyi vestnik*, no. 1 (2016): 127–131; D.M. Usmanova, “Politicheskaiia aktivnost' Iusufa Akchury v Rossiiskoi imperii (1904–1908): spetsifika rossiiskogo liberalizma [Political activity of Iusuf Akchura in the Russian Empire (1904–1908): Specifics of Russian liberalism].” *Simbirskii nauchnyi vestnik*, no. 1 (2016): 146–150; Iusuf Akchura i simbirskie kuptsy Akchuriny: sb. statei [Iusuf Akchura and Simbirsk merchants Akchurins: Collection of articles] (Kazan: Institut istorii im. Sh. Mardzhani AN RT, 2017).

<sup>31</sup> D.M. Usmanova, *Musul'manskie predstaviteli v rossiiskom parlamente. 1906–1916* [Muslim representatives in the Russian Parliament. 1906–1916] (Kazan: Fän Publ., 2005), 132.

<sup>32</sup> Tangists is a conventional name of a group of Tatar youth who shared the ideas of Russian socialist revolutionaries, united around Gayaz Iskhaki, Fuad Tuktarov, and others, and published the newspaper *The Tan Yoldyzy* [Morning Star] as a press organ.

They were related by the fact that both figures were in prison during their election campaigns. In general, in 1905–1907 the local administration everywhere arrested not only forthright revolutionaries, but even opposition candidates that were undesirable from the point of view of the authorities. In particular, during the first and second election campaigns in the Kazan province, the most famous candidates and those with the highest chance were arrested and charged under Art. 129 of the Criminal Code (which deprived people of electoral rights); they were imprisoned during the elections period. Among those arrested were as mentioned-above: Iusuf Akchura and Gaiaz Iskhaki.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, the local administration got rid of any potentially successful and significant candidate, and prison was a reliable and useful means to solve this political problem. However, in this case, the important fact is that both young men who left a large footprint on Tatar history became the authors of two literary works describing their prison experience. Another common circumstance that made both authors and both analyzed texts relatable is that obviously secularized and politicized perception of the prison experience as recorded by both talented people.

Iusuf Akchura's work "Memories of imprisonment" was made public a year after the events described: the author was imprisoned for 42 days – from 8 March to 17 April 1906, and the essay was completed and published in May 1907.<sup>34</sup> Although, in all likelihood, while being imprisoned, the author kept a diary, and the work was made in the form of everyday diary-memoirs, yet this factual part has its weaknesses. Y. Akchura's text is mostly filled with the author's experiences of arrest and imprisonment, but experience is intertwined with no less emotional and acute suffering of a young man passionately in love, a man who takes his beloved's absence very hard. Also noteworthy are those parts in Akchura's notes where he depicts overcrowding, wretched cells and disgusting smells. These descriptions reflect the physical suffering of the author, which otherwise on the whole were devoid of complaints, and showed a desire to arouse readers' sympathy.

In the context of the main problem of the article, there should be mentioned an imam's weekly visits to the prison and Muslim prisoners, prayer, sermon and exhortations. Judging by the tone of the notes, these exhortations of the clergyman did not have the desired effect on the author. In general, Iusuf Akchura notes that among the 16 prisoners of his cell, with the exception of one or two people, the vast majority were students and high school students, i.e. very young people. It is obvious that young people would not be the most appropriate audience for such religious exhortations of clergymen.

<sup>33</sup> См.: GART, f. 199, op. 1, d. 258, 538; Ibid., f. 651, op. 1, d. 3; At the same time, no less politically active Fuad Tuktarov and Gabdrashid Ibragimov were deprived of the electoral qualification on formal grounds. For more information about the election campaign to the State Duma of the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> convocations, see: D.M. Usmanova, *Deputaty ot Kazanskoi gubernii v Gosudarstvennoi dume Rossii: 1906–1917* [Deputies from the Kazan Province in the State Duma of Russia: 1906–1917] (Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo Publ., 2006), 17–26; It can also be recalled that in 1908 five Muslim deputies of the State Duma of the 1st convocation were forced to serve a three-month sentence of imprisonment for signing the Vyborg Manifesto. But there has been preserved fragmentary evidence only of A.-M. Topchibashev's imprisonment. See: A.M. Topchibashev, *Izbrannoe* [Selected], vol. 1–2 (Baku: [N.s.], 2014–2015); For more information on the imprisonment of the parliamentarians, see: Usmanova, D.M., and Shebalkov, S.V. "Devianosto dnei odinochnogo zakliucheniiia: tiuremnaia zhizn' pervodumtsev, osuzhdennykh za podpisanie Vyborgskogo vozzvaniia [Ninety days of solitary imprisonment: Prison life of the patterns convicted of signing the Vyborg Appeal]," *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta. Ser. Gumanitarnye nauki* 159, bk. 4 (2017): 824–835.

