



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Channels and Methods of Constructing Social Memory in a Multiethnic Society (Based on the Material of The Republic of Tatarstan, Russia)

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Oct 18, 2024 Accepted: Dec 11, 2024	The authors studied the channels and methods of constructing and transmitting communicative and cultural memory among residents of the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia). The results of a mass survey of residents of the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia) on the topic of social memory (n=2510) are presented. Social memory is the memory of a social group in which a narrative of the past is constructed for the purpose of self-identification and self-representation of the group. The authors of the study use the concepts of communicative and cultural memory. Communicative memory is the transfer of information about past events directly from witnesses or participants in these events. Cultural memory is an image-interpretation of the past transmitted through social institutions. Through cultural memory, social groups build identity, unity, and community. Reconstructed cultural memory allows a group to manifest itself, outlining the boundaries of self-identification. The main focus of the study is on determining the social portrait of the agent of social memory in the Republic of Tatarstan. As a result of the study, the authors come to the conclusion that agents of social memory in the Republic of Tatarstan construct a historical narrative in the form of communicative memory, referring to direct evidence or historical documents of their immediate environment.
Keywords Social memory Cultural memory Sociology of memory Politics of memory Historical memory History of tatarstan	
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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most important aspects of the consolidation of society, harmony in it and mutual respect of its members for each other is interest in one's past. The way people relate to and understand their past, the history of their homeland, their people, their family largely determines the values of various groups, the conditions for the interaction of these groups, as well as the national and religious flavor in the region. The attitude towards the history of the region in which a person lives forms social memory, which is constructed through various channels, from institutional to individual (history lessons at school or stories in the family).

Social memory is a form of representation of ideas about the past of a social group, as well as methods and mechanisms for constructing a narrative about the past in order to legitimize certain social practices by the self-identification group. Social memory, following Toffler's classification (Toffler, 1980), should be distinguished from individual memory. If individual memory represents memories of facts and events related to the direct experience of the individual, the facts of his personal biography, then social memory is an idea of the experience of a social group. Moreover, social memory can obviously also be represented in the individual experience of an individual member of a social group. Therefore, we proceed from the distinction between communicative and cultural memory, widely accepted in the sociology of memory (Assmann, 2011; László, 2003; Páez, Liu, 2010). Communicative memory is the transfer of information about past events directly from witnesses or participants in these events. Cultural memory is an image-interpretation of the past transmitted

through social institutions. Through cultural memory, social groups build identity, unity, and community. Reconstructed cultural memory allows a group to manifest itself, outlining the boundaries of self-identification.

Turning to the past for the purpose of ethnic, national, regional and other identification has a very diverse context, which is primarily determined by the interests of a particular social group (Jedlowski, 2001). The desire of a social group to satisfy existing needs largely influences the way a historical narrative is constructed. At the same time, within the social group itself, interest in its own historical past is not always homogeneous. Within a social group, we can identify the most passionate part, which is the main agent in constructing a self-identifying historical narrative. An agent can be the most active part of a social group, which has a strong interest in its own history. At the same time, the agent not only discovers his own cultural heritage, but actively forms it in the form of manifesting self-identification both for himself (self-awareness) and for others. Agents broadcast a constructed historical narrative through various social channels. For example, the infrastructure of historical monuments can serve as an effective channel for historical manifestation (Eflova et al., 2024). At the same time, one of the most significant factors determining social memory is the portrait of the agent. Therefore, the main goal of the study is to determine the social portrait of an agent of cultural memory in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia).

The Republic of Tatarstan is one of the most unique regions of the Russian Federation, in which, according to the 2020 All-Russian Population Census (Federal State Statistics Service, 2023), two numerous nations live - Tatars 2,091,175 people (52.2%) and Russians 1,574,804 people (39.3%) and which for many decades has maintained a high level of tolerant attitude of representatives of these nationalities towards each other (Gordeeva, 2024).

Social memory is an important factor in regional integration. Depending on how a social group reconstructs historical events in collective memory, the degree of integration with other social groups into more global communities may change. Cultural memory is of particular importance for the integration of various national and ethnic social groups. Cultural memory can either promote integration with other social groups or hinder them, for example, if history permanently reconstructs an unresolved conflict (Pletnia, 2014) or supports colonial policies in the region (Rothberg, 2013). Therefore, the problem of cultural memory is of particular importance for multicultural spaces of many subject states, such as, for example, Russia.

