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Gan family coat of arms

Petr Alekseevich GAN

1796 - 1875

Colonel, father of H. P. Blavatsky

Petr Alekseevich Gan is a representative of an ancient and noble German family. His grandfather Johann Gustav von Hahn (born between 1724 and 1730 - died in St. Petersburg on December 26, 1799) moved from Mecklenburg to Russia at the invitation of Empress Catherine II in 1789 [1]. According to family tradition, the Gan family goes back in the female line to the Carolingian dynasty, in the male line to the German crusader knights, as evidenced by the ancient family coat of arms: a red walking rooster on a silver shield hahn) discovered a Saracen in his tent. The intruder intended to kill him. The rooster that saved his life was included in the family coat of arms and the family name, which now began to sound Gan von Roterstern-Gan).

Gustav Gan, as the youngest son in the family, could not count on the inheritance and was forced to seek a better life in a foreign land. We managed to collect some information about his life [2]. He was born in Anhalt-Zerbst and there is an assumption that from childhood he was acquainted with his peers, Princess of Anhalt-Zerbst, the future Empress Catherine II, from whose hands he later received the high position of St. and a new coat of arms (based on the knightly coat of arms of the Gans), as well as granted lands (including those in the Dnieper region). In Russia, Gustav Hahn began to be called August Ivanovich, and the history of the Russian branch of a noble German family began with him. He was married three times and had seven children. His sons occupied important positions, received awards and lands in the new fatherland, which they faithfully served, growing into it with roots and love.

One of them, Aleksei Avgustovich Gan (circa 1780 - circa 1815), was a Suvorov general crowned with military exploits and orders, and also H. P. Blavatsky's paternal grandfather.

Recently, thanks to S.V. Skorodumov, a wonderful article by the researcher Lidia Markelova, dedicated to the general's wife, Elizaveta Maksimovna Gan, appeared at the disposal of the museum specialists.

From this article we learn that she was also German and came from the Estonian family of von Prebsting. The date of her birth and many biography facts are still unknown. Lydia Markelova writes: "As the wife of an officer, she, of course, had to roam around the cities and towns of the Russian provinces ... The last refuge of the family was, obviously, the Kamenets fortress in the Podolsk province, where Major General Gan served for more than ten years. Families then, as a rule, were large. Of all the children who were born to Elizaveta Maksimovna and Alexei Gan, one can name Alexander (1794) [3], Yegor (?) [4], Peter (1798 or 1799) [5], Gustav (1800) [6] and Ivan (1810) [7]. The Gan couple also had a daughter, who later married the Kursk landowner Lev Aleksandrovich Markov. The name of the daughter, presumably, is Elizabeth. "Lizhen", "Lizochek" - this is how Elizaveta Maksimovna called her in the autobiographical memoirs of her grandson E.L. Markov [8]. Book by E.L. Markov dedicated to his mother. Calling all his relatives by other names, he kept the real name only for Uncle Ivan. There is hope that the mother of E.L. Markov called her by her real name.

Children were initially brought up at home. But the boys, by our standards, were early torn away from the family and assigned to closed educational institutions. Three of them - Peter, Gustav and Ivan - were educated in the prestigious Corps of Pages [9]. When choosing a place for further service, not only academic performance and financial opportunities, but also family traditions and ideological considerations mattered. Pyotr Alekseevich was sent to the Yekaterinoslav Grenadier Regiment, which was once commanded by his father. It happened on May 31, 1815 [10]. By that time, my father was no longer alive.

