INTRODUCTION
At the turn of the 19th century Kazan was a major social, political, economic and cultural centre of the Eastern part of the Russian Empire. By occupying a strategically important point between the West, Russia and the East, Kazan came to be a convenient place for the development of Oriental studies. In the first half of the 19th century Kazan University became a leading centre of academic orientalism both in Russia and the world, with orientalism including sinology as well.

In the first half of the 19th century "Oriental literature and antiquity" embodied the very nature of Oriental studies in Russia. In the final quarter of the 19th century the leading scholars of this field defined a broader social and cultural task for the Russian Oriental science – to pass on "all the academically acquired knowledge concerning the East, and not just its languages" [1, c.176] to students as well as to summarize and generalize this knowledge.

In the beginning of the 20th century Oriental studies in Russia was a specific system of knowledge on the history and culture of the peoples of the East. The centre piece of the classic orientalism in Russia in the early 20th century was Oriental linguistics and studies of traditional Oriental artifacts of both literary and material culture. The profound knowledge and usage of classical and living languages of the East, written texts or material artifacts of the peoples of the East were the key traits of Russian academic Oriental studies. In the 19th and the early 20th centuries academic orientalism could be characterized by its close interaction with state and society, the renewal of its themes and the change of the function of regional scholarly subjects, the emergence of new forms of organization of research, as well as the unifying of researchers by way of international communication with scholars from Asia and Europe.

Practical and academic learning of the language, literature, history and culture of the peoples of China became an important factor of the emergence and development of sinology in Russia in the 18th – early 20th centuries.

RESULTS
The establishment of academic Chinese studies, Manchurian studies and Buddhist studies in Kazan, which before 1855 primarily consisted of studying languages and cultural heritage of Central Asian peoples, is largely related to the works of famed scholars and participants of the Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission – archimandrite Danil (1798–1871, Beijing, 1821–1830), I.P. Voysekhovsky (1793–1850, Beijing, 1819–1831) and the graduate of the Oriental department of Kazan University (also a member of the mission in 1840–1850) V.P. Vasilyev (1818–1900). These scholars' works on language, literature, history and ethnography – both published works and manuscripts – contributed immensely to the studies of history and culture of the peoples of China [2–7,10–13]. The university department of Chinese language and literature (founded in 1837), transformed in 1844 into the Department of Chinese and Manchurian language and literature, as well as the works of Kazan orientalists, embodied the beginnings and further development of the university tradition of studying civilizations and states of the Far East [20,22].

Academic Chinese studies in Kazan in the first half of the 19th century was established and developed due to several research travels to the countries of Central and East Asia. Besides practical lessons with native speakers of some living Asian languages, the first-hand acquaintance of the scholars with history, languages, culture, lifestyle and customs during these expeditions and research travels became a specific feature of both Kazan orientalism school in particular and Russian Oriental studies of the 19th – early 20th centuries in general.

The library archives of Kazan and St. Petersburg contain a vast amount of materials on the research travels of Kazan University Oriental Department alumni – O. Kovalevsky's (1801 – 1870) and A. Popov's (1855–1890) trips to Siberia, Mongolia and China (1828–1853), as well as V. Vasilyev's travel to China (1840–1850) [19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31].

China attracted huge interest of Russian orientalists of the 19th – early 20th centuries, and a very discrete role in the development of Russian-Chinese relations and the establishment of Russian sinology was played by the Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission, which was now sometimes joined by the representatives of university centers as well. An important milestone in the history of Russian academic orientalism and sinology of the first half of the 19th century is the research travels of the expert on Mongolian studies O.M. Kovalevsky (1800–1878) [18,19, 23, 24, 27, 28] and the sinologist V.P. Vasilyev (1818–1900) [9,14,15, 16, 21, 25, 30, 31] to China and their participation in the Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission.
The history of the academic Chinese studies of the 19th century is represented by several outstanding sinologists and their invaluable legacy on the history and culture of Russia's great neighbor – China. Among those I would like to single out the following names: N.I. Bichurin (1793-1850), P. Kamenskii (1765-1845), S.V. Liportsev (1770-1841), P.I. Kafarov (1817-1878) and V.P. Vasilyev (1818-1900). All of them lived and studied in Kazan at different times, and their thrusty path to Chinese studies was closely related to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing. The life and heritage of Bichurin, Kafarov and Vasilyev in particular personified a whole epoch in the Russian sinology of the 19th century. Their lives and destinies were intertwined, and in general they reveal the greatness and the tragedy of the first Russian sinologists' scientific work and research, which laid the basis for the classical Chinese studies in Russia.

