

## Russian Historiography of Sources of Historical Links of Volga Region and India

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**Abstract:** The modern national historiography permits presenting the place and the role of historical links of Volga region and India to the people, understanding the phenomenon of Indo-Tatarian relations in the region, demonstrating Kazan. “The Star of East” and “the Great gates to Asia” as the historical center of ancient contacts of Volga region and Indian peoples.

**Key words:** Russian historiography, historical links of Volga region and India, Indo-Tatarian relations, relation, links

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### INTRODUCTION

History of Russian-Indian links is the source of the modern situation of interrelations. Rhythms of their history are reflection of the dynamics which is kept today. Retrospective and perspective of mutual contacts of Russia and India in the modern historiography is presented rather widely. Studying the contacts of Russia and India has accumulated rich traditions. Basic stages, specificity and tendencies of trading and economic relations and social and cultural links are highlighted in the national historical literature.

History of mutual influence of Russia and India is rather various. Its sources go to deep ancient times. Recent decades are characterized by revival of theoretical and conceptual and certain historical researches of international relations.

The purpose of this research is realizing, analysis and evaluation of regional national history of relations between Volga region and India which have >1000 years history, starting from 8 century and continuing for the subsequent centuries.

Researchers of this study set their task as to systematization of material about the role of Volga region and Tatarian component in the Russian-Eastern and Russian-Indian relations.

Reputable national researchers, representatives of Kazan school of oriental studies and Indian studies Mirkasym Abdulakhatovich Usmanov, Fayaz Sharipovich KKhuzin, Albert Akhmetzhanovich Burkhanov, Guzel Ferdinandovna MratKhuzina, Ayrat Halitovich Tuhvatullin, being the authors of a number of scientific and op-ed articles and monographs, related to materials of

the established theme, agree that the term “Volga Region” is used as definition for one of the most significant entities of international relations not by chance.

### THE MAIN PART

In the middle ages the river Volga has played a huge role in communications of the North and the South as a waterway, says Khuzin (1996). If the Silk Road connected the Far East with the Volga region, then with the West and vice versa, various kinds of contacts of almost the total North of the Eastern Europe with countries of the Caspian sea basin and through them with the peoples and states of the Near and the Far East was carried out namely via the Volga way. This is especially peculiar of the period of 8-9 centuries. Via the Volga way there were not only famous expansions of Scandinavian Normans performed towards the Southern direction but also merchants of the Southern, especially from the Caspian bordering countries brought their goods to the Northern countries mainly by Volga. The waterway at that time was less dangerous than the overland (Khuzin, 1996).

In the epoch of revived action of the Volga way there were early feudal states of the Eastern Europe formed the Khazar kaganate in the South, then the Volga Bulgariain the Middle Volga. Rising of the state independence of the Volga Bulgaria refers to the end of the 9 to the beginning of the 10 centuries. During this period, due to development of trade relations and economic life, cities appear in the territory, like Bilyar, Bulgar, Guketau, etc. Foundation of Kazan, firstly in the form of a small city-like fortress, took place also a 1000 years ago, namely at the joint of the 10-11 centuries. In the epoch of rising of

political independence of the Volga Bulgaria this territory was visited by the official embassy of the Arab caliphate from Baghdad. The embassy secretary Akhmed Ibn-Fadlan has left a detailed description of their trip. It is possible to conclude that early documented confirmed contacts of the Bulgarian population of the Volga region with the representatives of India have >1000 years history.

The links continued in the epoch of independent development of the Volga Bulgaria during the 10 the first quarter of the 13 centuries. During this period the activity was expressed by the Bulgarian merchants in Khorezm, Bokhara and other developed centers of the Central Asia, where the frequent guests were merchants from India. The overland direction of trade links, existing as a branch of the Silk Road before was especially active during the stated period. At the starting stage this route was needed for the merchants from the Middle Volga in order to pass around the territory of the hostile Khazaria after demise of the kaganate the way along the Volga became more dangerous.

Good familiarization with the overland route is also mentioned in the materials of the Golden Horde epoch, says Burkhanov and Tuhvatullin. Establishment of the power of the Golden Horde khans at the Eurasian spaces created favorable conditions for development of overland route for the trading links of Volga region. This is especially noticeable in the first half of the 13, the middle of 14 centuries when the state of Dzhuchidov was actively developing international political, trade and economical and cultural links with the countries of East (Burkhanov, 2007). In accordance with, Usmanov, the Arabic traveler Ibn-Battuta having visited the Golden Horde in the 30-ies of 14 century, then India, the trading and economic links between these countries were stable and various (Usmanov, 2000a).

