

The Role of Sadri Maksudi Arsal in the Education and Work of the Turkish Historical Congress

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At the beginning of the 20th century Turkish society was going through a complicated process of modernization. The ideological principle was laid by Atatürk, whose reforms turned the entire Turkish society. Immediately after the formation of the Turkish Republic from 1923 cardinal social, political, economic, legal and cultural changes took place in Turkey, including changes in the field of education. The ideology of “Turkism” took place the ideology of “Ottomanism”. During the Ottoman Empire period, the Ottoman ideology was dominant, based on the idea of uniting all subjects residing on the territory of the empire, while the first president of the new state Atatürk advanced the notion of “Turkism”, i.e. the purpose of this idea was to unite the state and increase the national self-consciousness of the Turks. That is why historical studies devoted to the study of the history of the Turkic peoples acquired the importance of an extremely necessary and important task for the awakening of national self-consciousness of the people, for the spread of a single national idea. The work on the study of the history of the Turkic peoples begins with the initiative of Atatürk¹. At the same time, Mustafa Kemal invests in the development of historical, archaeological and anthropological sciences, which were tasked with tracing the ancient roots of the “Turkish nation”, its unique contribution to the development of world civilization². A whole group of scientists is working on this matter, and the Tatar emigrant S. Maksudi becomes one of the authoritative scientists in this field.

In the first half of the XX century there is a special interest in the ethnic term “Turk”. Outstanding orientalists and linguists tried to find a solution to the issue of the genesis of the people and the etymology of the term.

In the Middle Ages, the history of Turkic tribes and states was reflected in the writings of Arab and Persian authors: al-Jahiz (775-868), Abu-l-Qasim ibn

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1 A. G. Karimullin, *Our brotherhood: articles*, Kazan, 2005, p. 10.

2 V. S. Malakhov, *Nationalism as A Political Ideology*, Moscow, 2005, p. 293.

Khordadbeh (c.820-c. 912/913), Al-Masudi 896-956), Al-Mukaddasi (946-end of the 10th century), Al-Biruni (973-1048), Mahmud Kashgari (1029-1101), Ibn al-Asira (1160-1233/1234), Ibn Battuta 1304-1377), Rashid ad-Din (1247-1318), Ibn Fadlan (the first half of the 10th century), etc. In the works and materials of the above-mentioned scientists there are references to the Turkic nomads. Later these works become the main sources in the study of the history and culture of the peoples of Eurasia.

European historical science was also interested in the ancient Turks, whose history of civilization is closely connected with the events of the ancient history of China. The French missionaries who preached in China in the 18th century compiled astronomical tables and built observatories, studied Chinese and its writing, collected and translated chronicles, and it was they who had many discoveries in the history of the Turkic tribes. In particular, L. Kaen concluded that the Hun tribes were *prototurks*, which is confirmed by modern historical science.

In Russia, interest in the history of the Turks intensified at the end of the 19th century, thanks to the discovery of the Orkhon-Yenisei inscriptions by the Danish linguist V. Thomsen (1842-1927). Among Russian scientists and natives of Russia, who contributed to the study of the history of ancient Turkic tribes, it is necessary to name such figures as V. V. Radlov (1837-1918), V. V. Barthold (1869-1930), K. A. Foregners (1876-1941), S. E. Malov (1880-1957), A. N. Bernshtam (1910-1956), L. N. Gumilev (1912-1992) and others.

The beginning of the development of Turkology, as part of the historical science, among the Turkic-speaking peoples falls on the second half of the 20th century. Among the most famous Tatar scholars dealing with the problems of the ethnic formations of Eurasia, it is necessary to name S. Mardzhani (1818-1889), K.G. Nasyry (1825-1902), R. F. Fakhretdin (1859-1936), H. G. Gabashi (1863-1936), A. M. Atlasi (1876-1938), G. S. Gubaidullina (1887-1937), A. Z. Validi Togana (1890-1970), etc. And among these scientists, who made a significant contribution to the study of Turkic history, S. Maksudi takes a definite place. Being in emigration in Europe, he is engaged in the processing of sources, studies etymology, ethnogeny of the Huns.