<sup>34</sup> Иу. Акчүра, "Мяүкүфият' (totkynlyk) khatiräläre [Memories of freedom]," *Iusuf Akchura: ädäbi, tarikkhi äsärklär khäm mäkalälär zhuentygy* [Yusuf Akchura: A collection of literary, historical works and articles] (Kazan: [N.s.], 2011), 68–89.

Already after the release of Iusuf Akchura from prison, a kind of banquet was organized in his honor, which brought together more than 60 prominent representatives of the Muslim community in Kazan.<sup>35</sup> On the initiative of the former prisoner, the meeting organized fundraising for the purchase of Tatar-language books and periodicals which were subsequently supposed to be sent to the prison library. In addition to the Muslim library, the speaker asked the members of the “Prison Committee” (which in addition to military/prison imam Fasakh Mukhitdinov also included Akhmetzian Ya. Saidashev, M.-Rakhim Iskhakovich Iunusov) to find a teacher who could educate the prisoners. This practice is widespread in European prisons and would be very good for the Russian penitentiary system, especially when there are so many young people among prisoners. It is known that before his arrest, Iusuf Akchura had taught for some time at the Kazan madrasah “Muhammadiia.” Nevertheless, both this text and the actions of the author following his release reflected the approach of a quite secularized politician who was dealing with the young generation of Muslims who had different priorities, rather than the traditional performance of religious rites.

However, at that time there was one event when Iusuf Akchura positioned himself as a conservative Muslim politician – at the congress of the Kadet party (1906) during the discussion of women's issues, he spoke quite definitely in favor of maintaining polygamy from the position of a defender of Muslim men's rights. This speech by Iusuf Akchura could have been regarded as a move in order to achieve certain political dividends, if it had taken place, for instance, in front of the audience of the Hay market in Kazan. However, since it was made in a Europeanized environment, it could not bring political dividends; on the contrary, it provoked protests of the more-feminist portions of the Kadet party elite. Such actions and statements of Iusuf Akchura were in a way dissonant with some passages of his prison essays, for example, when describing experiences related to the Easter period, etc.

Gayaz Iskhaki's autobiographical story “Zindan [Prison]”<sup>36</sup> was created during the writer's imprisonment in the Chistopol jail in the period of the election campaign for the State Duma of the 2<sup>nd</sup> convocation. The text was written down in the period from 27 January to 11 February 1907, during the author's imprisonment; it was sent from the prison in parts by released cellmates or various visitors. It is noteworthy that Gaiaz Iskhaki, who did not expect an early release, decided to immediately publish his work in the Tatar press in parts. But in the end, the work, together with an extensive biography (14 pages) and a portrait of the writer, was published in its entirety as a separate brochure at the very end of May 1907, and it became one of the most famous and popular works of the Tatar classic. This is evidenced by the fact that the brochure edition of 3,000 copies was sold out almost instantly, and repeated attempts by the Police Department and the Main Directorate for the Press (St. Petersburg) to prosecute the author of the work under Article 129 of the Criminal Code, and the confiscation of the publication was futile.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> “Iosuf Akchura shäräfänä zyyafät [Feast in honor of Iusuf Akchura],” *Kazan mökhbire* [Kazan reporter], April 24, 1906.

<sup>36</sup> Modern reedition of this work in Cyrillic: “Исхакый Гаяз. Зиндан [Iskhaqi Gaiaz, Prison],” in *Әсәрләп* [Works], vol. 1 (Kazan: Tatarstan kitap nāshriiaty, 1998), 273–328.

<sup>37</sup> The publishers of the brochure were Gabdrakhman Khusainov and Gabdulgaziz Gubaidullin; the authors of the preface (14 pages) were Gabdrakhman Khusainov and Sagit Ramiev. The first edition of the work was in Arabic script: M.-G. Äl-Iskhakiy, *Zindan: möhärriinen tärjemä-i häle häm räseme berlä* [Prison: With a biography and a portrait of the author] (Kazan: [N.s.], 1907).

