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The Role of the Russian and Inorodcy Languages in the Muslim Question of the 19th and 20th Centuries

Abstract

The divergent positions of Nikolai Ivanovich Ilminsky (1822–1891) and Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (1851–1914) on education, provide the starting point for a reflection on the complex linguistic question in reference to the *non-Russian* communities of the Empire that took place at the end of the 19th century. Through the content of the social and literary activity of Ismail Bey Gasprinskii, I intend to deepen the point of view of the Crimean Tatar enlightener on the importance of the language of instruction in the *inorodcy's* (aliens) school, a tool necessary to counteract cultural and political isolation of Russian Muslims, to encourage the *sblizhenie* (rapprochement) between the Russians and Tatars. The socio-political implications of the linguistic question allow us to go *beyond* its borders, to reflect on the *vopros ob inorodcach* (question about aliens) and the current *samobytnos* (self-being) in connection with the issue of *identities* in multicultural Russia.

Keywords: Russian language, inorodcy, Russian Muslim, multiculturalism

The heterogeneous multicultural Russian universe has given rise, over the centuries, to many conflicts, but, at the same time, to reflections on the coexistence of the different populations that inhabit the immense Eurasian space¹. In this geopolitical context the Tatars represent one of the most numerous ethnic and religious minorities. Originally, the so-called *Muslim question* was raised and articulated in the Volga-Ural region, the heart of the Russian state, and in Crimea, a *border* space between the center and its boundaries² — two areas which, thanks to their peculiarity, became a productive hub for dialogue and mutual influence.

Unlike the populations of Central Asia and the Caucasus, who converted to Islam during the military campaigns of the Arab caliphs, the Bulgarians of the Volga, from whom the Tatars descended, adopted Islam in 922 A.D. following a long and gradual process promoted by the activities of Muslim

1 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 449).

2 Ian W. Campbell (2017: 21).

missionaries and merchants. Thus, the Volga-Ural area became one of the most important centers of Islamic culture and education. In the 13th century, when the Mongols established their dominion in the *proto-Tatar* and Russian lands, the Bulgarians of the Volga and other more developed Turkic populations were gradually incorporated into Mongolian ethno-political and cultural structures. After the conquest of Kazan in 1552, Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584) and his successors destroyed the most flourishing centers of Islamic Tatar culture, along with most of their intelligentsia³. We read in the *Memorial of 'Iyad Ishaqui on the condition of Muslims in Russia*⁴, that, once ascended to the imperial throne, Ivan IV was not content with seizing the Muslims kingdoms, but also to plundered their countries, massacred their inhabitants, destroyed their religious institutions, and deprived them of all civil rights, considering their confession as paganism. He severely harassed Muslim inhabitants everywhere, forcibly drove hundreds of thousands of Muslims to convert to Christianity, and prevented Muslims from living in Kazan. However, although most of the *ulama* were killed, mosques destroyed, and libraries and schools burned, in secret, Muslims did all they could to safeguard their religion⁵.

Islam, however, had always been a *recognized otherness* for the Russians. The conquest of Kazan marked a fundamental stage in the centuries-old process of confrontation, assimilation and cooperation between the Orthodox Christians and the Muslims of the Eurasian continent. Even though for centuries, before 1552, Russian and Tatar societies had constantly influenced each other, the Tatars who wanted to live and work in Moscow had now to convert to Orthodoxy, and were considered equals to Russians only after having taken this step⁶. The successors of Ivan the Terrible continued to impose an Orthodox hegemony on Islam for the next two hundred years, building churches and often converting Muslims by force - when it was not the elites themselves who chose to convert, with the hope of receiving political and financial rewards.

In his 1713 plan to *regularize* Russian society, Peter I asked for the cessation of missionary activities and *forced* baptism of Muslims in the Kazan area and the Rostov oblast⁷. In his project, the Tsar included incentives such as tax breaks and land subsidies for the newly baptized; but, as they incentivized the Tatar elites to convert but not the rest of the population, who remained almost completely indifferent to them, these measures were only partially successful. The successors of Peter I gradually sought to extend the control of the state over the Islamic clergy of the Volga area, allowing the former to regulate the number of senior *mullahs* for each administrative unit and continuing to pressure the population to convert to Orthodoxy⁸.

Catherine II, in line with her enlightened and tolerant despotic government, in the manifesto of annexation of Crimea of April, 8th, 1783 stated:

“[...] силою сего нашего императорского манифеста [...], обещаем свято и непоколебимо за себя и преемников престола нашего содержать их наравне с природными Нашими подданными, охранять и защищать их лица, имущество, храмы и природную веру, коей свободное отправление

3 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 554).

4 M.N.(1932).

5 M.N.(1932: 132).

6 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 37).

7 *Ibidem*.

8 *Ibidem*.

