

AHMAD ZAKI VALIDIY'S PERSONALITY

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Abstract: The birthplace of Zaki Validiy is the village of Kuzyanovo in Bashkortostan. The future founder of the Bashkir autonomy and great scholar's parents were fluent in Arabic, Persian, and Chagatay (Old Turkic) languages. At that time, educated families were not rare, and every Tatar and Bashkir village encountered such families.

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The scholar himself fondly recalls his childhood and youth and writes: "I loved my native villages Kuzyanovo, Aliakbar, Alanguyanbashi, and Akbeyek nomads very much. However, the backwardness of our daily life forced us to look at all this life as if from above. Only later did I understand why Russian writers Leo Tolstoy and Sergey Aksakov idealized the social life of the Bashkirs. The intellectuals of this community 'circle' introduced me to Turkic, Arabic, and Persian cultures, familiarized me with some of the great thinkers of the East and West, and provided me with moral ideals and political goals that later inspired me to develop and reform them."

Zaki Validi was not hindered by long distances and riding horses across vast territories to communicate with close and distant relatives. This was a tradition inherited from the recently nomadic Bashkirs. Every day, he would tirelessly observe the labor of Bashkir and Mishar peasants, who were able to provide for their lands. The scholar writes, "The simple life in the mountains and pastures, especially the vivid historical narratives cherished in the hearts of the people, deeply embedded in the child's consciousness and later inspired Zaki Validi to develop the most decisive plans during the national liberation struggle."

He places particular emphasis on studying Islamic theology, Arabistics, history, geography, and mathematics. When his father went on a pilgrimage, Zaki Validi, at the age of 16, replaced him and taught children in his father's madrasa from 1906 to 1908.

Starting in 1908, Zaki Validi studied at the "Qosimiya" madrasa in Kazan. He began independently preparing for the university entrance exams, studying a variety of works by prominent Tatar scholars and writers, as well as the literature of the Middle Ages of the East, and became familiar with the works of Russian orientalists.

In 1909, Zaki Validi began teaching the history of Turkic peoples and Arabic literature at the famous "Qosimiya" madrasa of his time. His first articles on the history of Turkic peoples were published in many Tatar newspapers and magazines. In early 1912, his first book, *History of Turks and Tatars*, was published. The work was positively received in Central Asia and Turkey. This book, written by the scholar at the age of twenty-one, still holds its scientific value today. It was republished in Kazan in 1992 (in Tatar), in Istanbul in 1993 (in Tatar with Cyrillic alphabet), and in Ufa in 1994 (in Bashkir).

Zaki Validi began his first independent historical-ethnographic research among the Bashkirs of the Buzyan (tribe) in 1913. A series of articles on the origins of Bashkir culture was published in issues 19-22 of the *Shuro* magazine, published in Orenburg.

A prominent role in shaping his career as a scholar was played by the famous Orientalist and professor of Kazan University, K.F. Katanov, who helped Zaki Validi enter the university and publish his first book. In 1913, N.F. Katanov suggested sending Zaki Validi to Fergana for historical-archaeological research and the collection of valuable books, documents, and manuscripts of interest to oriental studies. The expedition was successful and attracted the attention of St. Petersburg orientalists.

At the recommendation of academician V.V. Bartold, in 1914 the Russian Academy of Sciences sent Zaki Validi to Bukhara with a similar task. This expedition was even more fruitful. For example, he found and purchased a manuscript of a 10th-century Turkish translation of the Qur'an for the Academy of Sciences. This manuscript remains the oldest known Turkish translation of the Qur'an. The collection of manuscripts acquired and purchased by the young Bashkir scholar at that time is still known to orientalists.

Zaki Validi was not a "desk researcher." He was well-acquainted with the land, demographic, and social issues of every region within his research scope. By fate, he entered political activity. In late 1915, Ufa Muslims nominated him as a candidate for the Muslim faction in the State Duma. Zaki Validi went to Petrograd and became involved in political and social activities. Along with other members of the Muslim faction of the Duma and Turkic-speaking intellectuals in Petrograd, he began preparing for the Congress of Russian Muslims. The Congress of All-Russian Muslims was held in Moscow in May 1917. Zaki Validi participated as a delegate from Turkestan. After the revolution, the struggle over the formation of state structures for Turkic peoples in post-revolutionary Russia intensified.

In the summer of 1917, he participated in the first and second Bashkir congresses, prepared the main documents, and actively participated in major congresses and meetings of Muslim leaders in Petrograd, Moscow, Tashkent, and Ufa. Moreover, he visited Bashkir villages, met with intellectuals and youth, and laid the groundwork for the development of a movement to establish Bashkortostan's national statehood. The decree, written by Zaki Validi, played an important role in this process. It emphasized that the "Bolshevik policies" leading to civil war and their land policies were unacceptable, as they would deprive Bashkir peasants of their ancestral land rights. On November 16, 1917, the Bashkir Regional Soviet declared Bashkortostan an Autonomous Democratic Republic within the Russian Federation.

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