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# Apostasy, Conversion, and Literacy at Work

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Tatar reformists severely criticized the faith and morale of superstitious mullahs, itinerant dervishes, and Sufi shaykhs who taught from antiquated books, did not understand the texts that they purported to teach, and discouraged their flock from learning the Russian language and studying the secular sciences. Because of these ignorant teachers of Islam, children failed to learn how to read, write a simple letter, and perform the basic obligations of their faith. These teachers transmitted a superstitious view of Islam that did not correspond with the teachings of the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>1</sup> The Tatar reformists' critique echoed that of the Russian missionaries, who also believed that Tatar mullahs and shaykhs, unlettered in Arabic, knew little of the Qur'an. At the same time, Russian missionaries recognized the effectiveness of these same men as pedagogues and propagandists who successfully spread elementary knowledge about Islam in Turkic and Finno-Ugric milieus and encouraged Tatar resistance to Russian assimilation. Such mullahs, shaykhs, and their students were largely responsible for preventing the spread of Christianity into the Tatar countryside.

To better elucidate this paradox, this chapter does not focus on a typical description of the traditional curriculum that has been the subject of Western, Soviet, and more contemporary Tatar or Bashkir studies. Such an approach tends to contrast pre-modern traditional and European-inspired modern education, minimizing the successes of primary traditional learning and its earthly practicality.<sup>2</sup> Rather, it looks at

1. Fatikh Kärimi, *Jihangir mäkhdümneng awıl mäktäbendä uquı* (Tornalı awılıning mäktäbendä) (1898), and *Ber shäkert ilä ber student* (parakhodta), 1900, reprinted in *Tatar mäghrifätlelek ädäbiyatı* (1860–1905) (Kazan, 1979), 230–235 and 246–263; Yosif Aqchura, *Damella Ghalimjan äl-Barudi* (Kazan, [1907] 1997), 15, 35–36; Fatikh Amirkhan, *Moia avtobiografiia* (1911), in *Izbrannoe* (Rasskazy i povesti), trans. G. Khantemirova (Moscow, 1975), 81–84; Ismail Gasprinskii, *Mebadi-yi temeddün-i Islamiyan-i Rus*, trans. Edward Lazzzerini, in “Gadidism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: A View from Within,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 16, no. 2 (April–June 1975): 245–277; Zakir Hadi, “Jihansha khäzrät,” (1908) in *Tatar ädäbiyatınan khrestomatiya* (Kazan, 1957), 205–251; Mäjät Ghafuri, “Tärjemäi khälem,” in *Äsär-lär: 4 tomda* (Kazan, 1981), vol. 4, 365; *Tärjümän*, no. 10 (18 March 1890). Muslim reformers in Central Asia made similar criticisms of these traditional textbooks; see Adeeb Khalid, *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (Berkeley, 1998), 24.

2. Dzhamaliutdin Validov, *Ocherk istorii obrazovannosti i literatury Tatar do revoliutsii 1917* (Moscow and Petrograd, 1923), 13–32; *Tatary Srednego Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia* (Moscow, 1967), 378; Z. A. Ishmukhametov, *Sotsial'naia rol' i evoliutsiia Islama v Tatarii* (Kazan, 1979), 124–128; Saliäm Alishev, “Obuchenie i obrazovanie tatarskikh krest'ian v XVIII v.,” in *Razvitie kul'tury Tatarii v dooktiabr'skii period* (Kazan, 1988), 42–57; Marsil' Farkhshtatov, *Narodnoe obrazovanie v Bashkirii v poreformennyi period, 60–90 e gody XIX v.* (Moscow, 1994), 54–95; Ahmet Kanlıdere, *Reform within Islam: The tajvid and jadid movement among the Kazan Tatars (1809–1917): Conciliation or Conflict?* (Istanbul, 1997), 77–85; *Reforma obrazovaniia: Tatory Nizhegorodchiny i musul'manskii mir* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2008).

how peasants used their knowledge—understood here as both religious and secular—to build a community of faith and resist state encroachment when their identity was questioned. The apostasies of the nineteenth century were more than peasant-led legalistic movements triggered by a change of state policies toward its Muslim subjects. Instead, they constituted movements of conversion and revival, a time when villagers of various ethnic and religious backgrounds made the communal choice of participating fully in the faith of Islam.

## The Main Actors

### *The Kräshens: Their Origins and Religious Hybridity*

The main participants of the apostasy movement were the baptized Tatars whom Muslim Tatars called either by their indigenous name *keräshen* (pl. *keräshennär*) or, to express their disapproval, *mäkruh*—an Arabic word meaning “abominable,” “reprehensible,” “disliked,” and “not forbidden by God but looked upon with horror by Muslim teachers.” *Mäkruh* especially signified those crypto-Muslims who had succumbed to Russian pressures to nominally embrace Christianity. Muslims also called the Christian Tatars *murtadd*, another Arabic word meaning apostate, which implies that Kräshens had apostatized from Islam and were legally dead. Another favorite appellation was *chuqīnghannar*, which means “baptized,” but which became a profanity, meaning “killed” or “dead,” in a number of colorful and humorous expressions still used today in former apostate villages. Literally, the reflexive verb *chuqīnirgha* derived from the verb *chuqirgha*, “to pick,” “to knock,” or “to tap,” and means “to be picked” or “to be hit.” For Tatars, the cross resembled a bird beak or a little hammer, thus being baptized was equated to being bitten by a bird or hit by a hammer. Only after 1905 did some Tatar newspapers, more sympathetic to the baptized cause, opt for the term *mükreh* (“forced to do something”) to designate the Turkic-speaking converts from Eastern Orthodoxy to Islam. Significantly, *mäkruh* and *mükreh* were spelled the same way in Arabic script except for the long “ū” of *mäkrüh*, which was dropped in *mükreh*. In *jadid* literature, the ridiculed “abominable” apostates from Islam turned into victims, who had been compelled to accept baptism.<sup>3</sup>

3. “Otchet bakalavra missionerskogo protivomusul'manskogo otdeleniia Kazanskoi dukhovnoi akademii N. I. Il'minskogo o poezdke po tatarskim seleniim (1856),” in *Khristianskoe prosveshchenie i religioznye dvizheniia (reislamizatsiia) kreshchenykh tatar v XIX–nachale XX vv.: Sbornik materialov i dokumentov* (Kazan, 2011), 155; Nikolai Ostroumov, “Predvaritel'nye zamechaniia o tatarskom iazyke v sviazi s priiatym v slovar' alfavitom,” in *Pervyi opyt slovaria narodno-tatarskogo iazyka po vygovoru kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskoi gubernii* (Kazan, 1876), 5; idem, *Tatarsko-russkii slovar'* (Kazan, 1892), 229 (“chukī”), 230 (“chum”); Shihāb ad-Dīn b. Bahā' ad-Dīn Märjāni, *Mustafād al-akhbār fi ahwāl Qazān wa Bulghār*, vol. 1 (Kazan, 1897), 31; Rizaeddin Fākhreddinev, *Bolghar wā Qazan Törekläre* (Kazan, 1993), 56; definitions of *makruh* and *mükreh* in Redhouse Türkçe/Osmanlıca-İngilizce sözlük (1997), 749, 817; 'Ayn ad-Din Ähmärof, “Mükrehlär hälendän,” *Qazān Mokhbire (Kazanskii Vestnik)*, no. 78 (May 1906); Otdel rukopisei Instituta iazyka, literatury i istorii Akademii nauk Tatarstana, f. 56, op. 1, ed. khr. 3, l. 165 ob. (because of the negative connotation of the past-present participle *chuqīnghān* for “baptized,” Russian missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century chose to translate “baptized” as *chumilghan* [immersed]); Paul Werth, “From ‘Pagan Muslims’ to ‘Baptized’ Communists: Religious Conversion and Ethnic Particularity in Russia’s Eastern Provinces,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 3 (July 2000): 501.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Muslims who lived near the Kräshen villages often despised their neighbors for being neither Muslim nor Christian; yet at the turn of the twentieth century, Kräshens—who thanks to new missionary schools had remained Eastern Orthodox—claimed proud distinctiveness from the Tatars and viewed Christianity as their native religion. Kräshens requested not to be referred to as Tatars (*tatary*) or baptized Tatars (*kreshchenye tatary*) in the Russian press. Unlike the Tatars who were Muslim or the apostates (former baptized Tatars who had joined Islam), they argued, the Kräshens were Eastern Orthodox Christians. Nonetheless, in this book both “baptized Tatars” and “Kräshens” are used to designate a legal category of Turkic-speaking people, baptized in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, whose religious affiliation was in the making or in negotiation until the 1920s. The term Tatar—a word that the Turkic peoples of the Volga and Kama rarely used before the twentieth century—is used as a synonym for local Turkic Muslims living in the Volga-Kama region.<sup>4</sup>

Soviet and contemporary Tatar historiographies (and also the natives of the former apostate, now Muslim Tatar, villages I visited) portray the Russian conversion campaign of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries among the native peoples of the Middle Volga as state-initiated violence.<sup>5</sup> However, Ivan the Terrible (r. 1547–1584), who benefited from the support of part of the Tatar elite, did not make conversion to Christianity a condition for Tatars to enter Russian service and avoided destroying all mosques in Kazan after its conquest. For this reason, and also because vibrant Christian Orthodox communities continue to exist among the native peoples of the Middle Volga, some Western historians have softened the traditional picture of aggressive Christianization.<sup>6</sup> The origin of the Kräshen community, sitting on the fault line between Christianity and Islam that stretched through Eurasia and Central Asia, is indeed quite complex and defies twenty-first-century nationalist paradigms.