со всеми законными обрядами пребудет неприкосновенно; и дозволить напоследок каждому из них состоянию все те правости и преимущества, каковыми таковое в России пользуется.”⁹
(Aldo Ferrari 2017: 25)

In reality, however, things didn't exactly turn out that way. Wishing to show Muslims abroad how tolerant her rule was towards the Muslims who lived in Russian territory, she allowed the Tatars of Kazan to build mosques and establish schools. For their administration, in 1788, she set up a hub, with limited power, whose head, the *mufti*, was appointed by the Tsar, while its members, the *qādi*, were elected by the Muslim *ulama*¹⁰. Giving the Tatars the possibility to build villages and new mosques, Catherine tried to passively control the suburbs of her territory, and she succeeded in convincing traditionally nomad populations, who lived in the boundless countryside of southern Russia, to settle. The change of direction in Russian colonial politics, with the intensification of state activities and a more flexible and tolerant line towards non-Russians, led to the codification of the inorodcy category¹¹. During this period, the pressure of Russian ideas identifying the progressive social evolution with the transition to a sedentary lifestyle, led to the consolidation of this new way of categorizing the population. Thus, the way of life (sedentary or nomadic) began to overcome religion as an *essential criterion of differentiation* (Slocum 1998: 176) between Russian and non-Russian on the Eastern border, introducing a mode of categorization that better facilitated the Russian government's long-term goal of capturing the land north of the steppe for agricultural purposes¹². Before the reign of Catherine II, however, the Russians, who interacted with non-Russian populations for centuries, had never considered them *oriental*, as this interpretative category was absent in Muscovite Russia. The Tatars of Kazan, Astrachan and Crimea were considered infidels, but not oriental¹³. The villages *mullahs* maintained their spiritual authority even after the introduction of the figure of the *mufti*, the official head of the Russian Muslims; the *mufti* as well as the *qādi*, judges, were selected among the most reliable and respectful citizens, and appointed by the Russian Interior Minister, and were therefore perceived as an integral part of the Russian political establishment¹⁴. The first half of the 19th century was characterized by the intense growth of the *makātib* (*kataatiib*, primary schools) and the appearance of the first *madāris* (high schools). Due to the state recognition of the Tatar confessional education and the positive attitude of Empress Catherine, the appearance and widespread diffusion of these institutions started the process of restoring Islamic higher education. An important consequence of the reforms of Catherine II, was the change of attitude of the Tatar communities towards the Russian state: as the Islamic way of life was no longer openly threatened, and as the village *mullahs* became the mediators between the Russian authorities and the local tatar communities, confrontation gave way to

9 Original quote: *Manifest imperatricy Ekateriny II o prisoedinenii Kryma i Kubani k Rossii*, 8 Aprelya 1783; F.1239. Op.1.D.153.L.294-296; St. Petersburg: Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy istoricheskiy archive: “[...] By the power of Our imperial manifesto [...] we promise sacredly and unwaveringly for ourselves and our successors to keep them (the Tatars, ndr) on an equal footing with our natural subjects, to protect and defend their life, property, holy places, and natural faith, from which free departure with all lawful rites will remain inviolable; and finally allow each of them to enjoy all the rights and advantages that can be used in Russia [...]” Unless otherwise indicated translations are those of the author.

10 M.N. (1932: 133).

11 John W. Slocum (1998: 178).

12 John W. Slocum (1998: 176).

13 Aldo Ferrari (2017: 31).

14 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 555).

apathy, social passivity and political indifference¹⁵. Sergei Uvarov, the Minister of Education under Tsar Nicholas I, in 1883 announced the doctrinal principle on nationality: *Orthodoxy, autocracy and narodnost*. It was presented as a focal point thanks to which the empire would have been able to survive internal revolts and resist destructive tendencies from abroad¹⁶. Autocracy affirmed the absolute power of the Tsar, legitimizing him as the indispensable foundation of Russia. Therefore, considering religion as a distinctive sign of Russian identity, Uvarov and his supporters, claimed that only a person converted to Orthodoxy could be Russian, since, after the fall of Constantinople, Russia remained the only repository of the true Orthodox faith. Uvarov, advocating a return to absolute autocracy, placed particular emphasis on *russicity* and the fact that those who could not satisfy the three pillars of official ideology were not to be considered part of the empire, but considered as a separate category¹⁷. On the contrary, the director of *Moskovskie vedomosti*, Mikhail Kaktov (1818–1887) stated that professing a religion other than Orthodoxy did not prevent a Russian speaker from being considered Russian; but, in fact, the language was fundamental, for the process of Russification¹⁸. From the second half of the 19th century, the purpose of the missionaries was not so much to convert Muslims to Orthodoxy, as to limit the influence of Islam on baptized Tatars and other inorodcy. Church officials and missionaries in Kazan generally admitted that the *Tatarisation* and *Islamisation* of the non-Russian population of the Volga region was underway, and that Russian Christian education should be firmly re-established in all the eastern suburbs¹⁹. The main institutions that dealt with the Orthodox mission were The Orthodox Church Brotherhood of Saint Gurii of Kazan Cathedral Church, founded in 1867 and Kazan Ecclesiastical Academy, specialized in anti-islamism²⁰.