With regard to the author's fate, it should be noted that after the imprisonment in the Kazan provincial and Chistopol district jails (in these two prisons he served a little more than a three-month sentence of imprisonment, from 30 October 1906 to mid-February 1907), Gaiaz Iskhaki was released under the obligation to serve exile in the Volgda province. He left the place of exile, spent several months in the capital, and then moved to Istanbul. Returning to his homeland in 1911, he lived illegally in the capital, but was re-arrested and deported to the Arkhangelsk province. Only after the amnesty in honor of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Romanov dynasty (1913), G. Iskhaki was able to return to the "normal" legal life of a young Tatar publicist.

The circumstances of the creation of "Zindan [Prison]" predetermined its dual nature – an autobiographical text with elements of a work of fiction. At the same time, the place of writing and the circumstances of publication gave the text a certain touch of haste and stylistic negligence. The objective reason for this was censorship restrictions, political considerations, and fears that the text might fall into the hands of the police (during cell searches or when sending it from prison) which limited the author's possibilities as well. The analyzed text has certain specificity: it was created by a young man who was interested in politics and socialist ideas, who not particularly pious, and abandoned the traditional lifestyle of a rural imam in favor of a rather marginal but increasingly popular literary activity. Finally, the 29-year-old talented young writer was clearly aware of who his potential readers were and was guided by their tastes, in terms of both the content and the material presentation. This determines the polemical character of this essay. The work contains a description of the everyday wretchedness of a district prison, the facts of the arbitrariness of the prison administration, and the description of the sentiments of the oppositional Tatar youth.

Actually, in this work the emphasis is not placed on the religious aspects of imprisonment, especially considering that the author, in fact, was a failed rural imam. At the same time, it was M.-Najip Amirkhanov (1859–1921), the imam-hatip and mudarris of Chistopol that turned out to be the author's cellmate. In the work, he was named "Damella Nezhip." In the fall of 1906, M.-Najip Amirkhanov that was considered a jadid and a progressist was deprived of the official status of imam and imprisoned in the Chistopol jail where he served a sentence of imprisonment until 11 February 1907.<sup>38</sup> Whereas at first the imam withstood all prison hardships, then towards the end of imprisonment due to the worries about his family and young children, not only did his health deteriorate, but he also lost considerable sleep. In addition, the imam hardly knew the Russian language, and therefore was limited in communication and felt helpless.<sup>39</sup>

The imam's religious emotions were described by the author only by mentioning the fact that Muslim political prisoners were refused access to the holiday prayers in the city mosque. This refusal overshadowed the holiday (on 12 January 1907, Muslims celebrated Kurban Bairam) which both cellmates of Gaiaz Iskhaki – Imam M.-Najip

<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, in the mid-1890s mullah M.-N. Amirkhanov acted as the prison imam. See: S.V. Shebalkov, "Uezdnye tiur'my Kazanskoi gubernii v kontse XIX – nachale XX vv.: organizatsionnoe ustroistvo i arestantskii kontingent [County Prisons of the Kazan Province at the End of the XIX – Early XX Centuries: Organizational Device and Prison Contingent]," *Nauchnyi Tatarstan*, no. 3 (2014): 82; Ten years later, by a twist of fate, he was imprisoned. It is not known whether Imam M.-Najip Amirkhanov left any written description of his experience of imprisonment. Most likely he did not. Therefore, third-party testimonies are of particular value.

<sup>39</sup> G. Iskhaki, "Zindan [Prison]," in *Āsārlār*, vol. 1 (Kazan: Tatarstan kitap nāshriyaty Publ., 1998), 318–319.