The meaning of the Volga way in development of trade links with India can be seen in the following centuries, says Khuzin (2004). Different reasons led people to India. Search of new trade links first of all led the epic Sadko, then the real Tver merchant Afanasiy Nikitin to the risky travelling. Nikitin from Tver (1466-1472), performing its famous trip, swam down the Volga river and through, the Caspian sea got to the countries of the Near East, then to India. Nikitin has monumentalized himself in the history his notes of the trip are the honor of the national India studies. Since, him blurring of the legendary and fairy image of the "Indian Empire". Great geographical discoveries of 15-16 centuries and formation of the new geographical space have influenced the weakening of the essence of the territories of the Russia people as a unique linking bridge between

the West and the Southern, South-Eastern Asia. Nevertheless, the area of the Southern Volga region and the Middle Asia during the middle ages remained the source of trading and political relations of the people of Russia and India (Khuzin, 2004).

The boundaries of the new time has marked the epoch of the direct contacts, the beginning of systematic political and social and cultural links, when Russia continued performing searches of convenient ways to get connected with India as it is stated by Safiullin, Shaymurzin and Zakirov. Russia was linked with India with their embassies, the aim of the ambassadors was detecting of the relation of India to the issue about sending to Russia of Indian craftsmen. It is not by chance that Godunov provided patronage to Indian merchants. The Russian Tsar asked 2-3 thousand tons of silver in exchange for the Russian goods. For the first time, the merchants of Russia received the permission for trade in India in 1696. The Russian missions of 17 century in India (the embassy of the "tradesman" Gribov, the native of Kazan, Syroezhin and the native of Astrakhan, Tushkanov in 1646, the embassy of Pushnikov and Derevenskiy in 1651, the embassy of a Muslim native of Astrakhan, Kasimov in 1675) have become the evidence of the turn in the official and diplomatic course of the Russian state. However, the historic destinies of Russia and India by the 18 century have separated them one from another. Russia was becoming closer with the Western Europe (the westerning transformation by Peter the 1st). Sending of several expeditions to India took place by the official power headed by the duke Bekovich-Cherkasskiy and Revkelev. However, these diplomatic actions by Peter the 1st did not have any success. But still, the same national travelers collect the first Asian collections of Kunstkamera (Safiullin *et al.*, 2000).

Sverdlova states that the main centers of Russian-Indian links were Astrakhan, Orenburg and Kazan. In connection with arising of the first manufactures and strengthening of small trade manufacturing in Russia there increases the interest to the experience, accumulated by Indians in crafts. Astrakhan was the birthplace of cotton manufacture in Russia. Settlement of Indians here contributed to familiarizing of the Russians with their experience, culture, religion. Those in their turn, made penetration into India of the information about India easier. Starting from the 17 century (i.e., after conquering and administrative development of Volga region in the middle the second part of the 16 century) Astrakhan started to play a leading role in development of the Russian and Indian trading links (Serdlova, 1991).

With foundation in 1735 of the city of Orenburg the Russian-Eastern relations move there, though Astrakhan

continues playing an important role in supporting the trading links of Russia with Iran and India. A government privilege, granted to Orenburg, stipulated a number of advantages for craftsmen and merchants from the Middle Asia and India. More efforts to distribution of knowledge about India were made by the governors-general of the Orenburg area Nepluev and Rychkov. As the intermediaries for establishment and development of trade with Eastern countries "Kazan trade tatars" were attracted by Nepluev. For this purpose he contests voluntary moving from Kazan area (the present Sabinskiy district of the republic of Tatarstan) of two hundred families of tatars, giving them land plots near Orenburg. Here, there appears a new tatar settlement known under the name of Seidov posad (in tatar language Kargala). Inhabitants of this fast developed settlement, made free of taxes have actively joined the Russian-Eastern trade. Being Muslim and speaking east languages, they were successfully trading not only in Kazakhstan, khanates of the Middle Asia but also in the Eastern (Chinese) Turkestan in the "mysterious" Kashgaria in Iran and Afghanistan. In the 17-18 centuries, trading in these countries was almost impossible for Christians. Nepluev, taking into account the success of the tatar merchants in the East in the active support of Rychkov and Tevkelev, contests organization of the company for trade with India. In 1750-51, one of the members of this Company Khayalin, the son of Khayalin equips a caravan to India. Bekmukhamedov has left a small in the size but a significant in matter composition the "Notes" about its long and dangerous trip. The Indian part of the trip under the "Notes" was published by Usmanov (2000b). This trip lasted for 32 years. The value of the "Notes" is in the fact that by them the readers of Volga region and Cisurals for >150 years were getting knowledge about India. The manuscript lists of the composition were widely spread among the tatar population, the text of the original was republished typographically and studies in educational establishments of Russia (Usmanov, 2000b).