Speaking of Russification policy in the Volga region, the most tenacious and productive attempt at cultural assimilation of Muslims to Christian Russia²¹ is attributable to Nikolai Ilminsky, missionary and educator, who created and promoted what later became known as the *Ilminsky system* designed for non-Russian Orthodox schools. The key of the program was to teach the inorodcy in their mother tongue, employing teachers of the same ethnic group or Russians who had learned the local language. Only after having learned to read and write in their mother tongue would non-Russian students gradually move towards being taught in Russian²². In 1870 Ilminsky formulated a comprehensive school program which was to be administered to three types of schools, the Russian-Tatar schools, the *Centralnaya kreshenotatarskaya shkola* (Central Baptized Tatar School) and the Kazan Teacher Training Seminary²³. The Ilminsky system was taken as a model for *Pravila o merakh k obrazovaniju inorodcev* (Rules on measures for the aliens' education) promulgated by the Russian Ministry of Education on March, 26th, 1870. This statute provided for the establishment of baptized Tatar schools on the model of the Ilminsky schools, for Tatar teachers' in Kazan and Orebnurg, and for Russian-Tartar schools, which offered both

15 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 554).

16 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 69).

17 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 71).

18 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 38).

19 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 38).

20 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 474).

21 Stephane A. Dudoignon (2001: 28).

22 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 88).

23 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 475).

the Russian and Tartar languages together with Islamic religious instruction²⁴. The Ilminsky system owed its popularity first and foremost to the personality of its creator: as a student in Kazan Ilminsky quickly mastered the vernacular, observing and living the daily life of Muslims, attending mosques and *madāris*²⁵. This experience enabled him to become a member of the newly founded permanent translation commission in 1868, together with the *Bratstvo svititelya Guriya* (Brotherhood of San Gurii) (Zemtsova 2014: 82). Some time later, during a journey through the villages of baptized Tatars, Ilminsky realized that the translations they had worked on proved incomprehensible to most of the people to whom they were dedicated. For this reason the translation committee chose to translate Orthodox literature into spoken Tatar; since many Orthodox religious notions had no corresponding Tatar version, the committee decided, in order to widen the gap between Orthodoxy and Islam, to use Russian words – names should be written in the way they were pronounced in Russian, the alphabet to be used was the Cyrillic one, and changes to express Tatar sounds were made²⁶. Ilminsky believed that if all the Russian Muslims were converted to Orthodoxy, they would also have to adopt the Cyrillic alphabet²⁷ and this have brought the inorodcy closer to the Russians²⁸. On the other hand, he argued that unification of the alphabet would not have lead the inorodcy to a *sblizhenie*, to an *internal rapprochement* (Zemtsova 2014: 84) with the Russians, unless they received a Russian education and, more importantly, converted to Orthodoxy²⁹. Although several attempts to introduce the Cyrillic alphabet into the languages of Muslim peoples were made, this did not happen until the Soviet era³⁰. The main provisions of the new school policy of Tsarism were outlined in the journal of the Council of Education Ministers of 2 February 1870 – a document which stated that the Russification of Tatars could only be introduced through the spread of the Russian language and education³¹, replacing German in the universities and secondary schools.

The centers for the dissemination of Russian education were to be Russian-Tatar schools, while in the *kataatiib* and *madāris* the Russian language was compulsory for the shakirdy. Any new *madrassa* or *mekteb* could only open if the conditions for teaching Russian were met. Both Muslims who knew the Russian language and Russians who were fluent in the students' mother tongue could become teachers. The sense of linguistic Russification was an attempt by the Russian state to reach the non-Russian subject directly, without mediators. Supporters of teaching in Russian believed that the translation or grammatical method previously used was inadequate, and argued that Russian should be introduced in the first year of primary school. This method had a political significance, as it would have allowed the replacement of mother tongue teachers with Russian teachers, believing that this would accelerate the educational process of the inorodcy. The teaching conveyed through the Russian language, was aimed at curbing the nationalist wave fueled by non-Russian intelligentsia³². In order to start the process of Russification, the Ilminsky system

24 John W. Slocum (1998: 185).

25 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 82).

26 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 83).

27 *Ibidem*.

28 Mustafa Ö.Tuna (2002: 279).

29 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 84).

30 Mustafa Ö. Tuna (2002: 270).

31 I.K.Zagidullin (2012: 9).

32 Irina Paert (2016: 365).

envisaged the use of the languages of the inorodcy as a means of spreading Orthodox primary education; this idea came to Ilminsky from a scholar of Central Asian history, Vasily Valsilevich Grigoryev, who worked on the Orenburg commission, which the educator joined in 1858. During his stay in Orenburg, Ilminsky studied Grigoryev's method for the Christian education of the Kazakhs in their language, but with the use of the Cyrillic alphabet. Therefore, contrary to his opponents, he claimed the futility of conducting sermons in ecclesiastical Slavonic to the inorodcy, of teaching them only in Russian, as they would have understood little or misunderstood; on the contrary, using the language of the non-Russians at school, they would have approached the Russian *modus vivendi* and Orthodoxy more easily³³. Michael W. Johnson demonstrated, with good reason, that Ilminsky included the broader Orthodox missionary tradition in his system, following in the footsteps of Cyril and Methodius in Moravia, who created an alphabet for the Slavic languages based on Greek, translated religious texts into the language which then became the Church Slavonic, and formed the indigenous ecclesiastical class which, subsequently, was able to carry out the liturgies and preach for the local communities³⁴.

