

**The participation
at the international celebratory session
occasioned by the anniversary of 25 years
since the creation of the Academy of Sciences
of the Republic of Tatarstan**

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At the invitation of the president of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan, Miakzium Khalimulovich Salakhov, I participated between September 29th and October 2nd, 2016, together with Professor Tasin Gemil, in the international session dedicated to the celebration of a quarter of a century since the creation of the academic institution based in Kazan. We travelled by plane, a Turkish Airlines flight along the route Bucharest–Istanbul–Kazan and back, leaving the Romanian capital on the morning of September 28th, and returning on October 3rd, 2016.

The decree to found the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan was issued on September 30th, 1991, signed by the first president of the Republic, Mintimer Sharipovich Shaimiev, but its activity started effectively with the programming of the first general assembly of the institution on the 24th of January 1992.

The beginnings of academic preoccupations in Kazan are foremost connected with the ukaz/decreed of Tsar Alexander I from 1804, through which the bases of the University of Kazan were set, a cultural outpost of the Russian Empire towards the East. In a first stage, the professorial body of the academic centre was recruited from incoming specialists from Sankt-Petersburg and Moscow, with the support of whom a genuine “Kazan school” was established for various domains of science. The most famous representative of this school was the mathematician of international repute Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevskii (1792–1856), rector of the University between 1828 and 1846. The Alma mater from Kazan has distinguished itself particularly in the field of Orientalistics, a speciality in which Ch. M. J. Fren (Frähn), O. M. Kovalevskii, Kh. Faizkhanov, V. P. Vasiliev, and N. N. Berezin excelled. The high education was open primarily to the Russian-speaking community of the city and of the surrounding regions, but not to the Tatar community, which was barred from living in Kazan.

A significant moment for the activation of the local scientific life was the establishment in 1921 of the Academic Centre of the People's Commissariat, which

employed 98 specialists. Even though its main purpose was to implant the Communist ideology, the Centre supported the expression of the cultural traditions of the Tatars. During World War II, the seat of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, together with around 2000 researchers, moved to Kazan, which influenced the structures of the academic institutions in the city, even more so given that prestigious scholars activated briefly here, such as P. L. Kapitza, L. A. Orbeli, L. D. Landau, D. S. Likhachov, I. V. Tarle, B. D. Grekov, etc

As in other constituent republics of the Soviet Union, in 1945, shortly after the end of the war, Kazan became the home of a local branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, with positive outcomes for the science and culture of Tatarstan. Major changes in this regard occurred after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, when – on the 30th of August, 1990 – the Declaration on the state sovereignty of the Tatarstan Soviet Socialist Republic was issued. According to the new constitution, adopted on the 6th of November 1992 on the basis of a referendum carried out a few months earlier, the Republic of Tatarstan enjoyed notable administrative prerogatives within the Russian Federation. In this new socio-political context, the Academy of Sciences acquired more important responsibilities, which required certain organisational measures.

The Academy is currently structured in seven branches: (1) Humanities, (2) Social-economical Sciences, (3) Medical and Biological Sciences, (4) Agricultural Sciences, (5) Mathematics, Mechanics and Machinery, (6) Physics, Energetics and Earth Sciences, and (7) Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. In what concerns the Humanities division, it supervises the “G. Ibragimov” Institute of Language, Literature and Art, the Institute of Tatar Encyclopedia and Regional Studies, the Institute of Archaeology, the Centre for Islamic Studies, the “Sh. Mardzhani” Institute of History, and the Republican Centre for Preserving the Traditional Culture, entities created gradually after the founding of the Academy of Sciences. Quite significant is that the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan asserts its founding not from the creation of the branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences – as other academic institutions from the former Soviet state –, but from a date associated with the establishment of the Republic of Tatarstan.

The first elected president of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan was the man-of-letters Mansur Khasanovich Khasanov (1930–2010), who fulfilled his mandate between 1992 and 2006. He was succeeded in this important position by the chemist Akhmet Mazgarovich Mazgarov in 2006–2014, and currently the Academy is led by physicist Miakziium Khalimulovich Salakhov.

The Academy gathers 40 titular members, 80 corresponding members, 29 members of honour, and 14 members from abroad. Accordingly, the total number of members of the Academy of Sciences from Tatarstan is 163 persons, of which 149 from the

Republic and 14 from abroad, for a population under four millions. This is very high compared with, for instance, the number of members of the Romanian Academy, which, according to law, cannot exceed 81 titular members, 82 corresponding members, 36 members of honour from the country, and 89 foreign members of honour, meaning that the maximum number of members can be 288, of which 199 from the country, for a population of slightly over 20 million inhabitants. Within the department of Humanities of the Academy from Tatarstan were co-opted seven titular members, nine corresponding members, four members of honour from various centres from the Russian Federation, and other four members of honour from abroad (N. Devlet and E. Ikhsanoglu from Turkey, I. Fodor from Hungary, and U. Schamiloglu from the United States).