Amirkhanov and Garif Badamshin (1865–1939)<sup>40</sup> – spent in prayers, which cannot be said about the author of the text. He was rather upset by the fact that the friends and associates who remained at large forgot to congratulate him on the holiday. However, commenting on this case, Gaiaz Iskhaki sarcastically remarked that murderers, thieves and robbers were much closer and dearer to the tsarist bureaucracy than a village teacher, an imam and a former deputy who were among 10 political prisoners of the Chistopol jail.<sup>41</sup>

Another story related to the manifestation of a religious position concerned an elderly Russian prisoner (a white-bearded old man, Nikolai's soldier) who was arrested for campaigning among the peasants of the “Land and Liberty” organization. Indicative is the dialog of this old man with another cellmate. To the phrase – “do not worry, old man, if you go to prison, there is a church there, you will pray every day,” he replied that he did not go to the church, but he considered it his duty to instruct peasants to fight for their freedom and land. This answer aroused admiration of the author of the essay and an involuntary comparison with the “elders” from among the Muslim Tatars who only rested on the stove or spent all their time in gatherings at the ishans of neighboring villages, as well as who had invariably opposed progress and the youth; they spend effort and money on “idling ishans.”<sup>42</sup>

It is obvious that such contemptuous expressions in relation to clerics and the older generation, insignificant attention to religious issues (for example, he devotes much more time and attention to the election campaign to the State Duma of the 2<sup>nd</sup> convocation) – all this reflects the discourse that dominated among the young Tatar intelligentsia; it was by no means religious.

In general, according to Gaiaz Iskhaki, prison is not as scary as people at large see it. Essentially, imprisonment only manifests and enhances the qualities inherent in a person – people prone to theft become professional thieves and start thieving again on the second day after being released; people who were imprisoned for political convictions turn into professional revolutionaries. Among the few “advantages” against the background of numerous shortcomings of imprisonment, the following was noted: a creative person has more free time for quiet reading and self-education,<sup>43</sup> and young immature shakirds have the opportunity to learn Russian with conditions close to reality.

It is noteworthy that in the autobiographical work of Gaiaz Iskhaki “Zindan” (1907), religious experience of the author himself did not play a significant role. However, in another work of the Tatar classic – the drama “Zuleikha” (1912), Islam and religious problems occupy a central position. Written back in 1912, the play could be presented to the general public only during the period of political freedoms of the revolutionary era: its premiere took place in March 1917. Moreover, in atheistic Soviet Russia it was staged only until 1923; then for some time it was staged in the émigré environment. The main focus in the work is on the destiny of a Tatar woman who experienced all the vicissitudes

<sup>40</sup> See the biography of deputy of the State Duma of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> convocations Muhammed-Garif Badamshin in: D.M. Usmanova, *Deputaty ot Kazanskoi gubernii*, 300–302.

<sup>41</sup> G. Iskhaki, “Zindan,” 306–307.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 300–301.

<sup>43</sup> This is evidenced by the results of A.-M. Bey Topchibashev's imprisonment in the “Kresty” jail; he served a three-month sentence of imprisonment for signing the Vyborg Manifesto. During his imprisonment, the former deputy of the State Duma of the 1<sup>st</sup> convocation was able to write more than ten texts with a total volume of over 60 sheets devoted to such issues as the reform of public education, the reorganization of the spiritual institutions of Muslims, the issue of vacation for commercial and industrial employees, as well as notes on various issues; see: A.M. Topchibashev, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia deiatel'nost'. 1894–1918* [Socio-political activity. 1894–1918]. Vol. 2 of *Izbrannoe* (Baku: [N.s.], 2015), 377–378.

of fate and the severity of czarist hard labor for her loyalty to the faith of her ancestors. It would seem that the religious problem is central, but its effect was stronger and more effective because the theme of faith was within the national discourse, or rather, it was firmly woven into the discourse of the national struggle that was dominant at that time.

The works of Gabdrashid Ibragimov, Iusuf Akchura and Gaiaz Iskhaqyi written in a similar genre of “autobiography,” with elements of diary-memoir, were published almost simultaneously (1907) and aroused keen interest of the reading public and seemed to be devoted to similar events – arrest and temporary imprisonment. At the same time, they reflect completely different worldviews (in fact, predominantly religious or, on the contrary, secular), and therefore the prison experience of a Muslim was reflected and described in completely different ways. The generational gap manifested itself not only in content and dominant assessments, but also in lexical terms.

All the examples of literary texts with “prison overtones” given here refer to persons who had a great literary experience and a significant intellectual background. G.-R. Ibragimov, G. Barudi and G. Iskhaqyi were prominent representatives of the media, editor-publishers of various Tatar newspapers and journals; G. Iskhaqyi was the greatest Tatar writer, and G.-R. Ibragimov was a talented memoirist who had literary skills and great political ambitions. It should be noted that G.-Rashid Ibragimov, Zainulla Rasulev, Murad Ramzi and Galimdzhan Barudi were among the first order Tatar theologians who left a significant theological-dogmatic and religious journalistic heritage. With regard to the prison experience of “ordinary” imams or believing Muslims, due to objective reasons they stay in the background. “Back burner people” often remained in the shadow.