1 METHODS

The article uses materials from the analysis of empirical data collected as part of research on the historical heritage of the Republic of Tatarstan. The analysis was based on data from a mass survey of the population of the Republic of Tatarstan (n=2510 people) based on a representative sample (multi-stage selection, with quotas by region of residence, gender, age, ethnic and religious self-identification). The survey was conducted using a formalized questionnaire, with preliminary testing on a pilot group of respondents.

Methods of processing survey data - coding and creation of a single array of survey data, statistical analysis using a specialized data processing software package - SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The combination of various methods of data collection and analysis made it possible to verify the results obtained during the study.

2 RESULTS

The most popular sources of knowledge about the history of Tatarstan for respondents are stories from relatives, friends, acquaintances, family archives (diaries, photo albums) (42%), trips to historical places, excursions, visits to museums (36.3%), textbooks, history courses in school, other educational institutions (33.5%), documentaries, popular science films; television, radio programs (27.3%), less popular are Internet sites and forums, groups and pages on social networks (24.3%), Fiction, feature films and films (22.4%), Sites and channels of government and public organizations

(archives, museums, Books of Memory, Veterans Union, etc.) on social networks and messengers (21.4%), Lectures by scientists, local historians, their channels on social networks and messengers (21%), Websites and channels scientific organizations, groups of scientific communities in social networks and instant messengers (20.6%), Folklore (folk tales, songs, legends, baits, ditties, anecdotes) (17.3%), Articles in popular magazines and newspapers (15.3 %), Scientific, documentary, popular science historical literature, magazines (12.6%), Stories of clergy during sermons and religious meetings (5.7%). From this we can conclude that among agents of social memory in Tatarstan, the most common communication channels for constructing historical memory are in comparison with cultural channels.

At the same time, no significant differences by gender in the sources of knowledge about history were recorded. However, depending on the nationality of the respondents, the popularity of one or another source of information about the history of Tatarstan differed. Thus, travel to historical places, excursions, and visits to museums turned out to be the most popular source of information for Mordovians (45%), Tatars (37%), Russians (36.5%), Bashkirs (30.8%), and to a lesser extent for the Chuvash (29.4%), Mari (26.3%) and Udmurts (10%). Such a source of information about the history of Tatarstan as folklore (folk tales, songs, legends, tales, ditties, anecdotes) was more often noted by the Tatars (20.7%), other nationalities chose this answer somewhat less frequently - Bashkirs (15.4%), Udmurts (15%), Chuvash (14.7%), Russians (13.8%), Mari (10.5%), Mordovians (10%). Also, the stories of clergy during sermons and religious meetings are a source of information about the history of Tatarstan for 15%, which is 3 times higher than the figure among representatives of other nationalities. Thus, Tatars and Russians equally use channels for the formation of cultural memory.

The size of the settlement in which respondents live does not significantly influence the choice of one or another source of information about the history of Tatarstan, with the exception of folklore. Thus, for 27.5% of residents of urban settlements and 22.6% of residents of villages, folklore (folk tales, songs, legends, tales, ditties, anecdotes) is on average 10% more likely to be a source of information about the history of Tatarstan than for other nationalities.

Answering the question "Is the history of Tatarstan interesting to you?" - 77.1% of respondents answered that it was interesting ("definitely yes" (36.5%) and "rather yes" (40.6%)), 13.3% answered "probably no", 6.7% found it difficult to answer, 2.8% said "definitely not." There are no differences in the choice of answers by gender and size of settlement. Differences by age were noted when selecting the answer "definitely yes." Thus, respondents in the age group 56 years and older slightly more often than other age groups chose the answer "definitely yes" (46.3%), among 46-55 year olds - 40.3%, 36-45 year olds 37%, 26-35 year olds 30, 9% and 18-25 year olds 33.1%.

Religious affiliation has the following influence on interest in the history of Tatarstan. Among representatives of Islam, 87% are interested in the history of Tatarstan, 9.5% are not interested, among Orthodox Christians 81.4% are interested, 12.6% are not interested, among representatives of other Christian denominations 61.5% are interested, 30.7% are not interested, among representatives of other religions 50%, 41.7% are not interested, among those who do not identify themselves with any religion, 62.8% are interested, 32.6% are not interested. More detailed data is given in the table below.

