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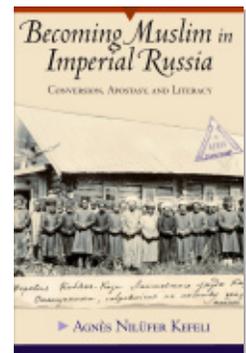
## Conclusion and Epilogue

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## Conclusion and Epilogue

Before the rise of modernist Islam, traditional education with its Sufi components helped to Islamize animist and baptized Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples. Islam's enthusiastic carriers—madrassa students, itinerant Sufis, traders, neighbors, but most of all “baptized” literati of both genders—established clandestine mosques and schools in officially Christian Orthodox villages, despite imperial and church prohibitions. Far from showing ethnic communal homogeneity along religious lines, Turkic genealogies and village traditions indicated that religious and ethnic identity often mutated from one generation to another. The contest between Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam in the Middle Volga involved volition and strategies by individuals and village communities who actively chose to be Christian or Muslim by using stories to defend or expand their realm of faith. More than trade and coercive power, religious myths and tales of struggle to defend or expand the frontiers of either Islam or Christianity helped draw and cement new communal boundaries.

Economic transformations among the Tatars of the Kazan province—in particular the development of textile and leather industry at the end of the eighteenth century—did facilitate the Islamization of a portion of the baptized community. The Islamic community grew thanks to intensified economic and spiritual contacts with Central Asia and India through the work of Mujaddidi and Khalidi Naqshbandi Sufis. But even more than Russian imperial or local Tatar economic power, myths were responsible for shaping or reshaping community boundaries. People drew from the stories of saints or prophets—which dated back to the fourteenth century when the Golden Horde converted to Islam—to change, negotiate, or sustain identity boundaries. Aware of their importance, Eastern Orthodox missionaries found parallel eschatological myths in their own tradition to substitute for the powerful Muslim tales of divine empowerment. As a result, many baptized villages, not entirely immune to Islamic influence, but ambivalent about their relationship with their Tatar neighbors, used the ancient stories of Christian martyrs (*mucheniklar*) of Roman, Greek, Turkic origins to construct their lives and solidify their own communal differences.

Likewise, in areas where Tatar trade mixed with Sufi charisma, apostates who had also been in contact with some aspects of Russian Orthodoxy but did not accept them as useful supplements or substitutes for their own sets of belief, identified themselves with the martyrs of their favorite Turkic literature. The mythical, more than the political and the economic, wove a powerful invisible shield against either colonial (Russian) or, in the case of Kräshen communities attached to their own indigenous religion and understanding of Christianity, local (Tatar) intrusion. At times, one may

wonder whether economic forces brought the baptized Tatars to either embrace Islam or remain Christian, or whether the stories themselves engaged them to find work in Muslim or Orthodox territories. In any case, more than imperial and ecclesiastical power, myths and symbols, family and communal relations, and broader economic and cultural connections to the outside world influenced the choice baptized villages made between Islam and Christianity.

The apostate discourse did not diverge from the Tatar mullahs' understanding of Islam. It was not a lesser Islam than the Islam lived and understood by their Tatar neighbors, even if their access to Islamic learning was occasionally obstructed by the local police, missionaries, or even unsympathetic local mullahs who refused to let them attend their mosques. Both the apostates' and their Tatar proselytizers' knowledge of Islam had a scriptural basis embedded in Sufism. Most Tatar peasants failed to go through all the steps of Islamic learning and their experience of Islam was essentially drawn from Sufi literature, spiritual songs, tales of the Prophets, talismans, images of the Prophet's belongings, tomb inscriptions, and visits to ancient Bolghar sacred places. When confronted by Russian and Kräshen missionaries who emerged from their midst, apostates were obligated to defend their faith. They drew their arguments from past mystical literature, which provided models of action in an environment hostile to the expansion of Islam and from the experience of previous Turkic encounters with paganism, shamanism, and various Christianities. Sufi-inspired books also addressed different levels of integration of Islamic literacy, offered hopes of redemption for all, and promised miraculous empowerment for both genders.