The good organisation of the research work, the setting of precise strategic objectives, and the efficient support given by leadership of the Republic of Tatarstan have led to remarkable achievements in the publishing field. An essential input in this regard came from the research body composed of elements gifted with passion and tenacity. From among the publications in the field of Humanities, compelling for the scientific potential of the scholars from Kazan, we mention the collective volumes: Татары (“The Tatars”), Татарская энциклопедия (“The Tatar Encyclopedia”), История татар с древнейших времен (“The History of the Tatars from the Oldest Times”) in seven volumes, as well as the atlases Tartarica, Bulgarica and Великий Болгар (“Great Bolgar”), elaborated for the most part by prestigious specialists from the Republic of Tatarstan. Some of the chapters of these voluminous works were written in collaboration with a number of historians from abroad¹.

Invited to the session dedicated to a quarter of a century since the creation of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan were the presidents and vice-presidents of similar academies from the Russian Federation, located in the vicinity of the Republic of Tatarstan, in Eastern Europe, Western Siberia and Central Asia, as well as several specialists from Kazan and other centres, with preoccupations tangential to those of the colleagues from Tatarstan.

A first meeting of a restricted number of participants to the session was programmed on September 29th, under the chairmanship of the president of the local Academy, Professor Miakziium Kh. Salakhov. The meeting occasioned a brief exchange of information on the professional objectives of the guests and the collaboration with academic institutions from Tatarstan.

The festive gathering dedicated to celebrating the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan took place throughout

¹ Республика Татарстан. Природа, история, экономика, культура, наука, Kazan, 2015, p. 160–175; Академия наук Республики Татарстан, 1991–2016, Kazan, 2016, p. 4–57

September 30th in the festivity room of the central compound of the Academy (Fig. 1, B). The meeting was graced by the presence of Mr Mintimer Sharipovich Shaimiev, the first president of the Republic of Tatarstan, with a mandate spanning a long period of time, from June 1991 to March 2010, who has special merits in supporting the founding and organisation of the Academy. The milestones of the important scientific and cultural institution from Kazan were expounded upon by the President of the Academy Miakzium Kh. Salakhov, the former president of the Republic M. Sh. Shaimiev, and the member of the Academy General Makhmut Akhmetovich Gareev. Their speeches foremost transmitted the goal of identifying the most adequate solutions for preserving the language and traditions of the Tatars, but also the availability to establish and maintain long-lasting collaborations with scientific fora from the Russian Federation, the Turkophone Islamic states and other countries.

These speeches were followed by the allocution of Ms Talia Iarullova Khabrieva, the vicepresident of the Russian Academy of Sciences, after which I was given the floor in order to present a message from the Romanian Academy. On this occasion I expressed the appreciation for the notable results of the colleagues from Tatarstan and for their aspirations to reach a level as high as possible, in accordance with the scientific achievements on the global level. At the same time, I made a brief foray into the most representative moments of the history of the Romanian Academy, which this year celebrated a century and a half since its founding. I stressed that the two academic institutions were founded in different historical circumstances and followed their own paths, but shared the same goals, notably the cultivation of the language and the reconstruction of the national history, as well as the production of eminent works in all major scientific domains. Delivered in English, my message was translated into Russian by Bulat Nogmanov, an expert from the Service of Foreign Relations of the Academy from Kazan, as to make it accessible for the entire audience.

Further on, speeches were given by several notable guest to the celebratory session: Ibrahim Guliyev, the President of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan, Igor Kolodeznikov, the President of the Academy of Sciences from the Sakha/Yakutia Republic, Zurab Dzhotovitch Dzahupua, the President of the Academy of Sciences from Abkhazia, Al'rus Gaiazov, the President of the Academy of Sciences from the Republic of Bashkortostan/Bashkiria, and by other representatives of academies from the eastern part of Europe and from Central and Western Asia, with fruitful collaborations with the Academy from Tatarstan. Also invited to speak was Uli Schamiloglu, professor of Turkic and Central-Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin (USA), currently a visiting professor at the Nazarbayev University from Astana, Kazakhstan.

At the reception dinner that followed the celebratory meeting, the floor was also given to Professor Tasin Gemil, who delivered a speech in Tatar, mentioning, among others, his preoccupations that focus on the history and culture of the Turkish and Tatar community from Romania. His proposal on organising a large itinerant exhibition with items lent from several European and Asian countries was received with great interest. In point of fact, the activity of Professor Tasin Gemil – director of the Institute of Turkology and Central-Asian Studies from the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca – is held in high regard on the international level, relevant in this regard being the numerous scientific gatherings to which he is invited to lecture, as well as by his works published in prestigious journals from abroad.