The establishment of the academic sinology in Kazan is related to the following events and people. On May 11, 1837, for the first time in Russia, the Department of Chinese language and literature was founded – in 1844 it was reformed into the Department of Chinese and Manchu language and literature. The first professor of Chinese language in Kazan University was archimandrite Danil' (D.P. Sivillov, 1798-1871) who worked there in 1837-1844. In this position he was succeeded by I.P. Voybtsekhovskii (1793-1850), who laid the groundwork for the academic Manchuian studies in Russia and Kazan University (1844-1855). In 1851-1855 the Department was headed by V.P. Vasilyev (1818-1900) [15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 27, 29, 31].

The beginnings of the educational work aimed at training scholars in Mongolian, Chinese and Buddhist studies in Kazan University for a research travel with the Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission are associated with some interesting archive materials on the biographies and legacy of the Russian orientalists.

In March of 1838 archimandrite Danil', the professor of Chinese, wrote the following on his best students, who showed diligence and high achievements in studying Chinese: "such students... can be capable, both for their own good and for the sake of their country, of improving their skills of learning Oriental languages even more, if they participate in the Ecclesiastical Mission, soon to be departed for Beijing" [21, sheet 10].

Among those students, who were to be included in the Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission, were: S. Ruscho (graduated from the Oriental department of the University in 1841, taught Chinese at the Kazan Grammar school and the University in 1841-1845), V. Vasilyev (graduated from the Oriental department of the University in 1837, taught Chinese at Kazan University in 1851-1855, taught Chinese and Manchuian at St. Petersburg University in 1855-1900) and M. Navrotsky (graduated from the Oriental department of the University in 1846, taught Arabic at Kazan University in 1846-1855 and at St. Petersburg University in 1855-1871).

The relieving officer of Kazan educational district M.N. Musin-Pushkin (1795-1862) made a request to evaluate the students' knowledge, meaning to send them to Beijing, so that S. Ruscho could "improve his skills of Chinese language", V. Vasilyev could "perfect his ability of Tibetan language" and for student M. Navrotsky to "improve his skills of Mongolian language and begin studying Manchuian language" [21, sheets 1-3 reverse side].

Sending the students of Kazan University to China was planned within the framework of the Ecclesiastical Mission, which at that point was one of the very few official possibilities to visit the Middle Kingdom. From the 17th century the Mission had been the only center for training experts on Chinese and Manchuian languages. The tasks of the Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission included studying Manchuian, Chinese and Mongolian languages, as well as the history, culture and religion of the peoples the Qing empire.

In March of 1838 teachers of Chinese and Mongolian archimandrite Danil' and Osip Kovalevsky took a favorable view of the achievements of the aforementioned students and noticed that sending them abroad to study was "the only way to give them all possible tools to acquire profound knowledge of Oriental languages". Speaking of the prospects of studying Tibetan language, professor in ordinary Osip Kovalevsky, who visited Beijing in 1831 as a member of the 11th Beijing Ecclesiastical Mission, mentioned that "In the capital of China, as far as I know, there are thousands of natural Tibetan lamas, including those who speak Sanskrit and various Indian tongues" [21, sheet 3 reverse side].

Due to the supposed opening of the Department of Tibetan language at Kazan University it was decided to dispatch V. Vasilyev to Beijing, as a member of the Ecclesiastical Mission, after him passing his tests for the master degree [21, sheet 14].

With V. Vasilyev leaving Kazan for China on January 20th, 1840 as a member of the 12th Ecclesiastical Mission a new page in the life of this scholar was turned and it was in China where, according to himself, "many of his thoughts and views" were born. The unique educational and scientific trip of V.P. Vasilyev to Beijing (from January of 1840 to September of 1850), which continued the traditions of many research travels in the history of Russian orientalism and sinology of the 19th century, played an exceptional role in his academic career.