In order to strengthen the Orthodox component of teaching, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, head of the Holy Synod since 1880, turned his attention to the religious and moral education of the peasants, to the improvement of the financial situation of the ecclesiastical authorities of the villages, and to the state of the local general education³⁵. In the 1884 report Pobedonostsev spoke about the statute regarding parish schools signed on June 13 of the same year by Alexander III; he argued that popular primary education should be inextricably linked to the Russian Orthodox Church, and placed particular emphasis on the fact that the school, whose keeper and interpreter could only be the Orthodox clergy, should have been based on the firm principles of the Orthodox faith, and should correspond to the feelings and desires of the *narod*³⁶. In this context, Pobedonostsev asserted that the school should have reflected people's soul and faith, and that only when the church would have had penetrated the school in the most spiritual sense of the word, would it have been embraced by the people³⁷. While this point was in agreement with the proposals of the Ilminsky system, the language of teaching remained an obstacle in the inorodcy education scenario. Ilminsky was criticized by those who believed that non-Russian languages were too primitive to express Christian teaching correctly. The missionary, for his part, highlighted the natural empathy that people would have felt for a teacher belonging to the same community, believing that an inorodcy priest or teacher would have been better able to approach people from his own environment³⁸. The immediate introduction of the Russian language was to Ilminsky of secondary importance; what really was important, was knowing the traditions, beliefs and customs of the people who lived together. It was necessary to "Russianize" the inorodcy completely, *v tserkovnom i khristianskom smysle* (in the Ecclesiastical and Christian sense) (Zemtsova 2014: 101).

Among the numerous opponents of the Ilminsky system, it is worth mentioning here Şihabetdin Märcani (1818–1889), exponent of the Tatar intelligentsia who, in the second half of the 19th century,

33 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 100).

34 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 75).

35 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 76).

36 *Ibidem*.

37 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 76).

38 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 109).

reformed Muslim education and transformed the Tatar society, taking it to a new level of development³⁹. According to Märcani, it was necessary to reform the religious conscience of Muslims without reforming the dogmas of Islam; in fact, what he proposed was a return to the original Islam, pure and free from the shortcomings of subsequent development. Märcani imagined that the reformed society would have first obtained its autonomy within the Russian empire, and then achieved its own statehood. Märcani's view of education was progressive for the time, as he understood the need for a conscious study of Islamic heritage along with the acceptance of modern Russian education. He argued that learning Russian did not go against the rules of Sharia law, and that European science and educational reforms would not have affected Islamic integrity – both sides could, on the contrary, actually benefit from dialogue⁴⁰. With Märcani, the Tatar identity issue becomes central: “Некоторые [из наших соплеменников] считают пороком называться татарами, избегая этого имени, и заявляют, что мы не татары, а мусульмане ... Бедняги .. Если ты не татарин и не араб, таджик, ногаец!; и не китаец, русский, француз, прусак и не немец, так кто же ты?”⁴¹ (Youzeev Nilovich 2018:177).

Tatars' specific cultural identity was supported by the great and enlightened Tatar Abdum Kayum An-Nasiri (1825–1902). An-Nasiri considered language as the essence of nationality, and emphasized the linguistic peculiarity of Tatars compared to other Muslims of Turkish origin. For this reason An-Nasiri sought to formalize a literary Tatar language, normalizing it and differentiating it from Turkitel, Chagatay and Ottoman Turkish⁴². The common homeland and the inevitable mutual knowledge were, for An-Nasiri, the basis of the relationship between Tatars and Russians. In his studies, he identified and delineated mutual cultural influences in areas such as architecture, customs, medicine, fairy tales and folk traditions. He recognized the importance of Russian as the language of the multicultural Russian empire⁴³. In these terms An-Nasiri was one of the first proponents of the principles of Russian *multiculturalism* and *civic nation*⁴⁴ (Yemelianova 1999: 464). At the same time, he categorically rejected the official policies of Russification, aimed at incorporating Tatar otherness into Russian identity⁴⁵. The pre-revolutionary debate among the Tatars of the Russian Empire on the essence of their nationality has an important place in the process of identity recognition⁴⁶; it coincided with and, as mentioned above, was partly generated by the transition from the traditionalism of agrarian society to the modernity of the Industrial Age⁴⁷. It must be said that an intense national self-awareness concerned a minority of society, the Tatar elite; most of the rural population remained outside the national debate, continuing to relate to the Russian *familiar otherness* unconsciously, almost apathetically⁴⁸.

39 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 135).

40 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 116).