Two waves of conversion to Eastern Orthodox Christianity took place among the Tatars of the Middle Volga. Archbishops Gurii (r. 1555–1563) and German (r. 1564–1567) of Kazan, assisted by the Tatar-speaking abbot of the Transfiguration monastery Varsonofii (ca. 1495–1576), inaugurated the first wave in the sixteenth century. All three were canonized in 1595 by the Kazan metropolitan Germogen

4. Kräshen priest D. Grigor'ev, “Zovite nas kreshchenami,” *Izvestiia po Kazanskoi Eparkhii* (hereafter *IKE*), nos. 14–15 (8–15 April 1906): 454; on the term Tatar as an ethnonym, see Allen Frank, *Islamic History and “Bulghar” Identity among the Tatars and Bashkirs of Russia* (Boston, 1998), 4–9.

5. A.N. Grigor'ev, “Khrisianizatsiia nerusskikh narodnostei, kak odin iz metodov natsional'no-kolonial'noi politiki tsarizma v Tatarii (s poloviny XVI v. do fevralia 1917 g.),” in *Materialy po istorii Tatarii*, vol. 1 (Kazan, 1948), 226–285; Faizulkhak Islaev and Iskhak Lotfullin, *Dzhikhad tatarskogo naroda: Geroicheskaia bor'ba tatar-musul'man s pravoslavnoi inkvizitsiei na primere istorii novokreshchenskoii kontory* (Kazan, 1998).

6. Matthew P. Romaniello, “Mission Delayed: The Russian Orthodox Church after the Conquest of Kazan,” *Church History* 76, no. 3 (September 2007): 511–540; Paul Werth, “Coercion and Conversion: Violence and the Mass Baptism of the Volga Peoples, 1740–55,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 4/3 (2003): 543–570; Janet Martin, “Multiethnicity in Muscovy: A Consideration of Christian and Muslim Tatars in the 1550s–1580s,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 5, no. 1 (2001): 1–23; Allen Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions in Imperial Russia: The Islamic World of Novouzensk District and the Kazakh inner Horde, 1780–1910* (Boston, 2001), 163–167; G. N. Aidarova, “Mecheti i tserkvi Srednego Povolzh'ia vtoroi poloviny XVI–XVII vekov: Protivoborstvo i vzaimovliianiia,” in *Islamo-khristianskoe pogranichie: Itogi i perspektivy izucheniia* (Kazan, 1994), 167.

TABLE 1.1 Number of Old and New Converts in Kazan Province in 1862

District	Old Converts	New Converts
Cheboksary		250
Chistopol'	3,292	918
Kazan	1,601	960
Laishevo	8,150	298
Mamadysh	13,942	871
Spassk		161
Sviiazhsk		4,201
Tetiushi		3,979
Tsivil'sk	916	1,055
Total	27,901	12,693

Source: Evfimii Malov, "Statisticheskie svedeniia o kreshchenykh tatarakh v Kazanskoi i nekotorykh drugikh eparkhii, v Volzhskom basseine," *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta*, vol. 4 (1866): 339.

(ca. 1530–1612) and continue to be revered as saints by both Russians and Kräshens. The Office for the Affairs of New Converts (Kontora Novokreshchenykh del), which opened in 1740 in the city of Sviiazhsk, was responsible for the second wave of conversions. The earlier converts and their descendants came to be known as "old converts" (*starokreshchenye*). They were mostly located along major rivers and trade routes east of the Volga in the Kazan, Mamadysh, and Laishevo districts of Kazan province, at the intersection of the Kazan and Viatka provinces, and in the Menzelinsk district in Ufa province. Some of these villages claimed baptized military servicemen of Tatar or Finno-Ugric origin among their ancestors. The converts of the second wave, called "new converts" (*novokreshchenye*), lived mostly south of the Volga and Kama rivers in the Kazan province and on the right bank of the Volga in Simbirsk and Nizhnii Novgorod provinces. A large portion of the *novokreshchenye* were of Mishar origin—the Mishars being one of the Muslim Turkic-speaking groups that form the Tatar nationality of contemporary Russia. Their ancestors, without having to convert to Christianity, entered the service of Muscovite princes as early as the fifteenth century after the disintegration of the Golden Horde. The Mishar nobility joined Ivan the Terrible in his conquest of Kazan, and provided troops to protect the Russian state's expanding frontier toward the southeast.<sup>7</sup>

For some villages, the appellation of "old" or "new" converts was not fixed; the date of their baptism could not always be determined. In one document, the Russian missionary and Kazan Theological Academy professor Evfimii Malov (1835–1918) firmly designated Elyshevo (Yilish) in Mamadysh district as an "old-convert" village; in another, he suggested that the village could have been baptized later. Nevertheless, if one accepts the official categorization of old and new converts in 1866, the Kazan province included 444,556 Muslim Tatars and 44,000 Kräshens, among them 27,901

7. Flera Baiazitova, *Govory Tatar-Kriashen v sravnitel'nom osvshchenii* (Moscow, 1986), 15–18, 21, 34–38; on the Mishars as servicemen, see Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 59–61.

were *starokreshchenye* and 16,099 were *novokreshchenye*. Thus, 9 percent of the Kazan province Tatar population was officially Orthodox or “baptized.”<sup>8</sup>

Although methods of conversion remain scarce, Tatar historiography, popular lore, textbooks, and children’s publications hold that the *starokreshchenye* were Christianized by force on the lines of defense in the region north of the Volga and the Kama, on the land that Ivan IV had granted to the first archbishop of Kazan and to the Zilantov and Spaso-Preobrazhenskii monasteries.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, some Western and Russian historians have challenged the national Tatar narrative of forced conversion, citing state and church instructions sent to local representatives after the conquest of Kazan that recommended peaceful means of Christianization. The same instructions distinguished between immediately pacifying the region militarily and securing the loyalty of the conquered peoples in the long term. In general, pragmatism prevailed among the Muscovite elite. Because the Volga region was still volatile—the Maris and the Tatars repeatedly joined forces to oust their conquerors—the Muscovites refrained from a policy of aggressive conversion and awarded natives who converted to Christianity with gifts of money, clothing, food, and temporary exemption from taxes and military service. Legally, new converts to Christianity enjoyed the same rights as Russians; they could receive land in exchange for service along the major fortress lines and occupy important local administrative positions. However, until Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725) ordered Muslim servicemen to convert to Christianity or forfeit their land and princely rank, service to the czar was not tied to conversion to Christianity. In addition, these harsh measures—often used as an argument by Tatar historians to support the thesis of forced large-scale Christianization—concerned only the landholding Tatar princes, and not the peasant commoners.<sup>10</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, many of the *starokreshchenye* were of animist origin. Many of those who were of Muslim origin had returned to Islam

8. Narodnyi Arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstan (hereafter NART), f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, ll. 226–226 ob. In 1836, according to Il’dus Zagidullin’s calculations, 11.8 percent Kazan Tatars were baptized in the Kazan province. Il’dus Zagidullin, “K voprosu otpadeniia kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskoi gubernii v musulmanstvo 1866 goda,” in *Natsional’nyi vopros v Tatarii dooktiabr’skogo perioda* (Kazan, 1990), 66.