The research travel of V.P. Vasilyev was a turning point in the history of Russian sinology of the 19th century. For the first time in the history of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing (1715-1864) a graduate of a Russian university and a master of Oriental arts was dispatched to China to join the mission. In Beijing he developed capabilities for observation, good memory and a unique ability of research work with original classical texts. It was at that time when his very specific character traits were formed – skepticism, perseverance, determination and firmness. Mainly he formed a substantial scientific foundation of various knowledge of history and culture of the peoples of China.

By the order of the Academic Board of the University in June of 1839 professor O.M. Kovalevsky compiled a program for a student of Kazan University who was sent to Beijing [26, sheets 6-10].

The "guiding instruction" of O.M. Kovalevsky for key areas of focus of V.P. Vasilyev in Beijing became the authentic educational and scientific program of the integrated training of an expert on China, Tibet, Buddhism or Manchuria. In this program Vasilyev accomplished the idea and the principles of his mentor O.M. Kovalevsky: "the university education..., by not limiting itself to just language theory, guides its alumni to the practical usage of languages; and, while explaining to them the history and literature of major Asian nations, it opens the way to further exploration of the mines of Oriental lore, for the glory of our country" [17, p.36].

The primary attention in the program was paid to studying Tibetan language and Sanskrit, "history of Tibet, its literature and antiquities", collecting information on China, India and Mongolia, purchase of books and manuscripts, etc. The future academician in ordinary V.P. Vasilyev was appointed corresponding agent of the Academy of Science in order to purchase Tibetan and Mongolian books, as well as accomplishing other scientific assignments. In addition to the guidelines issued by the University and the Academy of Sciences, the officer also gave an order to issue additional tasks for collecting rare objects for Kazan University for the benefit of the zoology museum, the herbarium, etc. [26, sheet 5, 11-12].

The instruction to the traveler compiled by O. Kovalevsky mentions that Kazan University, by sending V. Vasilyev to Beijing as a member of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission for ten years, hopes that in the future the latter will become an excellent professor of Tibetan language and a serious researcher of geography, history, religion and antiquity of the peoples inhabiting the "Eastern part of Asia". It was emphasized that the profound studies of Tibetan language, as well as its dialects was the first and most important task and
the main goal of the future scholar. For such purposes V. Vasilyev was advised to pay attention to preparing a "lexicon" based on Tibetan literary works belonging to various periods.

After studying the language and preparing the teaching books the primary attention was to be paid to studying the history of Tibet, its literature and antiquities alongside history, literature and antiquities of the peoples that influenced Tibet or were in close relation with it. It was pointed out that "India, China, Mongolia and other countries must definitely be in the sphere of Mr. Vasilyev's interests" [26, sheet 7].

While studying history it was important to "define Indian-Tibetan and Chinese timelines, as well as the geographical position of the country at various periods of its life without using the systems invented by some orientalists, leaving aside arguments and guesses of European scholars". V. Vasilyev was assigned to "try to find out the real meanings of the geographical names by himself", without thinking of the systems created by "some orientalists" [26, sheet 8]. It was implied that he, after having acquired sufficient knowledge on Buddhism, hierarchy of lamas and Buddhist philosophy at the University, will be able to "multiply and improve the acquired knowledge" [26, sheet 10].

The economy of the country was supposed to become an important object of Vasilyev's observations. "Lands and people as the foundation of the state's power,... state resolutions and governing; items of the national economy and popular education in every respect", according to Kovalovsky, were to attract Mr. Vasilyev's attention. Learning Chinese language and literature were not among his main goals, but it was an important means of achieving his aims [26, sheet 10].

V. Vasilyev's duties also included purchasing books in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan and Mongolian for the University library [26, sheet 9]. A special request was expressed as to the importance of acquiring a collection of Tibetan and Mongolian chronicles, "which Europe knows extremely little about".

He, like the previous travelers, had to keep a detailed diary about his lessons and observations both on his way and during the whole period of his stay in Beijing. The diary was supposed to combine daily entries on the events and happenings in the Chinese capital, governmental orders "and everything that marks the spirit of the place and the people".

By joining the Beijing mission in Kazan in January of 1840, V.P. Vasilyev began his journey to China.

Both during the trip and in Beijing Vasilyev kept a detailed diary. V.P. Vasilyev points out that the diary mostly contained official news from a Beijing newspaper, rather than his own impressions and experience.