A separate case is the story of imprisonment of representatives of the so-called “Muslim sectarianism”; their situation was complicated not only by conflict with the authorities and elites, but also by confrontation with most of the ethno-confessional community to which they belonged. It is referred to representatives of the “Wäisi God's Regiment of Muslim Old Believers” who from the 1880s until the end of the imperial system were under constant pressure from the authorities and regularly got to places of detention (prisons, psychiatric clinics,<sup>44</sup> exile and hard labor). It is obvious that the subjective perception of prison reality by the Wäisi could differ from the picture of the world of both a “conventional” Muslim and a secular person. Although no diaries, memoirs or autobiographies written by the Wäisi have been preserved, nevertheless, indirect evidence shows that in the case of the Wäisi, the “double confrontation,” as well as the religious and eschatological worldview affected prison experience of the imprisoned “sectarians” strengthening their conviction in their own rightness, ideas of sacrifice and validity of the God-given ordeal.<sup>45</sup> However, this subject is beyond the scope of this article due to its specificity and vastness.

## Conclusions

The detailed analysis of the three cases and three specific literary texts allows us to draw some comparisons and conclusions about both the situation of Muslim prisoners and perception of their prison experience. None of these texts, as well as numerous evi-

<sup>44</sup> Although formally psychiatric prisons were not part of the country's penitentiary system, it is obvious that the conditions of detention, the purpose of psychiatric clinics and the role of psychiatrists were akin to those in prisons. For details see: M. Foucault, *Nadzirat' i nakazyvat'*.

<sup>45</sup> For details see: D.M. Usmanova, *Musul'manskoe 'sektantstvo' v Rossijskoi imperii: 'Vaisovskii Bozhii polk staroverov-musul'man.' 1862–1916 gg.* [The Muslim ‘Sectarianism’ in the Russian Empire: ‘The Vaisov God's Old Believers-Muslims’] (Kazan: Fän Publ., 2009).



dence of other kinds of documents allow us to judge the conscious repressive actions of the prison authorities against non-believers for religious reasons. Apparently, despite the rapid secularization of Russian society at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the questions of confessional identity remained basic in the administrative system of the empire, and the binding role of religion was not questioned by the ruling elite and power institutions. Therefore, although we sometimes observe disregard for the interests and rights of Muslims by the leadership of the penitentiary system, but we cannot discredit them on this basis.

This article reveals the perception of prison reality by Muslims on the basis of a number of author's texts, texts that have a pronounced subjectivist character. The short and rather optional experience of forced isolation of a young Muslim is reflected in the most detail in the autobiography of G.-R. Ibragimov (“My autobiography”). Extraordinary personal qualities, literary talent, mobility and high social engagement – all these characteristics of the author made it possible to create an interesting text, a text in which imprisonment is interpreted as both a “school of life” and a non-trivial way of understanding Russian reality. The two other texts written by Iusuf Akchura and Gaiaz Iskhaki, young Tatar intellectuals, politically engaged and incorporated into the all-Russian political context show a different experience of the prison reality of Russia. Their perception is dominated by secularity, politicization and even a narrow class orientation of the consciousness of the young generation of Russian Muslims. For them, religiosity was reduced to celebrating a festive ritual related to the two most important Islamic holidays, and in some cases, religion was a part of a common cultural and national identity, without a strong influence on everyday practices.

It is also noteworthy that all three texts, although they describe chronologically different events, were published in the same year, 1907. Obviously, due to the conditions affected by the rise of public activity during the First Russian Revolution, prison experience could be successfully converted into political capital. Therefore, an author's subjective view of one of his life episodes was expressed in an autobiography, published in a significant circulation, and brought to the public with far-reaching goals. It is no coincidence that two of the three analyzed texts are made in the form of a diary, but with traces of significant literary work which reflects the authors' focus on a specific readership.

For a modern reader, these texts are interesting not only due to the fact what place religious experiences occupy in the description of prison reality, but also because of the extent to which these works have a pronounced subjective view which reflect the different “level of personal, cognitive and human maturity” of the author.

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