9. Iskändär Giljazov, “Le rôle de l’Islam dans l’évolution de la société tatare, de la conquête de Qazan aux réformes de Catherine II (1552–1788),” in *L’Islam de Russie: Conscience communautaire et autonomie politique chez les Tatars de la Volga et de l’Oural, depuis le XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, Dämür Is’haqov et Răfıyq Mōhāmmātshin (Paris, 1997), 15–25; Ildus Zahidullin, “La conversion à l’Orthodoxie des Tatars de la région Volga-Oural, aux XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles, et ses causes économiques et sociales,” in *ibid.*, 27–64; Engel’ Tagirov, *Na perekrestke tsivilizatsii: Istoriia Tatar v kontekste kul’tury mira* (Kazan, 2007), 259; Nurulla Garif, *Osvoboditel’naia voina tatarskogo naroda* (Kazan, 2007), 35; Mākhmūt Ākhmātjanov, “Kerāshennār tarikhiina ber qarash” (April 2001) in *Yamanni yuldash itmā (Māqalālār, ocherklar, esselar)* (Kazan, 2007), 73; Rqail Zāydulla, *Tatar Tadhī* (Kazan, 2004); G. M. Dāwlatshin, F. Sh. Khujin, and I. L. Izmailov, *Tatarstan tarikhiinan khikāyālār* 5–6 (Kazan, 1993), 129–130; Akhmad (Dmitrii) Davletshin, “Bor’ba musulman za svoi prava v tsarskoi Rossii v XVI–XVII vv.,” *Vera, Sovershenstvo, Islam (dukhovno-prosvetitel’skii zhurnal)* 15, no. 1 (2007): 19–20.

10. Boris Nolde, *La formation de l’Empire russe: Études, notes et documents*, t. 1 (Paris, 1952), 63, 115–120; Andreas Kappeler, *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Harlow, England, 2001), 24–31; Werth, “Coercion and Conversion,” 543–70; Dmitrii Liseitsev, “Sluzhilye tatory i novokreshcheny Posol’skogo prikaza v nachale XVII v.,” *Ghasirlar awazī (Ekho vekov)*, nos. 1–2 (2003), [http://www.archive.gov.tatarstan.ru/magazine/go/anonymus/main/?pathmg:/numbers/2003\\_1\\_2/01/01\\_4/](http://www.archive.gov.tatarstan.ru/magazine/go/anonymus/main/?pathmg:/numbers/2003_1_2/01/01_4/) (accessed 17 January 2009); A. F. Mozharovskii, “Izlozhenie khoda missionerskogo dela po prosveshcheniiu Kazanskikh inorodtsev s 1552 po 1867,” in *Chteniiia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh* (March–April 1880), bk. 1, 10–35.

during the 1570s and 1580s when the Tatars had attempted to retake power in the territory of their former khanate, and then again during the Stenka Razin rebellion (1670–1671).<sup>11</sup> There is no indication that Russians compelled them to reenter the Orthodox Church during these uprisings. In general, the *starokreshchenye* were located in areas separate from both the Russians and the Muslim Tatars. The sixteenth-century founders of the village of Apazovo in Kazan district were originally Muslims from neighboring villages and converted to Christianity to escape either justice or military service. Under the pressure of either their former coreligionists or the church, or simply on their own, they left their native villages to create a new community.<sup>12</sup> Russian religious authorities in general encouraged this type of separation, but scholars have also argued that, for some villages, such isolation could have occurred at the very time of the Russian conquest or even preceded it. Boris Nolde hypothesized that entire villages had accepted baptism collectively to avoid the consequences of war. Baptism in such a context could have been understood by the conquered as a ritual declaration of loyalty. The Tatar linguist Flera Baiazitova went further back in time and suggested that many of the *starokreshchenye* could have descended from the Turkic Sobekullian, Chelmat, and Temtiuzi peoples cited in twelfth-century Russian chronicles as having led a separate existence well before the Mongol invasion. But neither author adduced much evidence to back up these arguments.<sup>13</sup>

The establishment of monasteries in Kazan and Sviiazhska as spiritual, economic, and colonizing centers in the sixteenth century probably encouraged trade and religious interaction between Russians and the non-Russian residents of the Volga Region. The region's monks and nuns had to be accommodating and needed the logistical support of the local population to survive economically. Urban and rural monasteries expanded agriculture to forested lands, which fostered new economic opportunities along major road and river routes. In the seventeenth century, native peoples in state service also participated in the construction of fortresses south of the Kama River, designed to protect cultivated lands from nomadic Kalmyk and Bashkir incursions. Agriculture could have generated new forms of communal solidarities. Baptism in this context would not have been understood as a militaristic ritual of loyalty, but rather as a new form of ecological solidarity.<sup>14</sup>

Although it is impossible to determine with certitude the methods of conversion and the reasons why *starokreshchenye* adopted Christianity, it is certain that

11. A. N. Grigor'ev, "Khristianizatsiia," 230; D. M. Makarov, "Khristianizatsiia narodov Povolzh'ia vo второй polovine XVI veka," in *Istoriia khristianizatsii narodov Srednego Povolzh'ia: Kriticheskie suzheniia i otsenka* (Cheboksary, 1988), 16–18, 20–21.

12. "Materialy dlia statistiki i istorii Kazanskoi eparkhii. I. Istoricheskoe opisaniie tserkvei. O sel'skikh tserkvakh i prikhodakh Kazanskoi eparkhii. I. Kazanskii uезд. 2. O sele Apazove i tserkvi vo imia Rozhdestva Bogoroditsy," *IKE* no. 2 (15 January 1880): 56.

13. Nolde, *La formation*, 1: 118; Baiazitova, *Govory Tatar-Kriashen*, 16.

14. G. Peretiatkovich, *Povolzh'e v XVII i nachale XVIII veka: Ocherki iz istorii kolonizatsii kraia* (Odessa, 1882), 95, 100–101, 103–106, 116–117, 129–130, 141, 144, 158; Matthew P. Romaniello, "Controlling the Frontier: Monasteries and Infrastructure in the Volga region, 1552–1682," *Central Asian Survey* 19, nos. 3–4 (2000): 429–443; Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of A Colonial Empire, 1500–1800* (Bloomington, 2012), 1–6. In their need for local indigenous support, Russian monks on the Middle Volga found themselves in a position similar to that of Catholic missionaries to the Iroquois. Allan Greer, "Conversion and Identity: Iroquois Christianity in Seventeenth-Century New France," in *Conversion: Old Worlds and New*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton (New York, 2003), 175–198.



1.1: Picture of Nikolai Il'minskii in Tikhvin church on a prayer book stand, Kazan. Photograph by the author.

the external differences between the earliest group of converts to Christianity and Muslim Kazan Tatars puzzled Russian and Tatar scholars of the nineteenth century. The Russian archeologist Mikhail Iuzefovich (1802–1889) likened the Kräshens with Finns, and the Tatar historian and theologian Shihab ad-Din al-Märjani (1818–1889) underlined the differences between Kräshen and Kazan Tatar women's clothing. Kazan Tatar women did not wear the *süräkä*, a hard headdress with four angles that married Kräshen wore, nor the *tüshlek*, a decorative cloth with rows of coins attached covering their chest, whose value could reach up to seventy rubles (roughly fifty-three U.S. dollars in 1890), a substantial sum for a peasant household. Märjani advanced the conjecture that either Kazan Tatars wore such clothes before their Islamization or that Kräshens could be Tatarified Maris superficially Islamized before the Russian conquest.<sup>15</sup> The orientalist and missionary Nikolai Il'minskii (1822–1891) hypothesized that Kazan Tatars were not fully Islamized in the sixteenth century

15. Märjani, *Mustafād*, 1: 31; N. Odigitrievskii, *Kreshchenye tatory Kazanskoi gubernii: Etnograficheskii ocherk* (Moscow, 1895), 7, footnote 2. For discussions of the value of the ruble over time, see Jacob R. Eckfeldt and William E. Dubois, *A Manual of Gold and Silver Coins of All Nations Struck within the Past Century* (Philadelphia, PA, 1842), 109–12; Thomas C. Owen, "A Standard Ruble of Account for Russian Business History, 1769–1914: A Note," *Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 3 (September 1989): 699–706; Boris Nikolaevich Mironov, *Blagosostoianie naseleniia i revoliutsii v imperskoi Rossii* (Moscow, 2010); idem, *The Standard of Living and Revolutions in Russia, 1700–1917* (New York, 2012); Tracy Dennison and Steven Nafziger, "Living Standards in Nineteenth-Century Russia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 43, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 397–441.