For the Tatar community, Il'minskii's successes demonstrated the problematic fluidity of religious allegiance. Tatar scholars, exposed to Russian thought and modernist trends in the Ottoman Empire and India, became aware of the threat posed by the Russian missionaries' "rational" and "scripturally based" attacks on the popular mystical literature that had molded their childhood and perceptions of the non-Muslim "Other." Their new schools attempted to use Western and Ottoman Turkish educational practices to teach a rationalized Islam purified of the thaumaturgical emphasis that characterized the traditional village *maktab* curriculum. Believing that the Muslims of the Russian Empire had to adopt Western science and technology to survive in the modern world, Tatar reformists gave science and modern Western languages a more visible place in the curricula of their schools and created new textbooks emphasizing the Prophet's justice and his role as a builder of civilization. Although critical of the thaumaturgical content of popular Sufi literature, jadid intellectuals continued to use images from these tales to bring change and a greater openness to Russian civilization, predict the triumph of Islam in both East and West, and integrate the story of former apostate communities, still marginalized by their baptism, into a more dignified narrative of sacred resistance to colonial power.

Despite the jadid critique, traditional textbooks nevertheless prepared the way for Islam's reformulation of its tradition. Sufis—whom the jadids considered partly responsible for the decline of Islam—did not preach asceticism, call for a relaxation of rituals, or show uncritical receptivity of pre-Islamic practices. Instead, they called for social and economic involvement in the society, strict observance of rituals, expansion of literacy, and caution with regard to miracles. Moreover, jadids were not the representatives of the secular eighteenth-century European enlightenment. In particular,

they did not subject miracles to historical or scientific analysis. They did challenge the authenticity and worship of some anonymous saints' tombs, which had constituted an important religious network for future converts, but they rarely challenged miracles outright, partly because miracles were one of the attributes of Islamic prophets. If displaced at school, Sufi traditional textbooks, which were under attack by Russian missionaries, could still be read at home, chanted as *munajat* in school choirs, or studied as ancient Turkic literature. Furthermore, not all reformers called for a relaxation of rituals. Thus Sufism, as reflected in the old school books, and jadidism had more in common than usually suggested in Tatar or even Western historiography. Neither the modernists, such as Fäkhṛ ad-Din, nor the authors of prejadid books contended that believers should neglect Islamic rituals in the name of spirituality. Instead, they all held that Islamic rituals were an organic part of Islamic spirituality and intellectual life. This ultimately explains the penetration of jadid forms of literacy in many villages in the Middle Volga. Even apostate villages of Mamadysh were exposed to some form of jadid elementary literacy. Acceptance of new forms of knowledge, however, did not mean radical substitution of older patterns of learning, which were still at work throughout the Soviet period. According to *zemstvo* reports in Ufa and Kazan provinces, Tatar *maktabs* used both traditional books and jadid readers at the elementary level. It was up to the teachers and later to the students to pick what they deemed useful in jadid religious books.

After the 1917 revolutions, Kräshens attempted to defend their separate identity, but later in the 1930s the divide between Kräshens and Tatars disappeared on paper. Starting in February 1917, Kräshens avoided associating themselves with Tatar political associations, which to their view were too Muslim in orientation, and formed alliances with other baptized non-Russian indigenous communities. They created the Society of the Small Peoples of the Volga Region to reiterate their prerevolutionary demand for the promotion of indigenous priests in non-Russian parishes and even indigenous bishops for each ethnic group. Kräshen intellectuals, in particular the publishers of a new journal *Kriashen Gazite* (May 1917)—Ivan Mikheev (1872–1937) and Nikolai Egorov (1870–1922)—strove for the recognition of a separate “Kräshen nation” and the creation of an autonomous Kräshen republic inside the projected Idel-Ural State (formed on 19 November 1917). They obtained the creation of a traveling Kräshen theater, the opening of Kräshen sections at the Oriental Conservatory and the musical school, and the transformation in 1922 of the former Kazan Central Baptized-Tatar School into a Kräshen pedagogical technical school (*Kriashpedtekhnikum*). The Bolsheviks were willing to promote national status for all minorities in order to consolidate their power, but the Kräshens' case posed a hurdle as Orthodoxy and prerevolutionary missionary work had been instrumental in shaping elements of their identity. To the amazement of many Kräshen leaders who supported the teaching of religion in schools to avoid the further Tatarization (Islamization) of Kräshens in mixed villages, a younger generation of Kräshen communists rejected religion as an identity marker for their community, advocating Kräshen particularity based on their community's unique historical development, material culture, and alphabet. In 1922, local communists went further than these young Kräshen communists and denied Kräshens the status of a separate nation on the grounds that the Kräshen community was a product of Russification policies. Kräshens were merged with the Tatar