According to information available to museum specialists, Alexei and Elizabeth could have had six, seven or eight children [12]. Little is known about the brothers of Petr Alekseevich Gan and in the museum. So, Ivan Alekseevich Gan (dates of life not established) - was a captain of the Life Guards cuirassier regiment, and later director of the Russian Ports Department in St. Petersburg. Blavatsky's mother was especially friendly with him, and Elena Petrovna herself remembered him [13]. She also remembered another brother of her father - Gustav (dates of life are not established) [14]. She should have known about the fate of Alexei, another brother of her father. Family legends say that Aleksei Petrovich Gan (dates of life not established) was a graduate of the Land Imperial Cadet Corps, a member of the Southern Society of Decembrists, who was sent to live permanently in his father's family estate - near the village of Shandrovka, Yekaterinoslav province [15]. According to his grandson Professor P.A. Gan, Pyotr Alekseevich Gan often visited his brother Alexei in the family estate on the Aurele River: by himself, with his wife, with children. Shandrovskaya manor in the Yekaterinoslav region became for him, apparently, the main family marina after the loss of his wife. Here he kept his archive and relics for a long time. In all likelihood, he visited here with his eldest daughter Elena during a trip to Russia and Europe in 1845.

After the death of Alexei Avgustovich Gan, his widow with many children, Elizaveta Maksimovna, in her second marriage was married to Major General Nikolai Vasilyevich Vasilchikov (1781-1830) [16], a famous participant in the Napoleonic wars. His portrait by George Doe still adorns the walls of the Military Gallery of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. In this marriage, Elizaveta Maksimovna had two more children: son Nikolai (1816-1843) [17] and daughter Ekaterina (1818-?) [18].

Sources at the disposal of the Museum Center testify that H. P. Blavatsky's father **Petr Alekseevich Gan** was born in 1798. Like his father, he chose a military career. "I entered the military service from the nobles of the Lifland province, the son of a major general" [19]. At the age of seventeen, he had already completed his education in the page corps of St. Petersburg, and in 1815, with the rank of ensign, he was appointed to serve in the Yekaterinoslav province. He served in the artillery, most of the time in Ukraine.

In 1830, in Yekaterinoslav, he married Elena Andreevna Fadeeva. The father of his wife, A.M. Fadeev, writes: "This year, my eldest daughter Elena married Pyotr Alekseevich Gan, an artillery staff captain, an intelligent, well-educated young man ... My wife and I very reluctantly agreed to the marriage of our daughter because of her too early youth, she was only sixteen years old; but I have experienced many times in my life that what is determined by Providence cannot be prevented in any way" [20].

H. P. Blavatsky also has several lines about this: "Father was a captain of an artillery regiment when he married my mother," [21] she recalls in one of her letters to her first biographer A. P. Sinnett.

Recently found in the Russian State Military Historical Archive, the personal file of P.A. Gan [22], to which the reference has already been made, provides researchers with invaluable material for recreating his official biography. Thanks to this dossier, it is now known that, having served in the army for thirty years, P.A. Gan was awarded the Orders of St. Anna of the 3rd degree, St. Vladimir of the 4th degree, St. service. He retired in 1845 as the commander of the light cavalry artillery battery No. 6 of the 3rd cavalry artillery brigade and the rank of lieutenant colonel. Upon dismissal from the service, he was awarded "a rank, a uniform and a full salary pension" (that is, he received the rank of colonel with the right to wear a uniform).

After completing his service in Belarus, from the town of Derechin, Grodno province, Pyotr Alekseevich Gan moved to Saratov, where at that time his three children lived in the family of his father-in-law - the governor: Elena, Vera and Leonid.

And in these, and in all subsequent years until the end of his life, he is a caring father to all his children.

P.A. Gan has always been a friend and support for his eldest daughter, Elena, no matter how far away she is from him. H. P. Blavatsky experienced the same feeling of love for her father.

P.A. Gan spent the last years of his life in Stavropol, in the family of his son. In the same place in 1875 he completed his life and was buried.

The search for materials about Petr Alekseevich Gan allowed researchers to discover several more new sources. So, his drawing "Fruits" in 2006 was found in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, in the archival fund of his youngest daughter V.P. Zhelikhovskaya. The drawing is signed "P.Hann" and dated 1821. The quality of the drawing testifies not only to the artistic talent of H. P. Blavatsky's father, but also to the fact that, according to experts, he took lessons in academic drawing.

