

TATARS IN FINLAND IN THE TRANSNATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION



Seminar supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation
Wednesday 17 October 2018 at 10:00-17:00
Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, Unioninkatu 33
Moderator: Sabira Ståhlberg



10:00 Registration and coffee

10:15 Welcome

Kaarina Aitamurto, Aleksanteri Institute

Introduction to the seminar topic

Sabira Ståhlberg, independent researcher

10:30 Cultural encounter in mobile trade

Tatar pedlars in the Grand Duchy of Finland, 1870-1920

Johanna Wassholm, Åbo Akademi

Tatar pedlars began to engage in mobile trade in the Grand Duchy of Finland from the 1870s. New research shows how Finnish newspapers constructed notions of the encounter between these “newcomers” in the trading landscape and the local society in Finland. Themes include accounts of ethnified trading practices and debates about illicit trade and transnational mobility.

**11:00 Language as a fundamental component of identity
within the Tatar community in Finland**

Orsolya Kiss, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

What is the role of Tatar language for the Tatar community in Finland? Is it a fundamental part of Tatar identity or does it contain other aspects as well?

Preliminary research results show that Finnish plays a dominant role in everyday communication, and Tatar language functions as the basis for family and community interaction. How is the language used today among the Tatars in Finland and how could such a small minority preserve its own language for more than a century?

11:30 The “Tatar way” of understanding and practising Islam in Estonia

Ege Lepa, Tartu Ülikool

Tatars have played an important role in the Estonian Islamic community, but today the long domination of the Tatar way of “moderate”, secular type of practice is challenged by newcomers mainly from North Africa and South Asia. The presentation focuses on the historical background and how the changing community deals with the new challenges. What happens to the cultural and religious identity of the Tatars in this situation? On a personal level unique relationships are formed, but on the national level differences appear to exist about what Islam is and how it should be practised.

12:00 Lunch

13:30 Connections between the Muslim community in Petrograd-Leningrad and Tatars in Finland during the 1920s

Renat Bekkin, Södertörn University

St. Petersburg historically served as a transit point for Tatars moving to the Grand Duchy of Finland, where by the 20th century a small community had formed. It maintained contacts after 1917 with relatives and fellow countrymen - Mishar Tatars from the Sergach district in Nizhny Novgorod Province, St. Petersburg etc.

Tatars in Petrograd-Leningrad often illegally crossed the border to Finland in the 1920s, fleeing from Soviet Russia or helping relatives and friends. Tatars in independent Finland also actively used this “corridor”, sending couriers with considerable financial aid to the Leningrad Muslims, mostly Tatars. The connections are illustrated by two criminal cases, instituted by OGPU (Soviet political police agency) against representatives of the Leningrad community in 1931 and 1932.

14:00 Sources to the early Tatar community in Sweden

Simon Sorgenfrei, Södertörn University

The presentation focuses on the existing sources for research on the early Tatar community in Sweden, discussing archives containing information on the group, what kinds of materials are available and also what sort of material is lacking.

14:30 Religion, ethnicity and language in the Finnish Tatar community

Andreas Ali Jonasson, Södertörn University

The correlation between religion, identity, ethnicity and language among the Finnish Tatars is a complex and specific research topic. Are the broad variations of possible identities created by the Finnish Tatars (such as Russians, Tatars, Finns, Muslims, Turk) a product of geopolitical processes and if yes, to what degree? What elements contribute to the different self-definitions, and to the identity Tatars prefer to present to the world outside the community?

15:00 Coffee break

15:30 “Our Secret Weapon” - Majority Prejudices and Minority Strategies of the Finnish Tatars 1880-1945

Ainur Elmgren, Helsinki University

In the late 19th and the early 20th century, Volga Tatars settling in Finland were targets of prejudices and suspicions, even political conspiracy theories. This paper explores how Tatars responded to such accusations and how they attempted to defend their rights through the majority's channels, such as newspapers and courts.

16:00 Discussion: Future research perspectives

17:00 Conclusion