41 Original quote: “Some [of our tribesmen] consider it a vice to call themselves Tatars; they avoid this name, and claim that we are not Tatars, but Muslims ... Poor people ... If you are neither a Tatar nor an Arab, a Tajik nor a Nogay!; or a Chinese, a Russian, a Frenchman, a Prussian or a German, then who are you?”

42 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 545).

43 *Ibidem*.

44 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 464).

45 *Ibidem*.

46 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 543).

47 *Ibidem*.

48 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 455).

The industrialization of the Russian empire made it necessary for a “new man”, compatible with progress, to emerge⁴⁹. In this context, Jadidism (from Arabic *jadid*, renewal, *Usul-ul-jadid*, new method), a political-social and intellectual movement of the Turkic-speaking Muslim communities, began to spread; its opponents of jadidism were the so-called kadimists (from *kadim*, old”, *Usul-ul-kadim*, old method). Jadidists acted through education and upbringing, pointing out to non-Russians the advantages of modern civilization. In a broader sense, Jadidism was a movement for the spreading of culture, the development of Turkish languages and literatures, the study of secular disciplines, the use of technology, the application of science, and the emancipation of women.

One of the most iconic symbol of Russian Tatar modernism was Ismail Gasprinskii (1851–1914). Born in Crimea, he was the son of a noble Tatar who worked as translator at the service of a Russian prince. After having studied in a traditional Muslim school, Gasprinskii received his education in a Russian school and then moved to Moscow military academy in 1865. After the Crimean war and the Polish rebellion, panslavism and anti-tourism had become particularly popular in Russia around 1860⁵⁰. In 1867 he suspended his academic training to go to the Ottoman Empire and fight against the Greek rebels; however the Russian authorities intercepted him in Odessa. He had to return to Bakhchysarai, where he taught Russian for a while, and then moved to Paris first and then Istanbul. He returned to the Crimea in 1875 and from 1878 to 1882 he served as mayor in Bakhchysarai, publishing essays and articles on social issues⁵¹. In his youth Gasprinskii had studied at Moscow Military Gymnasium, where he met the director of *Moskovskie Vedomosti* Mikhail Kaktov, from whom he got the idea of educating a nation through printing, inspired by Slavic ideas about the uniqueness of each nation⁵². With the term *millet* translated as *nation*, Gasprinskii ideally referred to all Muslims in Russia united under the leadership of the ecclesiastical authorities, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia⁵³. Another source of inspiration was the educator’s stay in Paris during the period of the Third Republic⁵⁴. In Paris, Gasprinskii had studied the work of the French Ministry of Education, who impressed him with his dedicated commitment to the development of primary education⁵⁵. From the Parisian and, more generally, European experience Gasprinskii took up the idea that the political and intellectual backwardness of Muslims lay in the lack of clear ideals or objectives⁵⁶. The novelty of the school method promoted by Gasprinskii was the introduction of the phonetic teaching system. The kadimists used syllables in the approach to reading, while in the method of the jadidists, each letter corresponded to a sound⁵⁷. Most of the time, children had to learn the alphabet by heart, thus learning the names of the letters but not the sounds they represented; as a result, they often remained functionally illiterate even after years of study. The Russian orientalist Nil S.Lykoshin called this method *muchenie, a ne uchenie* (torture and not education) (Tuna 2002: 273).

49 Dilyara Brilieva (2019: 425).

50 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 555).

51 Mustafa Ö. Tuna, (2002: 267).

52 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 139).

53 *Ibidem*.

54 *Ibidem*.

55 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 140).

56 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 144).

57 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 138).

Gasprinskii opened the first Jadidist school in 1884 in Bakhchysarai and in 1908 there were about 6,000 of them⁵⁸. The reduction in learning time allowed the teaching of secular sciences, including geography, arithmetic, the history of Islam and the study of the Koran. On the contrary, in the *madāris*, where the old teaching method were applied, there were no rigid division into subjects⁵⁹ and all training took place around the study of the Koran.