(which might explain why this Turkic group joined Christianity, the religion of the conqueror); in addition, Islam took firmer root in the countryside after the Russian conquest and grew stronger during the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Based on the Kräshens' language, clothing, history, and genealogies, Soviet and post-Soviet scholars reaffirmed Märjani's hypothesis that some *starokreshchenye* could have Finnic roots and descended from linguistically Tatarified baptized Finno-Ugric or Turkic Chuvash peoples. Kräshen prerevolutionary women's dress exhibited Mari, Udmurt, Mordvin, Bashkir, or Chuvash characteristics depending on their location. The Kräshens of Urias'bash in the Kukmor region, although inclined toward Islam, dressed and lived like their Udmurt neighbors and their language was very much influenced by the Udmurt language.<sup>17</sup> In Elabuga district, Kräshen music also showed great affinities with the music of Udmurts. In other regions, Chuvash influence was more prominent. Although Kräshens' embroidery in the village of Tashkirmen', a village famous for its pre-Islamic sacred site in Laishevo district, did not differ from that of the Mordvins, their language contained many calques from the Chuvash language and some of their fertility rituals were very similar to those of their Chuvash neighbors. Oral traditions in Tashkirmen' confirmed that Chuvash people moved into the area in the eighteenth century, which explained why their dialect differed substantially from other Kräshen dialects and contained Chuvash verbal endings. Another baptized Tatar-speaking village, Dragun Bekhmetevo, was also originally founded by Chuvash people of Cheboksary district who came to work as laborers among rich Muslim Bashkirs.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, the Nagaibak Kräshens of Orenburg province, in the western part of present-day Republic of Bashkortostan, were a conglomerate of different cultures and peoples of animist and Muslim origin: baptized Nogays, Bashkirs, Kazan Tatars, Udmurts, Ural Cossacks, and even Central Asians. After they remained faithful to the crown during the Bashkir rebellion of 1735, Empress Anna Ivanovna (r. 1730–1740) appointed them Cossacks on the Bashkir frontier in 1736 to guard the new burgeoning towns near Menzelinsk. Some of them descended from baptized Kazan Tatar nobles, former landholding military servicemen of the czar at the Arsk fortress, but unlike members of the Chingisid dynasty who married into prominent Russian boyar families, they did not merge culturally and linguistically with other Russian landholding servicemen. They kept their language and developed a unique sense of communal identity based on Eastern Orthodoxy separate from their neighbors, both Muslim Bashkir and Russian.<sup>19</sup>

16. N. Runovskii, "Ocherk istorii khristianskogo prosveshcheniia inorodtsev Volzhsko-Kamskogo kraia v sviazi s istoriei perevodov na ikh iazyki do poloviny XIX st.," *Sibirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 2 (15 January 1901): 56.

17. Nikolai Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia kreshcheno-tatarskaia shkola. Materialy dlia istorii prosveshcheniia kreshchenykh tatar* (Kazan, 1887), 162.

18. *Tatary Srednego Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia*, 51–53; Damir Iskhakov, "Kriasheny (istoriko-etnograficheskii ocherk)," in *Tatarskaia natsiia: Istoriia i sovremennost'* (Kazan, 2002), 108–125; idem, *Etnograficheskii gruppy tatar Volgo-Ural'skogo regiona: Printsipy vydeleniia, formirovanie, rasselenie i demografiia* (Kazan, 1993), 117–144; Baiazitova, *Govory Tatar-Kriashen*, 15–48; on Dragun-Bekhmetevo, still Kräshen today, see NART, f. 93, op. 1, d. 128 b, ll. 13–18.

19. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Nagaibaks faithfully kept icons in their houses. Petr Rychkov, *Topografiia Orenburgskoi gubernii* (Ufa, [1762] 1999), 269–270; Damir Iskhakov, "Etnodemograficheskoe razvitiie Nagaibakov do pervoi chetverti XX v.," in *Nagaibaki: Kompleksnoe issledovanie gruppy kreshchenykh tatar-kazakov*, ed. Damir Iskhakov (Kazan, 1995), 4–18.

The population makeup of apostate settlements in the nineteenth century did not differ much from the villages that have remained Christian. Apostate villages were conglomerates of different ethnic groups, whose members voluntarily joined to form new village units in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Apazovo was made up of baptized Muslims and animist Udmurts who shared ancestry with the Nagaibak Kräshens of Menzelinsk. Elyshevo on the Mesha River, listed as an old-convert village in missionary statistics but whose Christianization could have occurred as late as the 1740s, was composed of Tatars and Udmurts who moved to the area in the first half of the eighteenth century. Verkhniaia Nikitkina (Yugharī Tubilghītau) in Chistopol' district included Tatars, Chuvash, and even Russians; two Russian sisters in 1849 asked to return to “the religion of their ancestors,” Islam. Finally, Ianyli in the Kukmor region, founded in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, was originally established by a Russian family and Udmurts from the Mamadysh and Arsk regions, and joined later by baptized Tatars.<sup>20</sup>

Baptism came to form a common bond between various ethnic communities partially dislocated by the Russian conquest but still attached to their indigenous beliefs. Even if pressure and material motives could have played a role in the initial process of Christianization of the *starokreshchenye*, forced conversion alone cannot explain the survival of a vital Christian community to the present day. Dogmatic assertions that sixteenth-century Tatars were so firmly Muslim that they could not have sincerely converted to Christianity fail to consider the very rich animistic religious tradition of the old converts that can be only tentatively reconstructed through Russian and Kräshen missionary prisms. Moreover, in both Christian and Islamic history, conversion through conquest, acculturation, and gradual transformation of sacred space led to the constitution of vibrant communities of faith in Europe and Northern Africa, as well as in Ottoman lands.<sup>21</sup> The theory of forced conversion in national Tatar histories also gives precedence to the conquering representatives, relegates non-Christians to passive roles, overlooks the way communities develop and interact with one another on a practical daily basis, and denies that communities of the past could be made of mobile and ethnically diverse individuals. More specifically, it does not explain why a community like Apazovo village in Kazan district, made up of baptized Muslims and animist Udmurts, petitioned to keep its church in 1827 but after the 1917 February Revolution asked to construct a two-story mosque in its central market place.<sup>22</sup> Nor

20. Interviews of elderly people by author, May 2008, Ianyli, Tatarstan; on the complex ethnic origin of Apazovo, see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii archiv (hereafter RGIA), f. 821, op. 133, d. 454, l. 6 and Iskhakov, “Etnodemograficheskoe razvitie,” 8; on Verkhniaia Nikitkina, “Iz vlecheniia iz otcheta bakalavra Kazanskoi dukhovnoi akademii N. I. Il'minskogo o poezdke po tatarskim seleniim (August–September 1849),” in *Khristiankoe prosveshchenie*, 108.

21. Marc Baer, *Honored by the Glory of Islam: Conversion and Conquest in Ottoman Europe* (New York, 2008), 17–18; James Muldoon, ed. “Introduction: The Conversion of Europe,” in *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville, 1997), 1–10; John Howe, “Conversion of the Physical World: The Creation of a Christian Landscape,” in *ibid.*, 63–78; Nehemia Levtzion, “Toward a Comparative Study of Islamization,” in Levtzion, ed., *Conversion to Islam* (New York-London, 1979), 1–23.

22. “Materialy dlia statistiki i istorii Kazanskoi eparkhii,” *IKE* no. 2 (15 January 1880): 60–61; *Istoriko-statisticheskoe opisanie tserkvei i prikhodov Kazanskogo uezda. Vypusk III-i (Alaty-Ivanovskoe)* (Kazan, 1916), 67–69 (the wooden church suspiciously burned in 1907); *Archa töbäge tarikhi. Istoriia Arskogo kraia* (Kazan, 1996), 72; NART, f. 2, op. 7, d. 2393, ll. 2–3.

does it explain why in 1766, the Udmurts and Tatars of Elyshevo petitioned for a chapel in the middle of their village, and a century later asked to be officially Muslim. Nor does it shed light on why the *starokreshchenye* villages of Apazovo and Elyshevo opted for Islam, while other villages—like Nikiforova (Shiyä-Bash), Mamadysh district, and the village of Iantsovary, Laishevo district—surrounded by Muslims and prestigious mosques, chose Christianity as their communal faith in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It dismisses individual agency and communal volition, and does not recognize the power of Eastern Orthodox proselytism or the resourcefulness and flexibility of traditional Qur'anic learning that proved extremely effective in shaping the religious and, consequently, the ethnic and political identities of these newly formed baptized communities.