With respect to the strictly official facet of my presence in Kazan, I was presented with the opportunity to visit several historical monuments and museums, and to establish contact with leading representatives of the local academia. The main museum complex of the city is the undoubtedly the Kazan Kremlin (Fig. 1, B), consisting of a fortified stone enclosure fitted with defensive towers lying in-between the two curtain walls, and a wall-walk of stone and wood on the inside. The fortress was erected shortly after the conquest of the city by the armies of Ivan the Terrible in 1552, a campaign that ended with the crushing of the Khanate of Kazan and its annexation to the Tsardom of Muscovy. Most likely the Russian fortress made use of previous fortification works made by the Khanate, since it has a dominant strategic location on the bank of the Kazanka River, at a short distance from its confluence with the Volga. Validating this opinion would require archaeological excavations of a methodical character.

Inside the Kremlin there is a church, a mosque, museums, seats of academic institutions, the seat of the President of the Republic, and other buildings. From among the edifices of the Kremlin, I only managed to visit the Museum of the History of the Nationality of Tatar People and the Republic of Tatarstan, entering on this occasion into the cathedral with the traditional onion domes, as well as into the majestic mosque with four slender minarets. The Orthodox church – the Cathedral of the Annunciation (Fig. 2, B) – was designed in 1556–1562 by masters Postnik Yakovlev and Ivan Shirlai, and underwent major reparations and additions in 1836–1841. Raised in 1996–2005 on the place of the former mosques and tombs of several khans, destroyed after the Russian conquest, the Kul-Sharif Mosque is a true architectural masterpiece (Fig. 2, A), which certain local officials try to impose as the city's emblem. Postnik Yakovlev was one of the architects of Saint Basil's Cathedral from the Red Square. According to tradition – which closely resembles the legend of Master Manole from Wallachia –, after the completion of the works, Ivan the Terrible ordered that Yakovlev be blinded, so that he could never design anything as beautiful as the cathedral from Moscow.

Another museum of interest for my own scientific preoccupations, where I had the chance to examine the artefacts exhibited, was the National Museum of the Republic of Tatarstan, located in a spacious building built in 1895 according to the plans of architect I. N. Kolmakov, for the use of the Kazan City Museum. Besides the rich collections of items dating from prehistory and the Scytho-Sarmatian period, the Museum holds artefacts relevant for the civilisation of the Volga Bulgars, of the Kipchak tribes, and of the Golden Horde.

After the collapse of Great Bulgaria, a state located to the north-east of the Black Sea, following the expansion of the Khazars in the seventh century, part of the Bulgar population moved to the Middle Volga, where it established a vigorous polity. Located along a very circulated trade route, the region prospered particularly when extensive urban centres appeared in the region, such as Bolgar and Biliar, which few cities in Western and Central Europe could have rivalled. In 922 Volga Bulgaria adopted Islam as the official religion. Its independent status ended in 1236, with the great Mongol invasion led by Batu Khan. The region continued its positive evolution, as it was found near the seats of the Golden Horde khans along the lower courses of the Volga. During the fourteenth century, the political-military elite Turkified and Islamised, and the ethno-cultural process of consolidating the Turkophone elements intensified, leading to the emergence of the Tatar people. The centrifugal trends within the Golden Horde led to the breakup of the state, so that in 1438 the Khanate of Kazan was established with the capital in Kazan. It remained independent for only slightly more than a century, after which it became part of the Tsardom of Muscovy, and transformed into the Gubernia/Governorate of Kazan by Peter the Great in 1708. The progresses in the economical-social sphere of the region had a lesser impact on the Tatar population, as the Tsarist authorities constantly limited its rights².

From among the greatest benefits of the visit in Kazan I would above all mention the meetings with several of the most prestigious historians from the “Sh. Marjani” Institute of History of the Tatarstan Academy of Sciences, namely with the director of the institution, academician Raphael Sibratovich Khakimov, an assiduous organiser, and with Ilnur Midkhatovich Mirgaleev, the director from the “M. A. Usmanov” Centre for Research of the Golden Horde and Tatar Khanates within the Institute of History. Even though he is still young, Ilnur M. Mirgaleev proved to possess vast professional expertise and outstanding spirit of initiative. Among others, he has initiated and coordinated the publications *Золотоордынская цивилизация / The Golden Horde Civilization* and *Нумизматика Золотой Орды / The Golden Horde Numismatic*, series for which he is the executive editor and R. S. Khakimov is the