nation, a new secularized entity. As a result, in the 1930s, they lost the privilege of having their own newspaper, technical school, and theater. The 1926 census still registered Kräshens under their “national” name, but the next censuses classified them as Tatars. Historiographically, a new search for “pagan” and “Turkic” common roots began. In this context, popular expressions of Islamic and Christian devotion were to be understood as remnants of a distant “pagan” past common to Kräshens and Muslim Tatars.<sup>1</sup>

In the countryside, however, despite the antireligious campaigns of the early 1930s that resulted in the destruction of Kräshen churches by Tatars and Tatar mosques by Kräshens, religion continued to serve as an essential identity marker in both communities. In Chura, a persistent legend claims that when Tatars destroyed the church bell tower, the Gospel miraculously flew away and the desecrators died mysteriously. During the relatively more religiously tolerant period of World War II, when Josef Stalin sought to gain the support of the entire population against a common enemy, the Kräshens of Chura, Staryi Karabaian, Ianyli, and Nalim painted their own icons and kept them in full view, copied portions of the Liturgy in their diaries and recited them at home, and diligently taught their children basic prayers privately—a practice they continued to the present day. Kräshens celebrated Eastern Orthodox festivals, even sharing Easter eggs with their Muslim neighbors who descended from apostates. Reciprocally, descendants of apostates invited Kräshens to their holiday celebrations.<sup>2</sup>

During the Soviet period, many of the descendants of apostates reverted to the clandestine religious practices of their ancestors. They relied on the elders’ knowledge of prayers, visited sacred tombs and springs, and buried their dead in Muslim ground. Because World War II took the lives of many men, the transmission of Islamic knowledge and in particular of the *munajat* fell mainly on women. As in the past, girls kept diaries of their favorite prayers, spiritual songs, and epics, first in Arabic script, then in the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets; they shared their notes with other girls who added their favorite poems to what was already written. One such epic told the story of a mullah who went astray and sold his daughter, Zölkhäbirä, to a pope in a card game. The young girl, now condemned to wear a small copper cross, longed for her Qur’an and Muslim books. Such epics expressed the girls’ commitment to their religious identity despite the Soviet state’s anticlerical policies. More important, these diaries served as the foundational source for the girls’ chants during the month of Ramadan, on the Prophet’s birthday, or at wakes memorializing the dead. The Muslim children of Ianyli, all descendants of apostates, observed Ramadan scrupulously and defied their Tatar atheist teachers who came from outside the region and ordered them to

1. Werth, “From ‘Pagan’ Muslims to ‘Baptized’ Communists,” 508–523; A. V. Fokin, “Kriashenskii vopros v Tatarstane: Etnoistoricheskii obzor,” in *Sovremennoe kriashenovedenie: Sostoianie, perspektivy (Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii, sostoiavsheisia 23 aprilia 2005 v g. Kazani)* (Kazan, 2005), 90–92.

2. Field notes, Staryi Karabaian, June 2000; Tat’iana Pavlova (from Nalim village), interview by author, March 2008, Tikhvin church, Kazan; Anatolii Nikolaevich Afanas’ev (director of Chura public school) and Andrei Nikolaevich Afanas’ev (both came from a priestly family repressed in the 1930s), interview by author, 12 May 2008, Chura; Andrei Fedrov, Nastia Grigor’eva, Räshidä Il’yäsova, Nail Khismätov, Anastasiia Kirilova, and Petr Stepanov, interviews by author, May 2008, Ianyli. Ibn Taymiyya condemned the participation of Muslims in Christian festivals, Jacques Waardenburg, “Official and Popular Religion as a Problem in Islamic Studies,” in *Official and Popular Religion: Analysis of a Theme for Religious Studies*, ed. Pieter Henrik Vrijhof and Jacques Waardenburg (The Hague, 1979), 340.