Gasprinskii claimed that Russian Muslims were fully loyal to the Russian state and the Tsar, but were still completely indifferent to Russian social and political life, and ignorant to modern civilization. According to Gasprinskii, the Muslim communities were stuck in the backwardness and obscurantism. They lived their own lives, had their own independent authorities and religious structures, and cared little about the homeland they shared with Orthodox Christians⁶⁰. An effective *sblizhenie* between the Russians and the Muslims of the empire would have been possible for Gasprinskii by promoting education in a modern and secular way; this would have been possible, according to the Crimean enlightener, using non-Russian languages for education. If the schools were run by well-educated and graduated Muslims, students would automatically be motivated to learn the Russian language as well, as they would fully understand the advantages of integration into Russian society⁶¹. The main goal of Usul-ul-Jadid was the elimination of linguistic, cultural and regional differences between the different Turkish groups in Russia and their unification on the basis of *edinstvo v yazyke, myslyach i delach* (unity in language, thoughts and action). For this reason Gasprinskii opposed the ethnic Tatar name and supported its replacement with *Turkish*, common to all Turkish populations in Russia and beyond⁶². Gasprinskii claimed that the priority in national identification had to be the language. He therefore promoted the development of a common Turkish language, *Türki*⁶³ - a standardized version of the Ottoman Turk with influences from the Crimean Tatar vernacular, used by Gasprinskii in his literary and publicistic production. Compared to other enlightened Turks in the Ottoman Empire, Gasprinskii never considered the political self-determination of Russian Turks as a possibility and always saw their future within Russia. He supported the cultural affinities of the Tatars and Russians by considering mutual cultural influence as a positive factor in the historical development of the Tatars, and welcomed their *russification*, as long as it was only of the intellectual sphere⁶⁴. Gasprinskii's works were dedicated to the problems and needs of Russian Muslims, but especially to their integration into the Russian social, cultural and educational environment⁶⁵. He argued that the Russian civilizing mission in the East was desirable, but it would have to go much deeper, if it wanted to shake the existing order. Its aim was to bring the Tatars and Russians closer together, and move towards a mutually beneficial coexistence. To do this, according to Gasprinskii, Muslims had to be made aware of Russia's interests⁶⁶ and vice versa. The tool he used to promote Russian-Tatar mutual

58 *Ibidem*.

59 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 88).

60 Michael, Kemper (2019: 9).

61 *Ibidem*.

62 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 549).

63 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 547).

64 Galina M. Yemelianova (1997: 557).

65 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 103).

66 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 123).

knowledge was the bilingual newspaper *Perevodchik-Tercüman*. The press was in fact used by the Muslim community in Russia as a vehicle for spreading knowledge with the aim of achieving progress, a space in which the exchange of ideas and mutual influence proliferated⁶⁷. Gasprinskii received permission to publish his *Perevodchik* in 1883, and its first issue was published on the hundredth anniversary of the Russian annexation of Crimea. the tone chosen by Gasprinskii was a cautious one, which allowed him to publish his newspaper continuously for thirty-one years, until his death in 1914. *Perevodchik* enabled the Tatar-Muslim question to go beyond the narrow framework of the treatises published on the pages of the periodical press, and to involve a much wider circle of readers⁶⁸. The issues raised by *Tercüman* and other Tatar periodicals were often considered through the prism of progress; calls for reform and change in society were often associated with concerns about the fate of the nation. Progress was the ultimate goal, the ideal for which the participants in the discussions, who aimed to create the new *Muslim*, strove⁶⁹. The idea of progress was born as a solution to the main problem faced not only by Muslims in the Volga-Ural region, but by the whole *Umma*, i.e. the stagnation and the backwardness of Muslims, first of all towards the West in many, if not all, areas of life⁷⁰. According to Gasprinskii the progress of the nation had to be achieved through the preparation and education of a new generation of new Muslims. The debate within the Muslim community, which took place on the pages of *Perevodchik* and other non-Russian newspapers of the empire, focused on the traditional and religious teaching method of *Usul-ul-Kadim* and on the new secular method promoted by Gasprinskii⁷¹. The Kadimists were worried that the strong secular component of Jadidism, and the preference of the Turkish rather than Islamic component in the national consciousness, could irreversibly damage the Tatar national identity, which they had safeguarded through centuries of Russian severe repression. The clash between Jadidists and Kadimists shifted the relationship between the Tatars and the Tsarist empire, and took it to a new level: in order to provoke the reaction of the Russian authorities towards the *progressive*, the latter were called by the traditionalist as revolutionary, red, panturkist and pan-islamist *mullahs* and the Jadidist program was considered anti-government and ultranationalist⁷². The Jadidists supported the end of the Ministry of Education's control over Tatar schools, as per the order of 18 January 1862⁷³, and, as a result, the transfer of the supervision of the Tatar schools to the local Muslim administration⁷⁴. At the end of the 19th century, the rivalry between Jadidists and Kadimists strongly influenced the opinion of the Tatar elite's self-perception of identity. Although most of both Kadimists and Jadidists imagined, and hoped for, the future of the Tatars within the Russian political context, their views on the level and intensity of Tatar integration with the Russian state differed considerably. Therefore, most traditionalists favored the perpetuation of the partially isolated existence of the Tatar Islamic community⁷⁵. On the pages of the Tatar periodicals, the division of

67 Ian W. Campbell (2017: 19).

68 Dilyara Brilieva (2019: 421).

69 Dilyara Brilieva (2019: 422).

70 *Ibidem*.

71 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 465).

72 *Ibidem*.

73 Oxana Zemtsova (2014: 73).

74 Galina M. Yemelianova (1999: 471).

75 *Ibidem*.

peoples into two groups according to the *svoy-chuzhoy* (self-other) concept is clearly visible, and to a large extent this division coincides with the great East-West dichotomy – in which the West acts as the bearer of light and progress. The West now became an object of interest, especially in matters of technology and education⁷⁶. For Gasprinskii, progress had to be necessarily combined with Islam and with the teachings of the Koran, which however should not have impeded the process of development and openness towards the West; the new Muslim had to be faithful to his confession but at the same time, able to move and live with dignity in a rapidly changing world. Education was the only tool that could have started the modernization process of the new Muslim⁷⁷.