² *Татарстан. Краткая иллюстрированная энциклопедия*, 2nd ed., editor-in-chief M. Kh. Salakhov, Kazan, 2015; *Республика Татарстан...*, 2015, p. 34–59

editor-in-chief. Since 2013, the “M. A. Usmanov” Centre for Research of the Golden Horde and Tatar Khanates has been publishing the journal *Золотоордынское обозрение / Golden Horde Review*, in which the editor-in-chief is the same tireless Ilnur M. Mirgaleev. One of the great merits of these publications is that the editors did not mean them only for issues of local history, but to an extensive range of topics. At the same time, the authors of the studies, as well as the members of the editorial council are recruited not only from medievalists from Kazan, but also from several other centres from Europe, Asia and America. Starting with the sixth issue of the series *Золотоордынская цивилизация / The Golden Horde Civilization*, corresponding to the year 2013, I was given the honour to be part of the editorial council alongside my colleague Tasin Gemil and others specialists from Russia, Kazakhstan, United States, Mongolia, Japan, etc.

Besides the abovementioned journals, during the last years numerous volumes concerning the Turkic and Mongol populations of the Middle Ages, of great scientific value, have been published under the aegis of the “M. A. Usmanov” Centre for Research of the Golden Horde and Tatar Khanates. Far from being an exaggeration, during the last half of decade the institution from Kazan emerged as the centre with the most important accomplishments in the field of investigating the Golden Horde and the Tatars from the entire world. A more dynamic and coherent distribution of the works published in the capital of the Tatarstan Republic would definitely lend more credibility to my claim.

The days spent in Kazan were also used for discussing various scientific themes and for testing possible opportunities for fruitful collaborations in the future with the colleagues met here: Ilnur M. Mirgaleev, Raphael Sibratovich Khakimov, Albert Burkhanov, Uli Schamiloglu, Zurab Dzhotovitch Dzhapua, Farit Sabitovich Manasyprov, Daniya Fatikhovna Zagidullina (Chief scientific secretary of Tatarstan Academy of Sciences), etc.

Translated by *Ştefan Caliniuc*



A

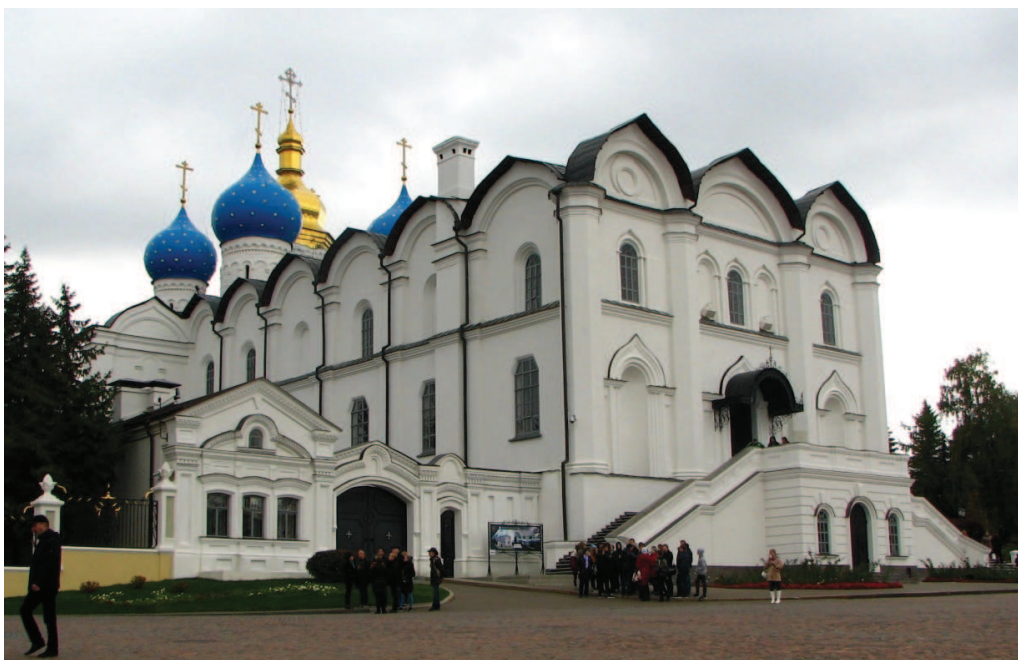


B

**Fig. 1. Kazan: A – The tower from the entrance into the Kremlin;
B – The main seat of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tatarstan**



A



B

**Fig. 2. Kazan – Kremlin. A – The Kul-Sharif Mosque;
B – The Cathedral of the Annunciation.**