Another important authentic source on this research travel is his letters sent to M.N. Musin-Pushkin.

For instance, he notes that his teachers of Tibetan – the local lamas – had a poor knowledge of the language and could hardly teach him anything new. Before he could find a suitable mentor, V. Vasilyev had to study by himself for several months [25, sheets 47-49].

The "Brief report on the ten years of master Vasilyev's stay in Beijing", a copy of which is stored in the National archives of the Republic of Tatarstan, can help to understand the subject and the tasks of his studies better. "While studying history and culture of Oriental countries", Vasilyev wrote, "I never considered learning Chinese language a secondary task" [25, sheet 60].

An important part of V.P. Vasilyev's report is the information on his literary works. The author mentions that "the report on my written works will probably not seem satisfactory", because he paid more attention to collecting various materials for further reworking upon his return to Russia. Vasilyev also spent a lot of time searching for rare books and speaking to lamas [25, sheet 67, reverse side]. The archive documents allow us to state that in Beijing V. Vasilyev compiled written summaries of his work in the following areas – Tibetan grammar, history of Buddhism in India, geography of Tibet, Buddhist literature, geographical maps, etc. [25, sheets 75-79].

It is difficult to overestimate the meaning of the ten years of V.P. Vasilyev's hard work on collecting and studying materials on the history of Buddhism in Tibet and the neighboring countries, persevering search and subsequent work on the information from Chinese sources, which revealed complicated interconnections between the Chinese Empire and the neighboring peoples and tribes, meticulous work on creating historical maps of China from the ancient times to the late Middle Ages. The studies of China and the countries of South-East Asia, which he began during his stay in the Ecclesiastical Mission, were developed further during the periods of Vasilyev's work at Kazan University (1851-1855) and St. Petersburg University (1855-1900).

An important result of Vasilyev's research trip to Beijing was the replenishment of Kazan University library with Chinese, Manchurian, Tibetan and Mongolian books and manuscripts. In 1850 V.P. Vasilyev brought a collection of Oriental books, consisting of 2737 volumes and 14447 notebooks [32, p. 61]. The collected works that were delivered to Kazan in fifty-one boxes encompassed all areas of knowledge: theology, philosophy, legal science, bibliography and philology, history and geography, literary fiction in verse and prose, agriculture and industry, astronomy and medicine [21, sheets 300-301].

In 1850 V.P. Vasilyev presented a detailed report on his work in China to the faculty of history and philology of Kazan University [26, sheets 59-88]. He honestly accomplished all the tasks given to him by the university scholars, and succeeded in all of them. He worked hard on improving his knowledge of Mongolian, Tibetan, Chinese and Manchurian languages; collected valuable materials on history, literature, ethnography, geography, philosophy and religions of China.

In 1883 in his university commencement address called "The modern position of Asia – the Chinese progress" professor V.P. Vasilyev wrote: "China has all the necessary qualities to achieve the highest point of intellectual, industrial and political progress. Their principle of the profound respect to science, the aspiration of all their people to study hard regardless of their age shows that China is capable of becoming the most educated nation in the world, that it can create scholars who not only can advance science together with the rest of the world, but also will not stop at the level of others" [8, p. 22].

CONCLUSION.

Scholar and thinker V.P. Vasilyev criticized Europe-centric approaches to the evaluation of the role and legacy of Oriental countries and societies, including the Chinese civilization – he rejected ideas of inferiority of Asian peoples, diminishing their cultural legacy, giving absolute priority in the world history to the European civilization, impossibility of revival of the peoples of the East.

His academic, social-political and educational ideas are the evidence that he was an outstanding scholar and thinker of the 19th century. Academic criticism, reflections on the commonness of the East and the West, criticism of European colonial policy, humanism and believing in the future of Asian peoples including China, evaluations of economical, political and spiritual progress of the Chinese people, the humanism of the Chinese culture, criticizing conservatism and dogmatism of the Imperial China, etc. were typical for Vasilyev.

Patriotism, love to one's homeland, rejection of censorship and the existing social order, ideas of popular education and the rise of science in Russia are all integral to the legacy of the scholar. Modern Oriental world, especially China, was of no less interest to Vasilyev than the medieval Asian country and society.