The essay *Russkoe musulmanstvo* (1881) (Russian Islam) can be considered the manifesto of Gasprinskii's social and moral activity. In *Russkoe musulmanstvo* Gasprinskii made a passionate appeal to the Tatars and Russians of the empire, asking them, in the name of unity and equality, to bring the Muslims of Russia out of the state of stagnation and degradation they were in⁷⁸. The educator considered the Muslims of Russia as a united group that professed the same faith, spoke dialects of the same language, and shared the same traditions. Imperial policies required Muslims to pay taxes, but excluded them from social life, which caused apathy, and both personal and community indifference.

The russification process led Russian Muslims stay within their local reality and interests, which did not allow them to acquire the skills and knowledge derived from European culture⁷⁹. It was in *Russko-vostochnoe soglashenie* (Russian-eastern agreement), published in 1894, that Gasprinskii outlined the second part of his plan, the alliance of the whole East with Russia:

“Длинный ряд веков жизнь и культура русского и тюркского народов взаимодействуют... несмотря на грубые и неуместные затеи... слава Богу, добрые отношения народов не поколеблены... и это совершенно понятно, ибо оба богатыря из века в век преследовались одной и той же гидрой о трёх головах в виде тягот, неправды и невежества. Так было в прошлом. А в будущем эти народы пойдут, ибо должны идти, рука об руку, чтобы обрести одинаково нужные им свет, правду и сносную жизнь.”⁸⁰ (Yuri B. Osmanov 2014: 19)

Ismail Gasprinskii's education was shaped on the one hand by the old method of Muslim teaching and on the other by a discontinuous and incomplete education among Russian institutions. The result of this symbiosis led to the formation of a young intellectual with a personality which can best be described as hybrid; a perfect connoisseur of Russian culture, he was at the same time representative of the country's Muslim community⁸¹. During his years in Europe he studied the Western model of society and compared it with the Russian reality, thus realizing that not only the Tatars, but also the Russians were still far from reaching the level of development of the West. For about six years, Gasprinskii taught Russian

76 Dilyara Brilieva (2019: 425).

77 *Ibidem*.

78 Yuri B. Osmanov (2014: 18).

79 Mustafa Ö. Tuna (2002: 365).

80 English translation: For a long series of centuries, the life and culture of the Russian and Turkic peoples have been interacting ... despite rough and inappropriate undertakings ... thank God, the good relations of the peoples have not been shaken ... and this is completely understandable, both heroes, from century to century, were persecuted by the same three heads' hydra, in the form of hardships, untruth and ignorance. This has been the case in the past. And in the future, these peoples will go, they must go, hand in hand in order to find light, truth, and the bearable life that they both equally need.

81 I.K. Zagidullin (2012: 12).

language and arithmetic in *Russko-tuzemnye shkoly* (Russian native schools), which were opened by the government specifically for inorodcy, and whose positive and negative sides he soon discovered. With his pedagogical activity, Gasprinskii proposed an alternative direction for the development of social and cultural life – an alternative that considered the preservation of national and religious traditions the basis upon which the transformation of the Muslim society of Russia according to the European model should have taken place⁸². The state, on the other hand, and therefore Ilminsky, considered the Russification, the *sbliuzhenie* between Russians and Tatars, as the ultimate goal of its school policy, and did not take into account the peculiarities of cultural development, often to the detriment of the national school. With regard to the Volga region, Gasprinskii understood perfectly that since the majority of Muslims was at the bottom of the social ladder, and continuously made the object of the Orthodox Church missionary activity and the Russification policies, to expect an attraction towards Russian educational institutions was utterly unrealistic (Zagidullin 2012: 12).

In the Central Volga region, the spread of Russian education among the inorodcy assumed particular importance. The region was subject to Russian laws, but the Muslim population, having minimal contact with the authorities, continued to live according to their own rules. The measures of 1870, according to which the Russification of the Tatars should have been conducted in the Russian language, did not influence the Crimean Tatars, whose *madāris* and *makātib* were still subordinate to the Taurida Governorate⁸³. In addition to that, Gasprinskii tried to avoid interference of Russian officials in its activities directed at introducing the new educational method in the *green peninsula*. Gasprinskii tried to convince Russian officials of the impossibility of a complete *pogloshcheniya*, absorption of one people by another (Zagidullin 2012: 7). While, for secular authorities and Orthodox clergy, *Russification* meant the loss of non-Russian national and religious identity, and the filling of this void with Orthodox faith, for Gasprinskii it meant the government's concern to transform Muslims into full-fledged Russian citizens, which would have then created the conditions for the development of a national culture, the voluntary study of the Russian language, and, consequently, a solid knowledge of Russian culture and science. In *Russkoe-musulmanstvo*⁸⁴ Gasprinskii declared that the spread of education and knowledge among Russians and Muslims through the state language, Russian, was unthinkable⁸⁵. A simple literacy, the ability to read, write and speak roughly in Russian, would only strengthen the stagnation of the Tatars. To bring real education and development, teaching should have been carried out in the students' mother tongue; only then a real impulse to curiosity and knowledge would have been aroused, only then the Tatars would have seen the school as a real benefit and not something incomprehensible and vague. In order to do this, it was absolutely necessary to teach the students the basics of Islam and allow them to study the Russian language voluntarily⁸⁶.