drink water. Christians also resisted pressure to abandon their faith: in Nalim village, the daughter of a former Kräshen priest refused to throw away her cross and for this was expelled from school. Although on paper Kräshens had merged into the Tatar nation, they continued burying their dead in separate cemeteries.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1930s, collectivization accelerated earlier trends of Islamization and Christianization in the Kukmor and Teliache regions (formerly Mamadysh district). On the one hand, Chura, which formed a collective farm with other Kräshen and Udmurt villages, grew to be a stronghold of Kräshen identity with only one Tatar family as of 2008.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, neighboring Ianyli, which had partially apostatized in 1883 and 1905 but was the target of constant Eastern Orthodox missionary activity, became a strong bastion of Islam after being absorbed by Vakhitovo, a large Tatar village, also the center of an important collective farm.<sup>5</sup> Whereas Chura church, restored in the years following perestroika, is now open for the Sunday Divine Liturgy, the beautiful prerevolutionary wooden church of Ianyli—built in 1907 and named after the apostles Peter and Paul—functions only for funerals and memorials.<sup>6</sup> There are still a few Kräshens in Ianyli, but they are all elderly; their grandchildren all identify with Islam. Whereas the school museum of Chura exhibits traditional Kräshen dresses and artifacts, Ianyli's includes only Tatar feminine outfits, *qomghans* for Islamic ablutions, and a *shäjärä* (genealogy) with purely Muslim names. With Ianyli's inclusion into the Tatar Vakhitovo collective farm, earlier marital networks, which survived in Chura, broke down. Whereas parents in the past had arranged marriages according to the degree of attachment of their future daughter-in-law's village or family to Islam or Christianity, the younger generation came to form new marital alliances with their parents' tacit agreement, after attending the same schools and working together at the farm.<sup>7</sup> As for Elyshevo, the last Kräshen family, all descendants of Kondratii Filippov, left during the famine of the 1920s. Although officially part of the Tatar ethnos, the remaining inhabitants continued marrying within their prerevolutionary apostate

3. Tat'iana Pavlova (from Nalim village), interview by author, April 2008, Tikhvin church, Kazan; diaries of Märyäm Yaghqub qızı Shäriřullina, born in Elyshevo, property of Gölsinä Khämıdullina. In her notebooks (ca. 1948), Märyäm transliterated sections of the eighteenth-century primer *Sharä'it al-İmân* into Cyrillic and copied epics whose main characters were women. *Zölkhäbirä* was one of them.

4. Chura was the church where the Kräshen poet İakov Emel'ianov, former student of Il'minskii and Timofeev, served as a priest. In a letter to Il'minskii, Emel'ianov wrote of his efforts to bring the old converts of Ianyli back to Orthodoxy. NART, f. 968, op. 1, d. 105, ll. 23–24 ob.

5. The Brotherhood of St. Gurii opened a school in Ianyli (also called Novaia Semen-Golovina) in 1872. *Narodnye uchilishcha v Kazanskoi gubernii ... Mamadyshskii uezd*, 77.

6. *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Bratsva Sv. Guriiä za semnadtsatyı bratskii god*, 19; "Otchet po obozreniiu khramov i shkol v selakh Kazanskogo, Laishevskogo i Mamadyshskogo uezdov s 15–25 noiabria vliuchitel'no, proizvedennomu vikariem Kazanskoi eparkhii Aleksiem episkopom Chistopol'skim—15 noiabria," *IKE*, no. 12 (22 March 1906): 392; İakov Koblov, "Torzhestvo osviashcheniia khramov v sele Apazove Kazanskogo uezda i der. Ianyliakh Mamadyshskogo uezda," *IKE*, no. 6 (8 February 1908): 194–195.

7. Currently Kräshen leaders worry that the further consolidation of villages through land reform will lead to the disappearance of more Kräshen villages. A new challenge awaits the Kräshens of Chura who, in 2008, have been attached to the same Vakhitovo kolkhoz, which was partly responsible for the Islamization of the Kräshen community of Ianyli. Anna Egorovna Alekseeva, Anna Terenteevna Alekseeva, Zoia Mikhailovna Egorova, Anastasiia Nikolaevna Tukacheva, interviews by author, 12 May 2008, Chura; Liudmila Muliukova (vice-director), Aysılı Khismätova (Tatar language teacher), interviews by author, 13 May 2008, Public School of Ianyli.

network well into the Soviet period, still experiencing discrimination from the neighboring Tatar village of Shittsy, center of their collective farm.<sup>8</sup>