Another success of the specialists was the discovery of two letters from P.A. Gan. They were found in the funds of the Nikopol Museum of Local Lore of the Dnepropetrovsk Region and were addressed to the Yekaterinoslav landowner G.V. Nechaev. These messages were sent by P.A. Gan from Stary Oskol and St. Petersburg and are dated 1836 and 1837. The letters have just been published. In June 1836, P.A. Gan, in particular, writes:

Gracious Sovereign Gleb Vasilyevich!

Forgive me that I have not yet fulfilled the word given to you, that I have not fulfilled my debt to you. Circumstances beyond my control are the cause. After that, I was transferred to the 3rd Cavalry Artillery (Lerian) Division, left Yekaterinoslav on April 30, went to Karachev Orlovsk Province, did not find the battery there, which went to Voronezh, went there, but meanwhile, again a change - they turned to Staraya Oskol. I arrived here from Voronezh on May 24, I didn't have time to decompose, settle down, when, on the 4th day of my arrival here, I was demanded to Petersburg, in an exemplary battery, for a service test, to be appointed to our daughter commander. God grant that this ends soon, and I should leave Petersburg. Where else will fate lead? I would like to be closer to your seats again.

... I entrust myself, in need, to your friendly favor; I ask you to accept the assurances of that true high esteem with which I have the honor to be, Gracious Sovereign, your most humble and always ready to serve Peter (Gan ...).

Old Oskol. 1836 June 5th.

Finally, the most important finds of recent years include a paired portrait ["Two Helens"] and several documents from the Ganov family archive, which in 1991 were donated to the museum by Professor, Doctor of Biological Sciences, Chief Researcher of the Forest Department of the Institute of Biology of the Academy of Sciences of Kyrgyzstan Pyotr Alekseevich Gan (1916-1993) - great-nephew of H. P. Blavatsky's father. The portrait, the authorship of which has not been established, depicts Elena Andreevna Gan and her eldest daughter Elena Petrovna Gan (Blavatskaya) at the age of 13-15 years. According to researchers, this portrait could have been painted in 1845, during the trip of P.A. Gan with his eldest daughter to Europe. Colonel P.A. Gan left a portrait of his untimely deceased wife and beloved daughter, in the Shandrovka family estate in the Dnieper region, where it was kept for a long time and passed down by the Gans from generation to generation, like a family heirloom. From the hands of the last owner in 1991 it was donated to the Museum Center of H. P. Blavatsky and her family.

Helena Petrovna Blavatsky knew about her roots and honored family traditions: her personal seal is crowned with a crown, repeating the crown of the coat of arms of the ancient paternal German knightly family. This is also evidenced by one of the letters to A.P. Sinnett dated 1882, signed: "H.P. Blavatsky, nee Hahn von Rottenstern-Gahn." At the same time, she never boasted of her noble birth and high status, both as a girl, being Helena Hahn, and after marriage, becoming Blavatsky. Elena Petrovna recalled: "In letters written in French, we added de to our surname - as noble. If the surname was written in German, then von was added. We were both Mademoiselle de Han and von Han. I did not like it and I never put de to the name of Blavatsky, although he was of noble birth; his ancestor, Hetman Blavatko, left two branches - the Blavatskys in Russia and the Counts Blavatskys in Poland".

Literature

1. Markov E.L. Barchuks. Pictures of the past. - St. Petersburg, 1875.
2. Corps of Pages of His Imperial Majesty for a hundred years. 1802-1902. Applications. - St. Petersburg, 1902
3. Fadeev A.M. Memories. 1790-1867, Odessa, 1897.
4. Mary K. Naf. Personal memoirs of H. P. Blavatsky. M., 1993.
5. Fadeev A.M. Memories. 1790-1867, Odessa, 1897.

[one] According to some sources, his brother Wilhelm also came with him, about whose fate, unfortunately, nothing is known yet.