Interest in the Turkic subject arises in S. Maksudi in his student years at the Sorbonne, where he attended courses of professors on the history of the Turks. After 1924 S. Maksudi created a series of historical essays dedicated to individual Central Asian peoples. Later, he undertook a scientifically grounded attempt to

achieve a higher stage of generalization-the consideration of the history of the Turkic-speaking peoples as a complex process in which the peoples related by language, but often different in their economic life, for centuries pass the path of independent social, political and cultural development, a path that in many cases led to the creation of stable national and state entities in different parts of the Asian continent.

In early 1924, while in France, S. Maksudi learned about the first congress of the society “Türk Ocağı” (Turkic Hearth), held in April in Ankara. “Turkic Hearth” is a well-known Turkish society in the Turkish world, which is engaged in reviewing everything that is happening in the political and cultural life of the Turks. In 1924, at the invitation of the society, Sorbonne University professor S. Maksudi arrives in the Republic of Turkey, where in honor of his arrival, Y. Akchura organizes a reception. On November 18 in Ankara, the professor gives the first lecture on “Turkic Unity”, November 21 – on the topic “The people, heroes and dynasties in Turkic history”. In Istanbul the professor speaks with lectures on December 15, they are called “General View of Turkism”, “Turkic Unity”, “The Role of Academies in the Development and Improvement of Languages”³. The texts of all these lectures were published in the journal “Türk Yurdu”⁴.

During his academic career at the Sorbonne in 1924, S. Maksudi made reports about his discoveries on history in Asian society. His report is published in the journal “Journal Asiatique” in French, and in 1925 in the April issue of the Turkish magazine “Türk Yurdu”⁵. The article is called “The Chinese and the Mongols considered the Uighurs (Hovei-Hu—the Chinese name of the Uighurs) and the Oguzes recorded in the Orkhon inscriptions by the same people” (Çinliler ve Moğolların, Hovei-Hu Uygurlarıyla Orhun Türk Kitabelerindeki Oğuzların Ayniyeti). The main idea of the article is that the Uighurs and Oguzes were one and the same people. In the proof the author gives numerous examples, arguments based on ancient sources and works of prominent Orientalists. He believes that the most reliable sources are Chinese sources⁶.

3 A. Ayda, *Sadri Maksudi Arsal*, Moscow 1996, p. 151-152.

4 H. Tuncer, *Türk Yurdu bibliyografyası (1911–2001)*, Ankara, 2002, p. 195.

5 S. Maksudi, “Les Houei-hu et des Mongols et les ogouz des inscriptions turques de l'Orkhon”, *Journal Asiatique*, 1924, № 4, p. 141–148.

6 S. Maksudi, “Çinliler ve Moğolların Hovei-Hu Uygurlarıyla Orhun Türk Kitabelerindeki Oğuzların Ayniyeti”, *Türk Yurdu*, 1925. Sayı: 7. s. 28.

Since ancient times, the Chinese understood that knowing the distant past is necessary in order to better understand what is happening in the present. Old Chinese historical sources are numerous, very diverse and, as a rule, quite well dated. They valued history as the preceptor of life. This explains their deep interest in collecting evidence of the past: various chronicles, documents, legends, songs, objects of material culture. Along with the fixation of events from its own history, Chinese sources already from ancient times mention different peoples living north of the “Celestial Empire”, i.e. in Central Asia—on the territory of present-day geographical Mongolia and adjacent lands⁷.

Well-known turkologist V. V. Barthold believes that the history of the Turks, who lived in East Asia, especially in Mongolia, where they were forced out, probably in the 10th century AD is known exclusively by Chinese sources; about the Turks who migrated to the western part of Central Asia and submitted to the influence of Muslim culture, we receive information from Arab and Persian sources⁸. S. Maksudi studied the history of ancient Turks, beginning with the first mention of them in the sources. The scientist’s task was to show the antiquity of their existence, to prove that the civilization of the ancient Turks possessed a developed culture and legal system. Maksudi was fluent in French, Arabic and Persian, which allowed the scientist to work with primary sources written in these languages. A brief summary of the main ideas of the scientist in the article “The Chinese and the Mongols considered the Uighurs (Hovei-Hu—the Chinese name of the Uighurs) and the Oguzes recorded in the Orkhon inscriptions by the same people”.