After perestroika the Tatar community faced new challenges to the maintenance of its communal cohesiveness and new threats of apostasy. Freedom of religion brought new choices. Some Tatars showed responsiveness to other nontraditional creeds, in particular Evangelical Christianity brought by Western missionaries, the Hare Krishna movement, and alternate forms of Islam. Unexpectedly the Kräshens reasserted their separate identity in 1989, organized ethnographic conferences and unions in Kazan and Naberezhnye Chelny, and in 1992 asked for government funding for their religious and cultural needs, including the Kräshen newspapers, schools, theater, and churches closed in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>9</sup> The Kräshens also demanded their inclusion as a separate group from the Tatars in the 2002 census to facilitate their access to state funds. Tatar nationalists regarded these demands as an attempt by Moscow to divide the Tatar ethnos and reconsider the sovereign status of Tatarstan; they feared that if the percentage of Tatars in Tatarstan fell below 50 percent, the Tatars could lose their political leadership.<sup>10</sup> Another challenge for the Tatars came from foreign Muslim missionaries who brought petrodollars from Saudi Arabia to rebuild Tatarstan's Islamic infrastructure, but who questioned the Islamic character of Tatar practices—in particular the very rituals that had served to spread and consolidate Islam among the apostates of Imperial Russia. Wahhabi Saudis condemned prayers to the Prophet and the saints, visits to local shrines, votive rituals, commemorative ceremonies for dead relatives, celebration of the Prophet's birthday, amulets, music, dance, and songs, and participation in Christian holidays. Such condemnations echoed earlier Russian missionary attacks on thaumaturgical Islam. All these new challenges prompted the reactivation of older myths that solidified community, in particular the forced Christianization of Tatars by Ivan the Terrible and the struggle of the baptized apostates for the recognition of their true faith.<sup>11</sup>

8. Field notes, Elyshevo, 1996 and 2008. Brides, during the Soviet period, came overwhelmingly from *starokreshchenye* villages. Novaia (Yanga), Kibeč', Kibiak-Kozi (Kibä-Khuja), Bol'shie Savrushii (Sawrišh), Sosnovyi Mys (Jänäy), Saltygan Kliuch (Köyek; because of land redistribution, this village no longer exists), Tri Sosny (now part of Staraiä Ikshurma), and Ianyli. Except for Kibeč' these villages are all currently Muslim. Other brides came from the Kukmor area.

9. Kräshens currently maintain a Web site (<http://kryashen.ru>) and publish two newspapers in "Kräshen language": *Keräshen süze* (The Kräshen Word) and *Tughanaylar* (Countrymen) in Naberezhnye Chelny, which include reprints of Il'minskii's translations of sacred texts. Another interesting review, *ANKO (Aktual'noe Natsional'no-Kul'turnoe obozrenie)*, contains articles about Finno-Ugric and Turkic minorities living in Tatarstan. Addresses of restored contemporary Kräshen churches are available on the Kazan diocesan site, <http://kazan.eparhia.ru>.

10. According to the 1926 census, the Kräshens, numbering 99,000, constituted 7.8 percent of the Tatar population of the Tatar Autonomous Republic. D. M. Iskhakov and R. N. Musina, eds., *Sovremennye mezhnatsional'nye protsessy v TSSR: Programma issledovaniia i instrumentarii* (Kazan, 1991), 61; Fokin, "Kriashenskii vopros," 94–100; Dmitry Gorenburg, "Tatar Identity: A United, Indivisible Nation?" (Harvard University, 19 July 2004), 1–31, <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~gorenbur/gorenburg%20tatar%20identity.pdf> (accessed 24 May 2009); Liudmila Belousova, "Kereshen: Pravo na samobytnost'?" *Tatarskii mir*, no. 6 (2003) in <http://www.tatmir.ru/article.shtml?article=47> (accessed 25 May 2009).