Table 1. Correlation of religious affiliation and interest in the history of Tatarstan

Is the history of Tatarstan interesting to you?	What religion do you consider yourself to be?					
	Islam	Orthodoxy	Other Christian denominations	Other religions	I find it difficult to answer	Not to any
Definitely yes	46,8%	32,3%	26,9%	16,7%	42,7%	23,3%

rather yes than no	40,2%	49,1%	34,6%	33,3%	43,7%	39,5%
More likely no than yes	8,1%	10,3%	19,2%	25,0%	10,7%	25,6%
Definitely not	1,4%	2,3%	11,5%	16,7%	0,0%	7,0%
I find it difficult to answer	3,4%	6,0%	7,7%	8,3%	2,9%	4,7%

Among those respondents who are not interested in the history of Tatarstan, the following reasons for the lack of interest were given: “this information is not important for me” (24.2%), “I don’t have time for this” (23.2%), “for me this is a boring, uninteresting topic” (18.9%), “at school and university this topic was taught in an uninteresting way” (15%), “I don’t feel part of the republic, so I don’t want to know about its history” (9.8%), “this is not such an important part of history, I am more interested in the history of Russia and the world” (7.7%). There are no differences by gender. The size of the settlement in which respondents live and age also do not make significant differences when choosing the reasons that formed the lack of interest in the history of Tatarstan among respondents - the most popular answers are the same as for the general sample.

It is important to note that the national component manifests itself paradoxically when answering this question. Thus, Tatars were somewhat more likely than Russians to choose the answer options “this is not important information for me” (38.1% of Tatars and 33.8% of Russians), “I don’t have time for this” (38.1% of Tatars and 31.1% of Russians), “for me this is a boring, uninteresting topic” (31.3% of Tatars and 27.4% of Russians). The same trend is observed when analyzing the religious affiliation of respondents and the lack of interest in the history of Tatarstan. The most popular answers remain the same, distributed as follows: “this is not important information for me” (38.3% of Muslims and 31% of Orthodox Christians), “I don’t have time for this” (34% of Muslims and 29.9% of Orthodox Christians).

Respondents interested in the history of Tatarstan more often chose the following three factors influencing their interest - 29% want to know the history of Tatarstan because it is their homeland, 23.6% believe that it is important to understand themselves, their identity and their roots, 20.7% note the importance for understanding both Tatar and Russian culture in the region. There are no differences by gender or size of settlement. Respondents aged 56 years and older were slightly more likely than other age groups to choose the opportunity to understand themselves, their identity and their roots as one of the significant factors in studying the history of Tatarstan (50.6%). Ethnicity and religious affiliation have a similar influence on the reasons for interest in the history of Tatarstan as in the general sample. Among Tatars, 54.1% (Muslims 54.3%) believe that knowing the history of Tatarstan is important in order to understand oneself, one’s identity and one’s roots; among Russians this figure is 33.5% (Orthodox 32.5%). 64.2% of Tatars (64% Muslims) and 44.7% of Russians (47% of Orthodox Christians) want to know the history of Tatarstan because it is their homeland. But 45.5% of Russians (47.8% Orthodox) and 33.2% of Tatars (32.6%) Muslims believe that it is important to be interested in the history of Tatarstan in order to understand both Tatar and Russian culture. In our opinion, it is important to note here the category of respondents who do not identify themselves with any religion. Among them, 61.5% are interested in the history of Tatarstan, because it is their homeland, 57.7% - to understand themselves and their identity, and 46.2% - to understand not only Tatar, but also Russian culture. Thus, we can say that, regardless of religious affiliation, respondents note the importance of studying the history of Tatarstan to form an idea of the place in which they live, to form their own self, from the point of view of individuality within or outside the religious and national context.

Thus, it can be noted that interest in studying the history of Tatarstan has both ethnic-religious roots and cultural-cognitive ones. There is a tendency towards the formation of a tolerant and tolerant

environment towards Russians and Tatars, Muslims and Orthodox Christians through interest in the history of their republic.

Respondents named the following areas from the history of Tatarstan that are most interesting to them: culture and art (24.7%), architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures (20.6%), religion (14.2%), social and political life (11.8%), sports (9.2%), science (8.9%), industry (7.2%), none (2.9%). As in the general sample, both men and women are primarily interested in culture and art (49.9% men and 68.5% women) and architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures (44.5% men and 54.5% women). 5% women), but the third most popular answer for men is socio-political life (31.2%), for women - religion (37.7%).