Without minimizing the sufferings apostate baptized Tatars endured in the nineteenth century for the legal recognition of their Muslim identity, the clan history of Taveli village helps unlock this persistent image of fixed communities and compulsory conversion as well as elucidate the role of pre-Christian indigenous beliefs in the forging of these communities. Indeed, most people in Taveli, a Kräshen village in Chistopol' district exposed to animistic, Christian, and Islamic influences, were not indigenous to the area but came initially as migrants and married outside their ethnicity or their original religion. The village's ancestors—Apakov, Ütägän, Andrei, Bikmän, Dimitri, and Bikbaw—were outsiders. Villagers could not say why their first ancestor Apakov, a landowner, accepted baptism, but at least there was no allusion to his being forcibly baptized. The elders had more knowledge of Ütägän and Bikmän's Christianization. Ütägän and his son Yuldiy, originally Muslims, came from Orenburg province and Bikmän, also Muslim, originated from Menzelinsk district. They first worked as laborers among the Kräshens of Taveli, liked the place, and accepted baptism in order to marry local Kräshen women. Andrei, another ancestor, was already baptized when he came to the village. His adopted son left to work in the village of Iamashi, married a baptized Mordvin, and their descendants became Russians.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, the descendants of a Christian ancestor, Dimitri, leaned toward Islam. After one of them worked for a rich Muslim Tatar in the village of Kamenkina, they adopted Turkic names—Bikay, Biktimer, Ishäy, Bikkenä—in addition to their Russian Orthodox names.<sup>24</sup> Although these ancient Turkic names were not of Arabic origin, Taveli villagers considered these appellations to be signs of religious otherness. In contrast, the Muslim Bikbaw (also named Kukara), originally from the district of Kazan and an itinerant carpenter, used to build houses and even churches before his conversion to Christianity. After working near Taveli, Bikbaw decided to be baptized. Later he married a Russian while he was working in the

23. All information on Taveli's kinship clans comes from Mikhail Apakov, *Rasskazy kreshchenykh dereven' Tavelei i Alekseevskogo vyselka Iamashevskogo prikhoda, Chistopol'skogo uезда, o proiskhozhdenii kiremetei* (Kazan, 1876), 1–5, 8–9; and from Il'ia Sofiiskii, a Kräshen student of the Kazan Theological Academy, "O kiremetiakh kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskogo kraia (Lektsiia v Kazanskom missionerskom priute)," *IKE* no. 24 (15 December 1877): 681–682.

24. Kräshens leaning toward Islam bore two names—one Christian and one Muslim. When questioned by missionaries, they often pretended not to remember their Christian names (Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 297).

Karamaly village and his descendants became Russian or Kräshen depending whom they married.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the presence of both Christianity and Islam, Taveli's kinship history indicates that animistic traditional religion through the work of female religious specialists (*küremche*) exerted a much more powerful influence than either Christianity or Islam in the making of its communal boundaries. Andrei's second son was married to Irina, a *küremche*, who, according to family tradition, introduced the practice of elevating one particular *kirämät* (a protective clan tutelary spirit) above other *kirämäts*. Thanks to her, each family, depending on its ancestry, came to worship a particular *kirämät*. After the death of several of her babies, Irina turned to a spirit named *Täre ügeze* (divine bull) and asked for his blessing; she purified her newborn child in the outer bath house (*muncha*), wrapped him tightly in a white piece of cloth and after placing him before the house icon, addressed her tearful prayers to the *kirämät*: "Äy tärem (oh, my God)! Give me a child and I will sacrifice a bull in your honor and a goose in honor of the other saints (*izgelär*)."<sup>26</sup> Every year she killed a bull and the *kirämät* granted her five healthy children. Irina gained the respect of her community and shared names of other *kirämät* with villagers in distress. Although Andrei's family tended to present their female ancestor Irina as the one who brought multiplicity of *kirämät* to the village and assisted families in their choice of a particular spirit for protection, the Apakov branch claimed that a spirit called *qır kirämäte* (field spirit, neither good nor bad) had chosen their family as its host through one of their female ancestors. The spirit had left offerings in the family field. Intrigued, the Apakovs' ancestress sacrificed a red cow to the *kirämät* and saw immediate results: the land yielded more. Thus, each clan worshiped the *kirämät* in its own way, according to their ancestresses' guidelines. To complicate the picture further, one of the descendants of Andrei married a Chuvash, learned to speak the language, and observed his wife's religious practices.

Thus, Taveli's clan genealogies shatter the unilateral theory of forced conversion that implies the existence of already formed Muslim communities who were subjected to violent baptism in the sixteenth century. Their history demonstrates that up until the middle of the nineteenth century, religious affiliations mutated from one generation to the other, depending on work, location, and choice of community and life partner. It also suggests that before or even concomitant with Islam and Eastern Orthodoxy, the animistic cult of the *kirämät* at family shrines guaranteed order through the work of female religious specialists who, elected by the spirits to be their intermediaries, shared their knowledge of the spiritual world with other female clan heads, and determined their husbands' connection to the supernatural world.

25. Apakov, *Rassказы kreshchenykh dereven' Tavelei*, 1–5; Ghomär Sattar-Mulille, *Tatar isemnäre ni söyli? Tatar isemnäreneng tuli anglatmalı süzlege* (Kazan, 1998), 61, 62, 122.

26. *Täre* comes etymologically from *Tängre* (the Turkic god of the earth and sky). It also means "icon." When Irina worshiped *Täre ügeze*, the icon was understood as the spirit's residence. Usually Kräshens did not make the sign of the cross when they addressed their clan spirits. See Semen Maksimov (Kräshen), "Ostatki drevnikh narodno-tatarskikh (iazycheskikh) verovaniü u nyneshnikh kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskoi gubernii," *IKE* 10, no. 19 (1 October 1876): 567; Apakov, *Rassказы kreshchenykh dereven' Tavelei*, 10.

The cult of the *kirämät* was also linked to the history of a particular village. In Al'bedino, Laishevo district, inhabitants claimed that there were seven *kirämät* brothers. Each of them flew from the sky and took residence in the neighboring Kräshen, Russian, and Tatar villages. Once every three or five years, the villagers collectively bought a white cow and sacrificed it to their *kirämät*, Al'bedino, near the spring, its residence, pleading for protection from hail, frost, and locusts. Such sacrifices were called *kurman*.<sup>27</sup> Russian missionaries viewed the *kirämät* as evil, vengeful spirits. However, native Turkic and Finnic teachers and priests remembered some of these spirits as good beings who brought blessings and healing to the family or community they chose to protect, but because of people's sinfulness they were often forgotten; only when hardship struck did people come back to them for protection. It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that *starokreshchenye* communities in Mamadysh and Laishevo regions had to face the difficult question of defining their religious affiliation. Not only did they have to choose between Islam and Christianity, but they had to renegotiate their relationship with the *kirämäts*. Their adoption of Islam or Christianity, however, did not lead to an immediate erasure of preexisting indigenous identities and worldview. In fact, Kräshens attached to their indigenous religion integrated Islam and Christianity on their own terms, first borrowing their practices—recitation of Muslim and Orthodox prayers—to lend more power to their worship of domestic and communal spirits.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike the *starokreshchenye*, the *novokreshchenye*—converted to Eastern Orthodoxy by the Office for the Affairs of New Converts under the watch of the Kazan bishop Luka Konashevich (r. 1744–1755)—had come from peoples who were originally Muslim. Historians hold different views of the conversion campaign of the 1740s.<sup>29</sup> Most emphasize the harshness of the methods of conversion, but others point to the church and state's use of positive material incentives for conversion—temporary tax relief, gifts of clothes and salt, and draft exemption. If abuses occurred, they came more from local overzealous hierarchs and functionaries than from St. Petersburg, often unable to control its periphery adequately. Although church and state supported each other in their Christianization campaign, occasionally local Russian state authorities supported non-Russians against missionary abuses. All historians agree that the Russian state and the church were not concerned about the genuine character of the conversion. As was the case in medieval Europe, the state viewed conversion as a way to integrate the peoples of the Middle Volga into the bureaucratic structure of

27. Arkhip Ilarionov (Kräshen deacon), "Iz zhizni kreshchenykh inorodtsev Kazanskogo kraia za 1887 god," *IKE* no. 1 (1 January 1888): 22–23; Mikhail Mashanov, *Religiozno-nravstvennoe sostoianie kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskoi gubernii Mamadyshskogo uезда* (Kazan, 1875), 21–22.