On 10 July 1892, in a circular issued by the Ministry of Education for the educational districts of Kazan, Moscow and Orenburg, it was decided to introduce the rule that only printed books approved by censor should have been used in Muslim schools; all handwritten books in *madāris* and *kataatiib* had to be removed, which amounted to a serious restriction of Muslims' religious rights. Under pressure from

82 *Ibidem*.

83 I.K. Zagidullin (2012: 7).

84 Ismail Gasprinskii (1881).

85 I.K. Zagidullin (2012: 5).

86 *Ibidem*.

the numerous petitions received, the ministry was forced to revoke the decision⁸⁷. With the law of 16 July 1888 the government decreed the introduction, on 1 January 1891, of the Russian qualification for people who wished to join Muslim religious institutions, and in particular the Muslim Spiritual Assembly in Orenburg (Zagidullin 2012: 12). Gasprinskii welcomed this innovation and, aware of the mistrust that Muslims could place in a Russian degree, he spoke in his articles about the advantages that the Muslim community would gain from learning the Russian language at the academic level. His speeches were mainly aimed at preparing a new generation of Muslims in the field of clergy, school and economy:

“просвещенный, честный и нравственный мулла может принести громадную пользу своему приходу: он учитель, советник, юрист, проповедник и образец хорошей жизни. Как учитель он сеет грамоту; как проповедник он поучает (или должен поучать) людей к нравственной, трудовой жизни, вести их к совершенствованию и прогрессу; как юрист и судья, он сглаживает столкновения, устанавливает право, порядок... Они могут вести народ ко всему хорошему; но могут так же своим бездействием и своим упадком деморализовать темное население и вести его к гибели духовной и материальной.”⁸⁸ (I.K. Zagidullin 2012: 12)

Gasprinskii invited the Muslim Tatars to use the rights and opportunities provided by the Russian state for the good of their *millet*, without fear of approaching the Russian school. And yet, in the young people who did not know their national traditions, their mother tongue, nor the basis of Islam, he saw no useful figures for the development of the Tatar communities. Instead, he believed that the Russian language should have been learned as an academic subject, included in the disciplines of Tatar educational institutions, and used as much as possible by Muslims who wanted, as long as their traditions were preserved, to reach a cultural and economic European level⁸⁹.

Nikolay Ilminsky and Ismail Gasprinskii thus symbolize two opposing points of view on the past, present and future of Muslims of Russia: on the one hand, the Russian Orthodox missionary, who was concerned with baptizing and spreading Orthodoxy among the inorodcy, not wishing to involve them in the social and cultural life of the empire; on the other, the Tatar educator, who wanted Muslims to become active members of a modern society, without losing their Muslim identity⁹⁰. This overview, which I have tried to outline, on the two teaching methods for inorodcy, wants to stimulate reflections on the question of language in a composite, multicultural space such as the Russian one. Crimea and the Volga Ural region, the geographical focus of my study, have always been complex cultural and linguistic spaces where a *multilingual-cultural situation*, as Galina Yu. Bogdanovich said, has been created with a series of peculiar characteristics of sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and ethno-linguistic attributes that have determined the functional and communicative state of language⁹¹. As pointed out Titarenko, Bogdanovich in his study *Russkii yazyk v aspekte problem lingvokul'turologii* reflects on the *multilinguocultural phenomenon*,

87 I.K. Zagidullin (2012: 9).

88 English translation: An enlightened, honest and moral mullah can bring tremendous benefits to his parish: he is a teacher, counselor, lawyer, preacher and an example of a good life. As a teacher, he sows literacy; as a preacher, he instruct (or should instruct) people to a moral, working life, lead them to improvement and progress; as a lawyer and judge, he smooths out conflicts, establishes law, order ... They can lead people towards everything good; but they can also, by their inaction and their decline, demoralize the unenlightened people and lead them to spiritual and material destruction.

89 *Ibidem*.

90 Mustafa Ö. Tuna (2002: 275).

91 Elena Ya. Titarenko (2018: 36).

formed in a *shared* space of coexistence and mutual influence, which comes to represent the diversity of cultural expressions - in dialogue and at the same time in conflict (Titarenko 2018: 36). This multilingual space is characterized by interdependence; none of its components can, or should, ignore the language or culture of the other, so as not to risk upsetting its balance⁹². Going beyond its borders, the Russian language, together with the language of the *other*, became a communicative instrument and a means of identity for a political-cultural action⁹³.

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92 Larissa Aronin; Muiris Ó Laoire (2004: 23).

93 Vincenzo Russo (2009: 82).

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