Table 2. Relationships between gender and the most interesting areas from the history of Tatarstan

What areas of the history of Tatarstan are most interesting to you?	Gender	
	MALE	FEMALE
Culture and art	49,9%	68,5%
Architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures	44,5%	54,5%
Social and political life	31,2%	26,1%
Religion	30,4%	37,7%
Sport	27,1%	17,4%
Science	24,0%	19,2%
Industry	20,6%	14,4%
None	8,5%	5,8%
Other	0,7%	0,8%

The national aspect also influences the frequency of choosing certain answers. Thus, for Russians, the most interesting are culture and art (57.6%) and architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures; the remaining areas account for an average of 20 - 25% of responses. Among the Tatars, the most popular are culture and art (62.8%), architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures (52.4%), religion (45.4%), social and political life (30.6%), sports, science and industry were chosen by an average of 20% of respondents. The size of the locality does not influence the choice of answers. Age also does not have an effect, with the exception of the group of 56 years and older; for them, religion and the socio-political life of the Republic of Tatarstan are somewhat more important than other age groups. For respondents with incomplete higher education, architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures (28.3%), socio-political life (17%), and science (9.4%) are much less interesting. So, for the remaining categories of respondents, architecture is important on average at 45%, socio-political life at 30%, and science at 20%.

Table 3. Correlation between the level of education and the most interesting areas in the history of Tatarstan

What areas of the history of Tatarstan are most interesting to you?	Education					
	Lower secondary	Complete secondary	Specialized secondary	Unfinished higher education	Higher education	I have an academic degree
Culture and art	50,9%	56,3%	61,3%	56,0%	61,4%	51,9%
architecture and material	28,3%	44,7%	49,7%	49,0%	52,1%	44,4%

monuments of ancient cultures						
Religion	39,6%	31,6%	36,5%	28,8%	35,5%	29,6%
Social and political life	17,0%	27,4%	26,9%	27,6%	30,4%	31,5%
Sport	30,2%	23,7%	19,7%	24,3%	21,8%	24,1%
Science	9,4%	18,9%	17,8%	24,0%	23,2%	27,8%
Industry	9,4%	13,7%	17,5%	18,9%	17,5%	24,1%
None	9,4%	7,9%	7,8%	7,4%	5,9%	16,7%
Other	0,0%	1,6%	0,3%	0,7%	0,9%	0,0%

We also asked which eras in the history of Tatarstan were most interesting to our respondents. The following answers were received - the most popular were three eras that were directly related to the heyday of Islamic and Tatar culture - the Kazan Khanate (11.6%), the Golden Horde (11.1%), Volga Bulgaria (10%). Then the following periods were named: modern (8.8%), the reign of Ivan the Terrible (7.7), the history of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (7.5%), the Ancient Turkic states of Eurasia (the state of the Xiongnu, the Turkic Khaganate) (7%), the Great Patriotic won 1941-1945 (6.7%), history of post-Soviet Tatarstan (90s of the twentieth century) (6.1%), the era of Peter I (5.5%), the reign of Catherine II (5.3%), history of the Kazan province in 19 century (4.7%), the Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War in Russia 1918-1922 (4.2), 2% of respondents each chose the options "difficult to answer" and "neither era is interesting." There are no differences by gender or size of settlement. Among the age groups 26-35 years old, 36-45 years old, 46-55 years old, the most popular eras are the Volga Bulgaria, Golden Horde, Kazan Khanate, but respondents from the youngest age group chose the modern period third most often (the period of the Golden Horde (37.4%) and the Kazan Khanate (35.3) in first and second place, respectively). Also, respondents from the oldest age group of 56 years and older chose the period of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (31.7%) as the second most frequently answered (the period of the Kazan Khanate (33.7%) was the first in popularity, and the Volga Bulgaria (30.5%) was third). Such differences in the choice of the most interesting periods, in our opinion, are explained by the individual interest of "life" in it. So for the youngest it is interesting to know the period in which they now live - modern, since they have not seen other eras personally, and for the oldest age group it is interesting to study precisely the period in which the time of their youth and their formation occurred. as individuals, the period of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, despite the fact that it is already more than 100 years old. For both Russians and Tatars, the most popular are the same 3 periods as for the general sample, and if there are no significant differences in answers regarding the period of the Golden Horde and Volga Bulgaria, then the period of the Kazan Khanate is 11.8% more interesting for the Tatars (42,8% Tatars, 31% Russians). It is also interesting to note that the history of the Tatar ASSR is interesting to 28.2% of Tatars and 19.2% of Russians, but the era of Peter I is interesting to 21.3% of Russians and 13.5% of Tatars.

Obviously, if we compare these answers with the fact that the most common form of social memory is communicative, then interest in the eras of the Kazan Khanate (XV - XVI centuries) and Volga Bulgaria (X - XI centuries) can be ignored, because these periods cannot be represented in the immediate memories of witnesses. Therefore, the most popular topic of historical narrative should be the history of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1920 - 1992).