11. In the 1990s, a number of historical novels decried the Tatars' forced Christianization and celebrated national Tatar resistance: Ilghaz Wahap Näwrüzkhān, *Söyembikä* (Challī, 1992); Jämit Räkhimov, *Batırsha* (Kazan, 1994) on the Bashkir-Tatar rebellion of 1755; Wakhit Imamov, *Säyet batır* (Yar-Challī, 1994) on an earlier rebellion in 1704–1722. See also Zölfät Khäkīm, *Äwliyä qabere* (Qiyssa) (1989–1994) in

Vehemently hostile to the Kräshens' reassertion of separate identity, the youth journal *Idel* published excerpts from the Orthodox missionary Malov's diaries and a very suggestive cartoon of a young Tatar adolescent in traditional costume, wearing the traditional Muslim skullcap, crucified on the cross. An article in the same journal held Kräshens responsible for the fall of Kazan, suggesting that they should be ashamed of their origins and "return" to Islam.<sup>12</sup> Under the direction of Wäliulla Yaghqubov (1963–2012), the publishing house Iman (Faith) published Tatar translations of Malov's diaries in its yearly Islamic calendar.<sup>13</sup> In addition to promoting an interpretation of the apostasies as the return of an oppressed people to their original faith, Iman also favored prejudicial religious literature. In particular Yaghqubov adopted its conceptions of the afterlife with its strong emphasis on collective responsibility for the salvation of family and neighbors over the jadids' emphasis on personal responsibility for one's salvation. Jadid criticisms of popular Islam sounded too much like the attacks formulated by Saudi missionaries. But even secularized Tatars who rarely set foot in the mosque or prayed at home associated Islam with the gathering of elderly women chanting the *munajat* for religious festivals, visiting sacred tombs, the healing properties of sacred springs, and repasts memorializing the dead.<sup>14</sup>

By reprinting ancient Sufi literature and *munajat* as conduits for re-Islamization of the Tatar population and repositories of forgotten Tatar words of Farsi and Arabic origin, Yaghqubov emphasized the continuity between pre-Soviet past and the present. The ancient story of Joseph and Zulaykha, which offered models of action and resistance in an environment hostile to the expansion of Islam, continues to represent symbolic resources from which contemporary Tatars may redraw their image as a "national" Muslim community separate from Eastern Orthodox Russians. Imams still use the tale to reintroduce both sexes to their obligations as missionaries of Islam. They call their flock to follow the example of Joseph who never ceased to witness for his faith, even in prison and to imitate Potiphar's wife who was once pagan but then repented; thus Tatars should spread their faith in all secular spaces and reject atheism

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*Saylanma äsärklär*, vol. 2 (Kazan, 1997), 67–125. In his tale, Ivan the Terrible forcefully baptized Söläyman, a Tatar who defended Kazan in 1552. Despite being rejected by his own countrymen, Söläyman remained faithful to Islam, carrying Islamic books in his bags. After his death, his tomb became the focus of a holy pilgrimage. In the 1990s the Tatarstan Ministry of Education actively promoted these novels by providing pedagogical guides to help teachers use them in the classroom. Khatıyp Mingneghulov and Shäykhelislam Sadretdinov, *Urta ghasır ham XIX yöz tatar ädäbiyatı* (Kazan, 1998), 44, 124, 169, 174.

12. Fanis Baltach, "Gordit'sia ili stydit'sia dolzhny kriasheny?" *Idel*, nos. 5–6 (1994): 61–66. Excerpts from Malov's diaries were published in Tatar in the religious calendar, *Möselman jädwäle, 1414–1415, Tatar kalendare 1994* (Kazan, 1994), composed and edited by Shäekh Zäbirov and Fäniyä Khujakhmäät, and in the youth journal *Idel*, nos. 5, 6, 7, 8 (1993) and 6 and 9 (1994). See also "Evmimii Malov: Sezdan iman, bezdan imana!" *Idel*, no. 1 (1996): 60. The cartoon was published in "Bezdan imana, sezdan iman," *Idel*, no. 5 (May 1993): 71.

13. Yaghqubov (Iakupov in Russian), former chief assistant of the Mufti at the Muslim Religious Board of Kazan, was killed in July 2012. Andrew Roth, "Two Muslim Officials Attacked in Southern Russia," *New York Times*, 19 July 2012.