One of the main fields of activity of the Tatar scientist in his new homeland is active participation in the formation of historical sciences. Having finally settled in the Turkish Republic, S. Maksudi supported the idea of his associates about the need to open the Academy of Turkish History and the Turkic peoples. The desire of S. Maksudi to take an active part in this work stimulated a great interest and attention to the national history and national cultural traditions that awoke in Turkey during the period of reforms and changes. It became obvious that studying the history of Central Asian peoples, mainly Turkic-speaking people, and getting answers to the main questions concerning their past, are a necessary part of cultural and national construction.

7 K. G. Akhsanov, *Essays on the history of Turkic peoples. Antiquity and the Middle Ages (III century BCE – XII century CE)*, Kazan 2003, p. 4.

8 V. V. Barthold, *Works on the History and Philology of the Turkic and Mongolian Peoples*, Moscow 2002, p. 19.

At the VI Congress “Türk Ocakları” Reshit Galip makes a speech about the need to create a special organization that would study the history of the Turks and the Turkish people. A. Inan begins her speech with thankful words addressed to S. Maksudi, she lists the main theses, which talk about the need to study history, to release new educational books: “... It is necessary to work in order to explain the origin of the Turks, to illuminate this goal it is important to show, to present the history of the origin of the majestic culture ...”⁹. S. Maksudi in his speech dwells on the rich history of the Turks: “The oldest civilization was in Mesopotamia – it’s Sumerian civilization. Who is the founder of the Latin alphabet? These are the Etruscans who brought the alphabet to Italy. Who in ancient Anatolia for several thousand years represented the highest culture? These are the Hittites. Among European scholars, it is believed that these peoples were Turks”¹⁰. S. Maksudi notes that wherever Turks lived, independent states were always formed there. For example, the eastern Huns, Hephthalites, Tuk’yu (Tukyu), who lived in Asia. The Turks ruled in eastern Rome, in Egypt. The rulers of Egypt were the Iranians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Turks. All these peoples in history had the highest culture. The Turkic race in the history of mankind left a deep mark as a civilization with the highest culture¹¹. R. Galip believes that the deepening into the spheres of such bright and important aspects of Turkic history can only be compared with the painstaking work of archaeologists¹².

After this congress, the Committee for the Study of Turkic History was established. The composition of the administrative council was as follows: Chairman Tevfik Bıyıklıoğlu, Vice-Presidents Yusuf Akchura and Samih Rifat, Secretary-General Reshit Galip, Sadi Maksudi was also a member of the committee with Afet Inan and other figures.

On April 10, 1931, the “Turkish Hearth” Society was dissolved, on April 15 of the same year the Historical Commission was transformed into the Society for the Study of Turkic History. Then work begins on the release of the book “The main sections of Turkic history” (Türk tarihinin Ana hatları). S. Maksudi contributed to the preparation of this publication. He wrote two sections: “Scythians–Saki”, “Turkic states of Central Asia”. Maksudi always relied on fundamental sources

9 Türk Tarihi Hakkında Mütalâalar, “Afet Hanımın Konuşması”, Türk Ocakları Neşriyatı, İstanbul, 1930, s. 3-7.

10 Türk Tarihi Hakkında Mütalâalar, *Ibid.*, 8.

11 Türk Tarihi Hakkında Mütalâalar, *Ibid.*, 12-18.

12 Türk Tarihi Hakkında Mütalâalar, *Ibid.*, 18-21.

and therefore looked at some of the ideas put forward by the members of the Historical Commission with distrust. The scientist wrote in his letter to President Atatürk that the secondary theses, which have no evidence base, should be avoided. Further, the scientist lists some arguments that cause him doubts:

1. we should agree with the presence of the Semitic-Akkadian element in Mesopotamia in the Sumerian period. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the Semitic affiliation of the Babylonian language;
2. it is necessary to accept the fact that in India, between the Dravidians and the Saks, non-Türkic peoples lived. In the opposite case, it is impossible to explain the proximity of Sanskrit and Indo-European languages;
3. it remains doubtful that the Turks lived in Egypt during the Eneolithic period. Whatever the origin of the word “Hyksos”, there is a possibility of mixing Semites with Hyksos;
4. it is necessary, if possible, to minimize linguistic evidence. Our current etymological method, based on dialects, the Europeans will not accept¹³.