We also asked our respondents from what moment, in their opinion, the history of Tatarstan begins. The following answers were received - from the moment of the emergence of the Volga Bulgaria (16.6%), found it difficult to answer (15.3%), the creation of the Kazan Khanate (13.9%), the creation of the Turkic Khaganate (11.9%), the adoption of Islam in 922 year, the emergence of the Golden Horde (9.5%), the creation of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (6.5%), the creation of the Bulgarian Khanate by Kubrat in the Black Sea region (5.5%), the annexation of the Kazan Khanate to the Moscow State under Ivan the Terrible (5.2%), proclamation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Tatarstan in August 1990 (4.4%) Differences in age and size of the locality. Regardless of the level

of education, respondents most often chose two periods from which, in their opinion, the history of Tatarstan begins - the emergence of the Volga Bulgaria and the creation of the Kazan Khanate. At the same time, respondents with incomplete higher education somewhat more often than others chose the option of accepting Islam in 922 (17%) as the beginning of the history of Tatarstan, as well as the period of the creation of the Turkic Kaganate (24.5%). Those who have an academic degree most often called the beginning of the history of Tatarstan the period of the emergence of the Golden Horde (16.7%), as well as the period of the creation of the Kazan Khanate (13%) and the Turkic Khaganate (13%). Orthodox Christians more often chose the following three periods of the beginning of the history of Tatarstan - the emergence of the Volga Bulgaria (18%), the creation of the Kazan Khanate (15%), the emergence of the Golden Horde (11.6%), for Muslims these periods are different - the emergence of the Volga Bulgaria (18.9%), Adoption of Islam in 922 (15.5%), Creation of the Turkic Khaganate (14.7%). Analysis of the respondents' ethnicity shows a similar choice of eras in the pair Orthodox – Russian, Muslim – Tatar. This distribution of answers shows how ethnic and religious identity correlates with the perception of the history of the native land.

As a result of the survey, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) The most popular sources of knowledge about the history of Tatarstan for respondents are stories of relatives, friends, acquaintances, family archives (diaries, photo albums) (42%) Consequently, among agents of social memory in Tatarstan the most common communication channels for constructing historical memory in comparison with cultural channels .
- 2) the most numerous national groups in the region, Tatars (52.2%) and Russians (39.3%), equally use channels for the formation of cultural memory. Thus, if there is a difference in the cultural memory of Tatars and Russians in the region, it is due to communicative memory.
- 3) the size of the settlement in which respondents live does not significantly influence the choice of one or another source of information about the history of Tatarstan, with the exception of folklore
- 4) Most of the population is interested in the history of the region (77.1%). People over 56 years of age show the greatest interest (46.3% of respondents in this age group)
- 5) Religious affiliation has the following influence on interest in the history of Tatarstan. Among representatives of Islam, 87% are interested in the history of Tatarstan; among Orthodox Christians, 81.4% are interested.
- 6) Respondents interested in the history of Tatarstan more often chose the following three factors influencing their interest - 29% want to know the history of Tatarstan because it is their homeland, 23.6% believe that it is important to understand oneself, one's identity and their roots, 20.7% note the importance for understanding both Tatar and Russian culture in the region. There are no differences by gender or size of settlement.
- 7) Respondents named the following areas from the history of Tatarstan that are most interesting to them - culture and art (24.7%), architecture and material monuments of ancient cultures (20.6%), religion (14.2%), socio-political life (11.8%).
- 8) Social and political life is more interesting for representatives of Tatar nationality (30.6%) compared to representatives of Russian nationality in the region (20%).
- 9) For the age group 56 years and older, religion and the socio-political life of the Republic of Tatarstan are more important than other age groups.

3 CONCLUSION

The agent for constructing social memory is an older person (over 56 years old) with religious beliefs. At the same time, gender, national and educational markers are not relevant for the portrait of a social memory agent. As a result of the study, we determined that the agent of social memory in the Republic of Tatarstan (Russia) tends to construct a historical narrative in the form of communicative memory, referring to direct evidence or historical documents of his immediate environment. Therefore, for agents of the youngest age group it is interesting to know the period in which they now live - modern, since they did not personally experience other eras, and for the oldest age group it is interesting to study precisely the period in which they were young and their formation as individuals, the period of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, despite the fact that it is already more than 100 years old. Consequently, the most common subject of historical narrative is the period of the relatively recent past (the period since the beginning of the 20th century). However, it is precisely this period that is less represented by the channels for constructing cultural memory.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The study was carried out at the expense of a grant from the Russian Science Foundation and Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan No. 23-28-10214, <https://rscf.ru/en/project/23-28-10214/>.

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