28. Timofeev, "Moe vospitanie," in *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, ed. Il'minskii, 16–23; A. Andrievskii, "Dela o sovershenii iazycheskikh obriadov i zhertvoprinoshenii kreshchenymi inorodtsami Viatskoi gubernii," in *Stoletie Viatskoi gubernii, sbornik materialov k istorii Viatskogo kraia*, t. 2 (Viatka, 1881), 565; R. G. Akhmet'ianov, *Obshchaia leksika dukhovnoi kul'tury narodov Srednego Povolzh'ia* (Moscow, 1981), 31–33; Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*, 29; story on a *kirämät* tree in Flera Baiazitova, "Traditsionnye obriady i narodnye verovaniia mol'keevskikh kriashen na fone dialektного iazyka," in *Mol'keevskie kriasheny*, ed. Damir Iskhakov (Kazan, 1993), 151.

29. Faizulkhak Islaev, *Islam i Pravoslavie v Povolzh'e XVIII stoletia: Ot konfrontatsii k terpmosti* (Kazan, 2001); Michael Khodarkovsky, "The Conversion of Non-Christians in early Modern Russia," in *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, ed. Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (Ithaca and London, 2001), 115–143.

the empire and churchmen regarded it as the foundation for future spiritual growth under their authority.<sup>30</sup>

Socioeconomic tensions in these agrarian communities help explain their adoption of Eastern Orthodoxy. *Novokreshchenye* often came from the lowest strata of Tatar villages, including poor peasants unable to pay communal taxes, people who wanted to avoid penalties as prescribed by the sharia (Islamic law), horse thieves who wished to escape corporal punishment, and men evading military service.<sup>31</sup> Local evidence suggests that *novokreshchenye* joined earlier communities of converts as laborers and were drawn into the Russian and baptized labor market. Tatars in the mixed Tatar-Kräshen-Russian village of Bikovo, Tetiushi district, worked with Russians as barge haulers on the Volga River and asked to be baptized, but later apostatized.<sup>32</sup> Old and new converts also worked in Russian- or baptized-owned copper foundries, opened between the 1740s and the 1770s along the Mesha, Kama, and Viatka rivers, in the Kukmor, Nyrtıy, and Menzelinsk regions. Baptized Tatars of this particular economic zone traveled extensively and shared goods and brides.<sup>33</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *novokreshchenye* in Transkazania, eastern Trans-Kama, and the right bank of the Volga, rarely formed isolated villages (except when they had moved to *starokreshchenye* villages), and instead generally lived in small numbers in predominantly Muslim villages. When more than three families had accepted baptism, the Office for the Affairs of New Converts was unable to transfer them to Russian villages as they had originally intended to do.<sup>34</sup> Such a state policy would have rendered baptism a hardship for many potential converts; it also would have cost the state and the church too much. As a result, many of the new converts to Orthodoxy remained a minority in a Muslim environment. Even in mixed Russian-Tatar-Kräshen villages of Simbirsk and Nizhnii Novgorod provinces, baptized Tatars did not join the Russian communes, but remained within their original Tatar commune. The elders, elected commune officials, and heads were all Muslim Tatars, and the well-being and claims for justice of the baptized Tatars depended on the whims of their Muslim brethren. This fact greatly increased the risk that these new Christians might switch to Islam.<sup>35</sup>

30. Werth, "Coercion and Conversion," 543–70; Gennadii Makarov, "Perspektivy razvitiia traditsionnoi kul'tury Kriashen v sovremennykh usloviakh," in *Materialy nauchno-prakticheskoi na temu "Etnicheskie i konfessional'nye traditsii Kriashen": Istoriia i sovremennost'* (Kazan, 2001), 17–44.

31. See the documents of the Holy Synod published in N. I. Il'minskii, ed., *Opyty perelozheniia khristianskikh verouchitel'nykh knig na tatarskii i drugie inorodcheskie iazyki v nachale tekushchego stoletii: Material dlia istorii pravoslavnogo russkogo missionerstva* (Kazan, 1883), 36–70; Qayyum Nasiyri, "Yughari Shırdan," in *Saylanma äsärlär (dürt tomda)*, vol. 3 (Kazan, 2005), 195.

32. Roza, native of Bikovo, interview by author, May 2008, National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, Kazan.

33. As soon as Russians entered the Volga and Ural regions, Ivan IV ordered to search for copper which constituted the basis of their monetary system (Nolde, *La formation*, 236). For this reason, Tatars could not own metallurgical factories. Khusain Khasanov, *Formirovanie tatarskoi burzhuaznoi natsii* (Kazan, 1977), 33–34, 49, 51, 302; Faizulkhak Gazizullin, *Dorogoi k pravde (sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie interesy klassov i tatarskaia ekonomicheskaiia literatura 1880–1917)* (Kazan, 1979), 18; *Istoriia Tatarskoi ASSR: S drevneishikh vremen do velikoi oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii*, vol. 1 (Kazan, 1955), 197; *Istoriia Tatarskoi ASSR: s drevneishikh vremen do nashikh dnei* (Kazan, 1968), 132, 135.

34. Evfimii Malov, "O Novokreshchenskoi kontore," *PS* 24, no. 12 (December 1878): 46.

35. Il'minskii, *Opyty perelozheniia*, 24.

However, even if the new converts were originally Muslim, their acceptance of Christianity indicated that these new Christians did not hold completely to Islam and for some socioeconomic reason, were not fully integrated into their original communities of faith. Once they adopted Orthodoxy, many experienced further ostracism from their respective milieus. Some left and settled in old convert villages after their former brothers demanded that they pay back the taxes from which they were exempted. Other converts had no other choice but to stay in their original community and, because access to the village mosque was forbidden to them (by both the church and their former brethren), their descendants engaged their own “baptized mullahs,” formed their own *mahallas* (neighborhoods) in separate streets, and opened their own cemeteries.<sup>36</sup>

Most *novokreshchenye* apostatized in the nineteenth century. One notable exception was Mol'keevo and eight other new convert villages located in Tsivil'sk and Tetiushi districts, who apostatized in part in 1826 and 1866, but in the 1880s, petitioned for the construction of four churches in their midst. These communities shared many affinities of the old converts, participating in both the culture of Islam and more actively in the animistic culture of their Chuvash neighbors whom they occasionally married. From 1910 to the 1930s, villagers claimed either Muslim Tatar or animist Chuvash ancestry, and the genealogies of Mol'keevo, Staryi Kyrbash, Khozesanovo (Quyasan), and Iangozino-Surinskoe confirmed their Muslim origin. Local songs and traditions referred to the presence of previous mosques; thus, along with many other nature *kirämäts*, Iangozino-Surinskoe worshiped a divinity called *mächet uründaghî türese*, the god who resides at the place where the mosque once stood. The villagers also visited their former Muslim cemeteries, even after the opening of an Eastern Orthodox school. On one of the days of Easter week (which coincided with the celebration of the spring agrarian festival of the plow, called *Sabantuy* by Muslim Tatars and *Sörän* by Kräshens) the Khozesanovites prayed for a good harvest to their village's founder Khoja Hasan, a Sufi saint responsible for the region's colonization and Islamization, at the cemetery where two other saints were buried. They also avoided greeting each other with the usual Easter greeting “Khristos Voskrese” (Christ is risen), since, in their view, it would have offended the saint. Such respect for the Sufi saint did not mean that they were secretly Muslim or syncretic; they were simply mindful that their founding saint was entitled to a different form of prayer on the day of his feast. Likewise, they were not Chuvash animists. If their spirits fulfilled the same functions as the spirits of their Chuvash neighbors, they bore Tatar names and their place of residence was tied to their village's toponymy, not to that of their neighbors. Thus, even communities classified as *novokreshchenye* could live in some form of religious hybridity, navigating between Islam, Orthodoxy, and various ethnic forms of animism or fertility cults. As among the *starokreshchenye*, there was no automatic return to Islam, no blind acceptance of Christianity as the conqueror's religion, and no accidental mixing of beliefs. Kräshens articulated their own relationship

36. N. Firsov, *Inorodcheskoe naselenie prezhnego Kazanskogo tsarstva v novoi Rossii do 1762 goda i kolonizatsiia zakamskikh zemel' v eto vremia* (Kazan, 1869), 196–197; Priest Gr. L'vov, “Religioznoe sostoiianie otpadshikh tatar v derevne Iangil'dinoi Cheboksarskogo uezda,” *IKE*, no. 21 (1 November 1896): 407.

to the sacred, applying different modes of religious action and discourse to different times, locations, and ecological contexts, which enabled them to create a safer communal space, despite colonial or local encroachment.<sup>37</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Islam seemed to take the upper hand in the religious solidification of individual baptized communities. Apostasies first broke out mainly among new converts, but then, in the second half of the century, they reached a much larger number of old converts. To complicate the picture further, they included non-Tatar indigenous groups, which signified a victory for Muslim proselytism. These new communities of faith, however, had a unique history that kept them from merging completely with the surrounding Tatar villages. Despite their official “return” to Islam, descendants of Elyshevite apostates in 2008 complained that Tatars from the kolkhoz center of Shittsy still referred to them contemptuously as *kerāshennār*.