However, as his daughter A. Ayda wrote in her book, S. Maksudi did not manage to prevent the inclusion of materials of unscientific nature in these textbooks¹⁴. In the historical world, these works are criticized by scientists, because some Turkish figures in them unjustly call all the peoples of the Turks. For example, A.N. Bernshtam writes that Turkish historiography, making Turkish all nomadic societies of the East, seeks to present them as harmonious formations, where the idyllic agreement of the aristocracy with ordinary nomads served as the basis for the grandeur of “ancestors”, the basis of the “indestructible” strength of the conquerors supposedly capable in virtue of racial qualities, keep the world in obedience¹⁵.

After the creation of the listed works, on the initiative of Atatürk in Ankara the First Turkish Historical Congress was held from 2 to 11 July 1932. The Congress presented historical theses concerning Turkic history. The purpose of the congress was to familiarize with historical theses in a more formal form and the development of textbooks on history. S. Maksudi delivers a speech on the topic “Historical factors”. The scientist reveals two main problems of each historical period: the

¹³ Ayda, *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁴ Ayda, *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵ A. N. Bernshtam, *Essay on the history of the Huns*, Leningrad 1951, p. 15.

first is the factors and causes that influence the development of mankind, and the second, the goal of the historical development of mankind. According to him, during each period of history, historians were focused on two different areas. On the one hand, they tried to identify events and phenomena, on the other hand, they were associated with the factors that affected these events.

As a historian, S. Maksudi tried to shed light not only on historical events and final results, but also set himself the task of finding out all the causes and factors affecting the history of the development of human civilizations. Having investigated this issue, he identifies 9 important factors that influenced turning historical moments and social transformations: physical and geographical factors; spiritual (psychological) factors; great ideas (ideals); race; conquest and migration; evolution; economic forces; people (nation); great personalities.

Then S. Maksudi dwells in detail on each factor. Concerning physical and geographical factors, he notes the centers that played the most significant role at the beginning of the formation of people's historical processes. As evidence, he cites the example of migration of Turks from Central Asia.

The scientist illustrates the existence of psychological factors by discoveries in the field of psychological causes. S. Maksudi states that the legal institutions were spreading from one center to other places as it was, in particular, with the adoption of the British parliamentary system by other countries.

In connection with the third factor—great ideas, Maksudi called nationalism (love of one's nation) and political sovereignty the most significant ideas that influenced the historical processes and, thereby, changed them. As an example, he mentions the Great French Revolution.

In the development of mankind, S. Maksudi noted the special role of the Turks in the development of civilization. However, he notes that, the value that is given only to the Turks, does not mean the inequality between the races.

In support of the theory of evolution and economic factors, S. Maksudi argues that these elements contributed to the development of historical events, but to a lesser extent in comparison with the other factors mentioned above.

To great personalities who left a deep trace in the progress of their nation, S. Maksudi calls Confucius, Galileo, Copernicus, Descartes, Napoleon, etc. Among the Turkic peoples are such figures as Tughril Beg, Malik Shah, Gazi Mustafa

Kemal. Maksudi said that such great personalities are generated by the nation itself¹⁶.

September 20-25, 1937 in Istanbul, the Second Historical Congress took place, where S. Maksudi participated with the report “The role of Turks in the development of concepts and institutions of the state and law” (Devlet ve Hukuk mefhumunun ve müesseselerinin inkişafında Türklerin rolü). Such a theme enabled the study of Turkic history from a new perspective. One can cite the following quotation from his report: “In the history of mankind, no race has demonstrated such a capacity to build a state like the Turks ... The Turkic states that dominated other nations never resorted to tyranny, and in accordance with the level of development and state of society demonstrated maximum justice, maximum legitimacy and tolerance”¹⁷. As contemporaries note, the Second Congress, in which ninety people took part, passed without sharp controversy and criticism. The speeches were on the topics of archeology, linguistics, anthropology¹⁸.