From the ancient times Indian guests-merchants moved by caravans to Volga and then swam along it to Bilyar, Bulgar and Kazan where they were trading, living and leaving memories about them. They met with Varangian, Moscow merchants in Aga Bazar near Bulgar at the Gostinniy island and in Tashayak in Kazan, they came to Makarievskiy fair where they traded with "oversea oddities". The first documented information about political contacts of Russia and Kazan with India are connected with the embassy of India from the estate of padishakh Babur having visited in 1533 firstly Kazan during the leadership of tsar Safa Giree then Moscow

during the leadership of duke Vasily the 3rd. In Moscow, there was an agreement signed as to "be in friendship and brotherhood with him". This is not by chance that Babur in his poem "Baburnama" writes about a gift, sent by him to the country of Bulgar. Along, the trade way from East to West there were functioning settlements of Indian tradesmen. In 1470 by Kazan there came the Tver merchant Afanasiy Nikitin to the "Indian land" who left his notes for the most part written in Cyrillic alphabet to Turki. The way, passed by Afanasiy Nikitin to India, discloses in detail the new route to India. He, moving along Volga in 1470, informs that "Kazan and Uslan are passed behind" and notes that Kazan are located at a high mountain and near the city there flow the river Kazanka and over the city very high minarets of mosques and an imperial palace rise.

Materials, where it is told about the fact that in the city of Khazanabad (North India) in the 17 century there was a copy of Kazan eight-minaret mosque built by the natives of Bulgar "Kol Sharif", testify to the existing contacts. Cartographic data also tell about it in which the North from India is marked as Bulgar on the map.

Just in the first half of the 17 century the Indian merchants brought goods to the markets of Kazan and Moscow. The intermediaries between the Indians and the Russian tradesmen were tatars, knowing Arabic and Persian languages and freely speaking Russian. Among them there were in all appearances, natives of Kazan being as interpreters and translators at the state servicing. In the middle of the third quarter of the 17 century in Russian embassies in Eastern countries a vivid role was played by the Kazan Tatar Muslim Makhmet-Isup (Mukhammed-Yusuf) Kasimov. In 1675, he headed one of the early Russian embassies to India to Shah Aurangzebu. Kasimov was one of those figures of tatar origin who in the 17 and 18 centuries provided to Russia big services in the course of relations with Persian and even East Asian states. Due to tatars being in the Russian servicing the Russian for the relations with governments of Muslim countries, possessed a ready staff of translators. The tatar language for some time was the language of diplomatic relations between Russia and Persia. Tatar duplicates of Russian credentials were sent not only to Persia but also to leaders of India. Replies were prepared as the rule to the tatar variant of Russian credentials as is it considered by Usmanov (1994).

In the 18 century, Kazan as it is shown by Sverdlova (2005) becomes the industrial and the administrative centre being at the joint of the transit trade. To the Eastern trade there were "Kazan trading tatars" attracted. Namely from this period Kazan was named the "Star of East" and the "Great gates to Asia" (Sverdlova, 2005).

Mrathuzina (2001) notes that already in the 19 century a unique science about India appears. Just in the beginning of the century there begins teaching of East languages in Kazan Imperial University, traditions of studying the spiritual world of the peoples of India begins (Mrathuzina, 2001).

At the joint of 19-20 centuries among the Muslims of the "Internal" Russia there starts distributing the so called Dzhadidistkiy Method of education which in line with the religious subjects also included the worldly. As it is specified by Tuhvatullin (2012), the special place in teaching of such disciplines as geography, history, biology was taken by the data about India. In the book on geography for the primary Muslim school issued in Kazan by the publishing house of brothers Karimovs in 1909, contains the following facts: "In Hindustan there live about 300 million people, of them 70 million are Muslim, 10 million are Christians. The rest are heathens Hindu and Buddhists. In Hindustan there are the following languages are used: English, Persia and Urdu. The capital city is Calcutta" (Tuhvatullin, 2012).

The work "The general history of Turks" issued in 1909 by the Ufa publishing house "Oriental print", the tatar historian Hasan-Gata Gabashi gives the following historical and ethnographic facts about India: "the Hindu, the Iranians, the Afghans, the Greek, the Latinas, the French, the Englishmen, the Germans and the Slavonic belong to Arians or to the white race. The most ancient part of the Arians, moves to the South-East, occupied India and during a long time kept the ethnonym "Arians". The modern Indians are their descendants".

During all the mentioned time the huge factual material was regularly accumulated which led to achievements in the sphere of research of language, history, literature, culture of India, makes the conclusion (Mrathuzina, 1999).

## RESULTS

Researchers of the study try to show that links of the Volga region and India were wider and various, than this was highlighted in the previous literature. The modern Tatarstan historians have studies many aspects of the stated theme. This study lets presenting the nature, the place and the role of historical links of Volga region and India, to realize the phenomenon of the Indian-Tatar relations in the region to show Kazan as a historical center of ancient contacts of Volga region and Indian peoples.

## CONCLUSION

Today the historical and cultural image of India in Russia is based on the partnership strategic mutual relations. Tatarstan and India have established the spheres of cooperation, including the scientific and the cultural. At the present moment there is the necessity is sensed to continue the traditions of Kazan scientific school of Indian studies in the historical and cultural senses.

In the perspective, researchers plan the cycle of study which will aim at demonstrating the ideological and esthetical and scientific value of historical and cultural inheritance in the sphere of various relations of peoples of Volga region and Hindustan.

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