14. A. Timerghalin, "Ruslashtıru häm chuqındıru tarikhınnan säkhifälär," *Iman nurı (Islam zhurnali)*, no. 3 (1995): 16–29.

and consumerism for a sharia-based life.<sup>15</sup> Iskhaqi's Zöläykha, an apostate reincarnation of Joseph's Zulaykha, has also reemerged as a powerful symbol of national and religious resistance to spiritual Russification, and as a means to reintroduce the idea that a Tatar can be only Muslim and a Russian only Orthodox. Censored in the 1920s for its religious content and anti-Russian rhetoric, Iskhaqi's play has been made into a film by Ramil Tukhvatullin sponsored by the Republic of Tatarstan and distributed by mosque and madrasa vendors. Shown for the first time in 2005, the film opened with a discussion between Il'minskii and Malov plotting for the Russification and total annihilation of the Tatar people, anachronistically linking the horrifying fate of Zulaykha with Il'minskii and Malov.<sup>16</sup>

The play has also become part of the Tatarstan public school curriculum, along with samples of Sufi literature.<sup>17</sup> Whereas Tatar teachers welcome the return of their national ancient and jadid literatures, Kräshen teachers find the reading of Tatar Sufi literature and the learning of the Arabic alphabet a challenge for their students because, as they confided to me, Islamic culture is alien to them and their language is devoid of Arabic and Farsi loanwords. Nevertheless Kräshen teachers take the opportunity to emphasize the religious differences between Orthodoxy and Islam. When the time comes to read the story of apostate Zöläykha, these Christian teachers inform students of their true origin: the Kräshen people descended from Turkic peoples who accepted baptism well before Ivan the Terrible at the time of the Bolghar kingdom and the Golden Horde. Contrary to Islam, Christianity of the Greek faith allowed Russians, Chuvash, Maris, Udmurts, and Kräshens to preserve their native customs. As for Kräshen historians and activists, they concentrate their efforts on the search for their complex origins, the rehabilitation of Il'minskii, the discovery of Kräshen agency in Il'minskii's pedagogical reforms, the search for Kräshen role models for the next generation, and evidence of their struggle against Russification after the death of Il'minskii when his system of native instruction came under attack. They look into the histories of their villages and seek to preserve the songs and dances of their elders. To the credit of the Tatarstan Ministry of Education, Kräshen and Tatar children can now read samples of Iakov Emel'ianov's poems and get acquainted with the Kräshens' unique culture and history in some of the textbooks used in the

15. See reprints of the tale in modern Tatar illustrated by Ildar Äkhmädiev in the children's journal, *Salawat küpere*, no. 3 (May 1990): 9–10 ("Qol Ghali, Yosif Kitabi"); "Qiyssai Yosif," opera based on Qol 'Ali's epic directed by K. Bikmökhammätov, Tatarstan TV, 1996; Leonid Liubovskii (composer) and Renat Kharis (poet and librettist), *Skazanie o Iusufe*, ballet in three acts first staged at the Kazan Theater named after M. Dzhali' in 2003; Ramil Khäzrät Yunis, Qur'anic readings, chapter 12, Qol Shärif mosque, Kazan Kremlin, 17 and 24 April 2008 (author's field notes); *Pokornaia Bogu ili poslushnaia d'iavolu* (Moscow, 2008), 108–122.

16. Ramil' Tukhvatullin (director and producer), *Zuleikha*. Collection of historical films on DVD distributed by Firdaus Studio; *Entsiklopediia Islam v sovremennoi Rossii* (Moscow, 2008), 127.

17. *Tatar mäktäplärendä Tatar ädäbiyatınnan belem birü standartı* (Kazan, 2004); *Tatar urta mäktäpläre öchen ädäbiyat programmaları 5–11 sıynıflar* (*Tatarstan Respublikası Mägharif häm fän ministrilighi tarafınnan raslanghan*) (Kazan, 2005); Kh. Y. Mingneghulov and N. S. Ghıymadieva, *Tatar ädäbiyatı (Rus telendä urta ghomumi belem birüche mäktäpneng 10-nchii sıynıfi öchen däreslek-khrestomatiya* (*Tatar balaları öchen*) (Kazan, 2006), 3–90; Sämigha Säwbanova, *Bügen bäyräm, bügen tuy: Mäktäp uquchıları, uqıtıçılar, ata-analar häm mädäni-aghartu uchrezhdenieläre öchen bäyräm kichäläre ütkärü ürnäkläre tuplanghan däreslek-qullanma* (Kazan, 2005), 21–47.