At the Third Historic Congress Maksudi acts with the theme “The role of Farabi in the history of culture” (Farabi'nin kültür tarihindeki rolü), where he analyzes his writings, views, compares with the works of Aristotle, mentions Farabi's questions of philosophy. Maksudi in his report defines the main view of Farabi on the idea of statehood: “The main need for humanity is society. For a person, the smallest society is a house (family). Then mahalla or village and the biggest society is the state (city)”, uniting all political groups (İnsanlar için camia halinde yaşamak ihtiyacı tabii bir ihtiyaçtır ... En küçük camia evdir (ailedir) Ondan daha büyüğü mahalledir veyahut köydür. Ondan daha büyüğü bütün bir siyasi zümreye şamil devlettir (medinedir))¹⁹.

The work of Farabi “A worthy state”, which according to S. Maksudi is relevant for all time. One of the topicalities of the work is that the qualities of the manager that are important in governing the country are clearly marked. The article gives a qualification, setting conditions for the ruler on the items. The manager should have the following qualities:

1. To be an expert who knows his own business.

16 S. Maksudi, “Tarihin Amilleri”, *Birinci Türk Tarih Kongresi*, Istanbul 1932, p. 339-364.

17 Ayda, *Ibid.*, p. 175.

18 K. Koçak, *Talim ve Terbiye'nin Türk Eğitim Ve Kültür Politikalarındaki Tarihi Yeri*, Ankara, 2008, p. 30.

19 Koçak, *Ibid.*, p. 354.

2. To be an educated person, a scientist.
3. To know clearly about the work of the state administration, about his predecessor.
4. To be understanding and judicious.
5. To have oratorical abilities: it is necessary not only to issue laws, but also to explain your arguments.
6. Only physically and mentally healthy person has the right to rule the state²⁰.

According to S. Maksudi, in the history of political philosophy Farabi presented the most basic criteria for the states leaders, which will never lose relevance. S. Maksudi fully understood the role of the individual in history. In great people he was attracted to such qualities as enlightenment, talent, a strong spirit. The study and the analysis of Farabi's works made it possible to show Maksudi progressive aspects of the creative heritage of Farabi, to prove the advanced ideas of the great oriental thinker.

On November 10-14, 1948, the Fourth Congress was held. And this was the last time Sadri Maksudi took part in the Congress. His work was devoted to the topic "Tribal Organization of Ancient Turks" (Eski türklerdeki 'soy-oymak' teşkilatı)²¹.

After these congresses S. Maksudi began to turn less to the questions of history – he was a member of parliament, and all his attention and time was directed to the implementation of political activity.

S. Maksudi's works on Turkic history were highly appreciated by Turkish scholars. The professor of Istanbul University Tayyip Gökbilgin, speaks of Professor Maksudi as an "ardent warrior" in the study of history and calls him a Turkic philosopher²².

Thus, the analysis of the works of the scientist shows that interest in the past of his nation, the ethnogeny of the people at S. Maksudi was enormous. A man of broad outlook and diverse scientific interests, he gave a great place to history. The historical views of the scientist are imbued with deep respect. Paying attention to

20 Maksudi, *Ibid.*, 360-363.

21 S. Maksudi Arsal, "Farabi'nin Kültür Tarihindeki Rolü", *III. Türk Tarih Kongresi*, Ankara 1948, s. 175.

22 T. Gökbilgin, "Sadri Maksudi'nin Türk Tarihi ve Türk Soyuna Hakkındaki Görüşleri", *Türk Yurdu*, 1970.

the past of the Turkic peoples, ethnogeny, S. Maksudi showed considerable interest in the history of other nations. He managed to involve in research various sources, which he studied in the libraries of Germany, France. A feature of his method of studying history was the use of a set of sources: historical, archaeological, ethnographic and others. He studied, analyzed and interpreted them.

S. Maksudi played one of the most significant roles in the process of the formation of historical studies in the Turkish Republic. The function of historical science in the formation of the national consciousness of the people was very important, therefore the well-known Tatar figure made a valuable contribution to the study of the history of the Turkic peoples, and his scientific works should be of interest to readers studying history.

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