### Other Participants

Several other indigenous peoples of the Middle Volga region accepted Islam as their faith and participated in the apostasy movements of the nineteenth century: the Finnic Udmurts (called Votiaks before the Revolution), the Mari (known as the Cheremis before the Revolution), and the Turkic Chuvash.<sup>38</sup> This historical process of conversion to Islam dated probably as far back as the tenth century. The nineteenth-century Tatar historian Märjani noted that Muslim graves predating the Russian conquest had inscriptions with Chuvash, Mari, and Udmurt names.<sup>39</sup> According to one Tatar tradition, the sixteenth-century Russian invasion had driven Tatars north into the territory of the Udmurts and Maris, which could have encouraged the Islamization of a portion of these small minorities.<sup>40</sup> In the 1850s, the Udmurts of Malmyzh and Elabuga districts of Viatka province began to turn away from Christianity to adopt Islam. By 1869, Mamadysh district in Kazan province had become the area with the largest number of Udmurt converts to Islam. Even after the introduction of Udmurt literacy through the work of Russian missionaries in the 1860s, villages in the Kukmor region were still strongly attracted to Islam. In 1912, about 4,000 Udmurts had adopted Islam in the provinces of Perm', Ufa, and Kazan.<sup>41</sup>

37. Gurii Filippov, “Iz istorii khristianskogo prosveshcheniia kreshchenykh tatar-meshcheriakov Tetiushskogo i Tsivil'skogo uездov Kazanskoï gubernii,” *IKE* no. 37 (1 October 1915): 1038–1042 and nos. 39–40 (15–22 October 1915): 1080–1084; idem, “Kreshchenye meshcheriaki v Tsivil'skom i Tetiushskom uездakh, Kazanskoï gubernii (Istoriko-etnograficheskii ocherk),” *Pravoslavnyi Blagovestnik* (hereafter *PB*), no. 4 (April 1915): 167–182; Nikolai Vorob'ev, “Otchet o poezdke s etnograficheskoi tsel'iu v Svizhskii [sic] i Tetiushskii kantony TSSR letom 1927 g.,” *Vestnik nauchnogo obshchestva tatarovedeniia* no. 8 (1928): 102; Damir Iskhakov, ed., “Mol'keevskie kriasheny: Problema formirovaniia i demograficheskoe razvitie v XVIII–nachale XX veka,” in *Mol'keevskie kriasheny*, 4–25; Baiazitova, *Govory Tatar-Kriashen*, 44.

38. Il'minskii's letter in *NART*, f. 93, op. 1, d. 128 v, ll. 159–160 ob. On the demography, economy, and religion of these groups, see Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*, 17–22; Geraci, *Window on the East*, 30–40; Andreas Kappeler, “L'ethnogénèse des peuples de la Moyenne-Volga (Tatars, Tchouvaches, Mordves, Maris, Oudmourtes) dans les recherches soviétiques,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 17, nos. 2–3 (April–September 1976): 311–334.

39. Märjani, *Mustafād*, 1: 29.

40. Nikolai Vorob'ev, *Material'naia kul'tura Kazanskikh tatar* (Kazan, 1930), 26–27.

41. *Istoriia Tatarii v dokumentakh i materialakh* (Moscow, 1937), 349–350; M. Reshetnikov, “Nuzhdy pravoslavnoi missii sredi magometan v Viatskoï gubernii,” *Missionerskoe obozrenie* 14, no. 3 (March 1909): 396;



Islam also had great success among the Maris in Kazan and Mamadysh districts of Kazan province, Malmyzh district of Viatka province, and Birsks and Menzelinsk districts of Ufa province. Märjani, with undisguised satisfaction, noticed that Maris, even after their baptism, borrowed nothing from Christianity but their names. Yet, while being in constant contact with Muslims, they uttered *Bismillah* (in the name of God) in Arabic before starting an action, rested on Fridays, consumed horse meat against Orthodox priests' command, and considered pork meat inedible.<sup>42</sup> To their great consternation, Russian missionaries found many of the baptized Maris still attached to their indigenous beliefs and more familiar with the Sufi versions of Biblical stories than they were with the Christian scriptures.<sup>43</sup> There were even mosques in villages populated entirely by Maris. In 1912, according to official statistics, there were 1,477 Muslim Maris.<sup>44</sup> The actual number was probably much greater, especially in Ufa province, where the Maris had immigrated after the Russian conquest of Kazan. As early as 1900, the ethnographer Sergei Rybakov (1867–1921) spoke of 40,000 unbaptized Maris who were being assimilated into the Tatar community.<sup>45</sup>

The people most marked by Tatar Islamization were the Chuvash. According to them, God had given humanity seventy-seven religions, of which the best, morally speaking, was that of Muhammad. By contrast, Orthodoxy was one of the worst. The famous Chuvash pedagogue and disciple of Il'minskii, Ivan Iakovlev (1848–1930), recalled that before the age of eight he used to play kickball with Eastern Orthodox icons in the street of Koshki village in the Buinsk district of Simbirsk province. Ailing adults of this village turned for help to Islam rather than Christianity and called the Tatar mullah to their houses for prophylactic purposes. In general, animist Chuvash of Simbirsk province in the 1850s who wished to keep their ancestral beliefs and communal autonomy often preferred to be listed as Muslims than be baptized. The Chuvash proved most amenable to Islamization for historical and linguistic reasons. The Chuvash language was a Turkic language related to Tatar. Even after the Christianization of the Chuvash in the mid-eighteenth century, the Tatars continued to convert and assimilate the Chuvash.<sup>46</sup> In the village of Verkhniaia Nikitkina, which played a pivotal role in the apostasy movement of 1865, 101 Chuvash lived among 195 new converts

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Iakov Koblov, "O tatarizatsii inorodtsev privolzhskogo kraia," in *Missionerskii s"ezd v gorode Kazani 13–26 iyunia 1910 goda* (Kazan, 1910), 352, 373; Andrei (Aleksandr Alekseevich) Ukhomskii, former bishop of Mamadysh) and N. V. Nikol'skii, *Naibolee vazhnye statisticheskie svedeniia ob inorodtsakh vostochnoi Rossii i zapadnoi Sibiri, podverzhennykh vliianiiu islama* (Kazan, 1912), 241; Z., "K sud'bam votiakov," *Okrainy Rossii* 7, nos. 29–30 (21–28 July 1912): 437–439; Aleksandr Kremlev, *K voprosu ob otatarivanii votiakov Kazanskoj eparkhii i o merakh prosveshcheniia ikh* (Kazan, 1913), 1–6.

42. Märjani, *Mustafād*, 1: 24–25.

43. "Otchet o deiatel'nosti soveta Bratstva Sv. Guriia, s 4 oktiabria 1870 g. po 4 oktiabria 1871 goda," *IKE* no. 4 (15 February 1872): 112.

44. Koblov, "O tatarizatsii," 352, 372; Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 381, 383; A. F. Rittikh, *Materialy dlia etnografii Rossii. Kazanskaia guberniia* (Kazan, 1870), 107; Petr Eruslanov, "Magometanskaia propaganda sredi chermis Ufimskoi gubernii (iz lichnykh nabliudenii)," *PB* 3, no. 8 (1895): 424; Andrei and Nikol'skii, *Naibolee vazhnye statisticheskie*, 241.