republic's schools.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, while Russian Orthodox priests preach on TV at major festivals, Kräshen priests are still barred from the opportunity to share the "good news" in what they call their Kräshen language. More troublesome is the anti-Kräshen rhetoric of the ultranationalist writer, Fäwziyā Bāyrāmova (b. 1950), who associates Kräshen Christianity with sorcery.<sup>19</sup>

From the mid-nineteenth century on, female religious specialists, Sufi imams, Eastern Orthodox missionaries, state bureaucrats, Muslim reformists, local Russian notables, humble villagers, Soviet communists, and Tatar post-Soviet politicians have clashed as they sought to fashion new collective identities for the peoples of the Middle Volga. Culture with its myths and symbols has persisted throughout the Soviet period and still constitutes an important source of imaginary power for both Kräshens and Tatars. If Tatars were quick to revive their visits to the sacred ruins of Bolghar, the Kräshens took the same route to pray at the site where their Turkic saint, Avraamii, was martyred. To my remark that some prominent Tatar figures declared that Kräshens should return to the faith of their ancestors, an elderly Kräshen woman answered that no one had forced her to be Orthodox, that Orthodoxy did not belong to Russians alone but belonged to all people, and that in biblical times, when God destroyed the Babel tower and scattered all nations, Kräshens, Maris, Chuvash, Udmurts, Russians were present, but not the Tatars. In other words, because the Tatars did not originate in biblical times, they could not be part of God's plan to save humanity. Her story echoed earlier nineteenth-century tales of the prophets, which served to defend Islam or solidify Christianity among the baptized Tatars. Another prominent eighty-year-old Kräshen woman who saw an apostle in a dream claimed that her prerevolutionary books (including stories about the eschatological toll gates and the superiority of Christianity over Islam) miraculously escaped a fire. Similar stories about the Qur'an circulate among female students of the Mōhāmmādiyā madrasa in Kazan.<sup>20</sup>

Contemporary analysts have focused their energies on counting the number of mosques and churches, checking church or mosque attendance, or delving into church and mosque politics to measure the population's level of commitment to religion, which often led to conclusions that religion was a veneer or a temporary fad. However, nothing has been written on the reappropriation by Tatars and Kräshens of their prerevolutionary religious literature, myths, and sacred spaces in a largely

18. Field notes (interviews by author of Galina Pavlovna Azina, Marina Vasil'evna Igushina, and Anatolii Nikolaevich Afanas'ev), Chura, May 2008. Teachers turn to the history of the Kräshen people (*Sud'ba gvardēitsev Seiumbeki*) as interpreted by Maksim Glukhov-Nogaibek who views Kräshens as the very first Christians of Eastern Europe. They have also created their own textbook of Kräshen songs: *Kerāshen jiru äytä* (Challi, 1999). Finally, Kräshen children can read Emel'ianov's poems in a ninth-grade anthology *Tatar ädäbiyatınman khrestomatıia (Borıngıi häm urta ghasır, XIX yöz ädäbiyatı)* (Kazan, 2000), 290–293. The editors, however, exclude the priest's controversial poem about the awakening of the Kräshen people and overemphasize his dependence on Russian writers.

19. Gennadii Makarov, "Perspektivy razvitiia traditsionnoi kul'tury Kriashen v sovremennykh usloviakh," 39–40; Fäwziyā Bāyrāmova, *Songghıi namaz* (2000), in *Qırıq sırt: Romannar* (Kazan, 2005), 654–656.

20. For a critique of the Tatar press, see T. G. Dunaeva, "Sovremennoe polozhenie kriashen Tatarstana: Analiticheskaia informatsiia respublikanskoi pechati za poslednee desiatiletie," <http://kryashen.ru/index5.php?link=5> (accessed 17 May 2009); field notes, Tikhvin church and Mōhāmmādiyā madrasa, Kazan, April 2008; M. Martınova, "Ul töshendä Apostolnı kürgän," *Tughanaylar* (31 January 2008), 5.

secular environment. The Russian conquest, the physical ruins of the Bolghar and Kazan pasts, the “forced” Christianization of the Tatars, the nineteenth-century apostasy movements, and the prerevolutionary religious literature constitute important clusters of memory that both religious and secular teachers seek to reactivate in order to solidify communal boundaries, first shattered by the Russian conquest, then by the Revolution, and today by globalization.