[2] Service record of August Gan. RGIA. Depository 1289. Inventory 16. File 19, File 47. Certificate of nobility to August Hahn. December 9, 1791 RGIA. Fund 1343. Inventory 19. File 570.

[3] Database prof. Eric Amburger: <http://88.217.241.77/amburger/index.php?id=67335>

[4] Yegor Alekseevich is the probable son of Alexei Gan and Elizaveta Maksimovna, if we take into account his patronymic. Of all the representatives of the Gan family at that time, the name Alexei occurs once precisely with General Gan.

[5] Database prof. Eric Amburger: <http://88.217.241.77/amburger/index.php?id=67334>

[6] Database prof. Eric Amburger: <http://88.217.241.77/amburger/index.php?id=67336>

[7] Database prof. Eric Amburger: <http://88.217.241.77/amburger/index.php?id=67339>

[eight] Markov E.L. Barchuks. Pictures of the past. - St. Petersburg, 1875. - S. 83, S. 84.

[nine] Materials for the history of His Imperial Majesty's Corps of Pages. 1711-1875 / Comp. gr. Miloradovich. - Kyiv, 1876. Corps of Pages of His Imperial Majesty for a hundred years. 1802-1902. Applications. - St. Petersburg, 1902. Pages for 183 years (1711-1884). Biographies of former pages with portraits / Sobr. and ed. O. R. von Freiman. - Friedrichshamn, 1894. - Issue. one.

[ten] Corps of Pages of His Imperial Majesty for a hundred years. 1802-1902. Applications. - St. Petersburg, 1902. - S. 270.

[eleven] Archive of the Museum Center of E.P. Blavatsky and her family.

[12] The last figure is called in his "Memoirs" by A.M. Fadeev / / Fadeev A.M. Memories. 1790-1867, Odessa, 1897. - S. 107

[thirteen] Letters of HPBlavatsky to APSinnett. Ed. By AT Barker. NY-L., 1923, p. 150

[fourteen] There.

[fifteen] The participation of A.A. Gan in the Decembrist uprising is a family legend, which has not yet received documentary confirmation.

[sixteen] Not to be confused with a relative and namesake, also Major General Nikolai Vasilyevich Vasilchikov (died in 1849) (See: Prince Petr Dolgorukov. Russian genealogical book. - St. Petersburg, 1855. - Part 2. - P. 98) and Nikolai Mikhailovich Vasilchikov, Doctor of Sci.

[17] Book. Pyotr Dolgorukov. Russian genealogical book. - St. Petersburg, 1855. - Part 2. - P. 99. See also: <http://www.russianfamily.ru/vvasilchkh.html>

[eighteen] Book. Pyotr Dolgorukov. Russian genealogical book. - St. Petersburg, 1855. - Part 2. - P. 99. See also: <http://www.russianfamily.ru/vvasilchkh.html>

[nineteen] RGVIA (Russian State Military Historical Archive). P.A.Gan. F.395, Op.36, D.33 (1845)

[20] Fadeev A.M. Memories. 1790-1867, Odessa, 1897. - S. 107

[21] Letters of HPBlavatsky to APSinnett. Ed. By AT Barker. NY-L., 1923, p. 150

[22] RGVIA. P.A.Gan. F.395, Op.36, D.33 (1845)

[23] Letters of HPBlavatsky to APSinnett. Ed. By AT Barker. NY-L., 1923, p. 150



Events

08/12/2016
10:00 - 18:30

Day of the Herald of Light

Dedicated to the 185th anniversary of the birth of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky: August 12, 2016, the birthday of H.P. Blavatsky in the Dnieper will be held Anniversary readings "H. P. Blavatsky. Fate and legacy"

[View all events](#)



Work regulations

Guided tours are held on **Monday, Thursday and Saturday** by prior arrangement.

An application for an excursion can be made by phone: **(067) 211 00 31, (056) 736 42 18** (Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00).

[View detailed schedule](#)



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