45. Sergei Rybakov, *Islam i prosveshchenie inorodtsev v Ufimskoi gubernii* (SPb., 1900), 8.

46. I. Ia. Iakovlev, *Moia zhizn': Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1997), 56, 62; Aleksandr Kobzev, "Islamizatsiia pravoslavnykh chuvashel i chuvashel-iazychnikov Simbirskoi gubernii v XIX–nachale XX veka," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 5 (2007): 121; Leonid Braslavskii, *Islam v Chuvashii: Istoricheskie i kul'turologicheskie aspekty* (Cheboksary, 1997); Qayyum Nasiryi, *Saylanma äsärlär*, vol. 3 (Kazan, 2005), 189.

and married according to Islamic ritual. The historian G. N. Volkov concluded that between 1826 and 1897, 400,000 Chuvash in Kazan province alone had been Islamized. Tatar influence over the Chuvash was significant in other provinces as well. Before 1870, Russian Orthodox missionaries were most concerned with Tatar influence in Chuvash villages of Kazan and Simbirsk provinces, but afterward they also looked with alarm at the Tatarization of Chuvash in Belebei district of Ufa province.<sup>47</sup>

Demographic prerevolutionary evidence and Soviet calculations suggest that the Tatars were absorbing part of these smaller minorities, who often adopted not only the Muslim religion but also the Tatar language. This increase included Maris, Udmurts, and those Mordvins who had adopted Islam and eventually became Tatars. In the nineteenth century, the natural growth of the Tatars was far above normal—115.8 percent compared to 40.3 percent for the Chuvash.<sup>48</sup>

Missionary observers, however, tended to exaggerate the assimilatory power of Tatar Islam. There is evidence that the new converts' native language and ethnic identity were not entirely lost. Tatars in Tsivil'sk district shared their faith in the Chuvash language, and Märjani humorously noted that during the scholastic debates between Muslim scholars, two mullahs of Mari origin discussed strategies in their ancestral language, not in Tatar, to fool their opponents.<sup>49</sup> Russian observers in Simbirsk province also noted that Chuvash and Maris (especially women) kept their language and clothing despite their growing attachment to Islam. A priest in Belebei district, Ufa province, even warned local police authorities that baptized Chuvash who had studied secretly in the madrasa of a local Tatar mullah formed their own underground Muslim congregation (*mahalla*) with a Chuvash mullah. Islamized Chuvash, he wrote, did not lose their Chuvash identity; on the contrary, they looked for brides in neighboring baptized Chuvash, and not Tatar villages. The same phenomenon also took place among apostates of Kazan province, who developed their own Islamic marital networks separate from the Tatars.<sup>50</sup>

## Laws and Measures against Apostasies

Once subjects of the empire accepted baptism, there was no other choice but to remain Eastern Orthodox. Russian law severely punished apostasy from Christianity,

47. NART, f. 4, op. 80, d. 60, ll. 59 ob., 61 ob., 96; f. 4, op. 84, d. 263, l. 15; G. N. Volkov, *Etnopedagogika chuvashskogo naroda* (Cheboksary, 1966), 289; "Iz vospominanii protoiereia A. Baratynskogo," *Simbirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 21 (1 November 1905): 530–531; G. I. Komissarov, "Chuvashi Kazanskogo Zavolzh'ia," *Izvestiia Obshchestva arkheologii, istorii i etnografii pri Kazanskom universitete* (hereafter IOAIE) 27, no. 5 (1911): 320; Rybakov, *Islam i prosveshchenie*, 9–10; S. M. Matveev, *O kreshchenykh inorodtsakh Ufimskoi eparkhii* (Ufa, 1910), 25–27.

48. In the beginning of the twentieth century, a group of Mordvins in the Nizhni Novgorod district asked to be officially recognized as Muslims. M. Vasil'ev, "Rasprostranenie khristianstva v Kazanskom krae," *IKE* no. 32 (22 August 1904): 1054. For statistics related to Tatar population growth, see Volkov, *Etnopedagogika*, 289.

49. Pavel Rufimskii, *K voprosu o pravoslavnoi missii sredi inorodtsev Kazanskogo kraia* (Kazan, 1908), 2, 5; Iz zapiski N. I. Il'minskogo "O rasprostranении magometanstva sredi Kazanskikh tatar" (1880), in *Khristianskoe prosveshchenie*, 247; Shihāb ad-Dīn b. Bahā' ad-Dīn Märjāni, *Mustafād al-akhbār fi ahwāl Qazān wa Bulghār*, vol. 2 (Kazan, 1900), 185.

50. "Kratkaia zametka ob inorodtsakh Volzhsko-Kamskogo kraia," *Simbirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 1 (1 January 1897): 24–26; letter and report of priest Andrei Petrov (Belebei district) in NART, f. 93, op. 1, d. 128 v, ll. 34–34 ob., 45–45 ob.

conversion to Islam, and all forms of Muslim proselytism among the animists and Christians. In 1593, Czar Fedor (r. 1584–1598) ordered apostates from Christianity to be thrown in prison, beaten, and placed in chains. Severe measures were also taken to isolate the Christian converts from Muslims by placing them in special settlements. A Christian convert married to a non-Christian was legally separated from his or her spouse.<sup>51</sup> Later, the Law Code of 1649 condemned any Muslim judged guilty of having converted an Orthodox Christian to be burned to death without pity. The “victim” was sent to the patriarch for further instruction and then to a monastery for penitence.<sup>52</sup> In 1722, the Kazan metropolitan Tikhon III (r. 1699–1724) ordered the destruction of old cemeteries that attracted Kräshen and Tatar pilgrims.<sup>53</sup> His successor, Sil'vestr Kholm'skii (r. 1725–1731) discovered cases of conversion to Islam among Chuvash, Mordvins, Maris, and Udmurts, which prompted the promulgation of a new law in 1728 condemning Muslim proselytism among animists.<sup>54</sup> Finally, in the 1740s, the Office for the Affairs of New Converts punished converts to Islam with fines, beatings, separation from families in cases of mixed marriage, deportation to monasteries, or exile. Circumcisers of Chuvash, who otherwise kept their indigenous way of life—that is language, customs, and even the worship of their indigenous spirits—were moved from Sviiashsk province to Siberia.<sup>55</sup> The Tatars, for their part, had their mosques destroyed especially in areas populated by Christian converts. In two years (1742–1744), 418 out of 536 mosques were destroyed, and the construction of new ones was strictly limited.<sup>56</sup>

After the second Bashkir revolt in 1755 and the 1773–1775 Emelian Pugachev rebellion that Volga Muslims had supported, the state made concessions. Catherine II proclaimed religious liberty and favored the economic and spiritual expansion of Tatar merchant colonies. She also authorized the construction of mosques in Bashkiria, Siberia, and in the Kazakh steppes, but maintained the restrictions placed on the opening of new mosques near converts to Christianity. State representatives, and not local bishops as before, would investigate and decide whether to have a mosque erected. From that point on, the power to favor or to hinder the growth of Islam lay with the state.<sup>57</sup>

51. Mozharovskii, “Izlozhenie,” 26–27.

52. M. N. Tikhomirov and P. P. Epifanov, eds., *Sobornoe ulozhenie 1649 goda* (Moscow, 1961), chap. 22, art. 24, p. 291; M. Arkhangel'skii, *O Sobornom Ulozhenii Tsaria Alekseia Mikhailovicha 1649 (1756) g. v otnoshenii k pravoslavnoi russkoi tserkvi* (SPb., 1881), 28.

53. *Opisanie dokumentov i del, khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishego pravitel'stvuiushchego sinoda*, vol. 1, 1542–1721 (SPb., 1868), p. CCCXIII (prilozhenie no. XXIX); Firsov, *Inorodcheskoe naselenie*, 178, footnote. 3.

54. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (hereafter PSZ), first series, 45 vols. (SPb., 1830), 8 (1728–1732), 5333, no. 19: 100.

55. PSZ 11 (1740–1743), no. 8236: 248–256; Malov, “O Novokreshchenskoii,” 107.

56. PSZ 11 (1740–1743), no. 8664: 719–720; Priest K. Prokop'ev, “K istorii prosveshcheniia inorodtsev Kazanskogo kraia v XVIII veke. L'goty obrashchaiushchimsia v khristianstvo inorodtsam i stesneniia inorodtsev, kak sil'neishii faktor v dele obrashcheniia inorodtsev v khristianstvo v XVIII veke,” *Simbirskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 6 (15 March 1905): 151; *Tatary Srednego Povolzh'ia i Priural'ia*, 376.

57. PSZ 19, no. 13996: 775–776; Evfimii Malov, “O tatarskikh mechetiakh v Rossii,” *PS*, pt. 1 (1868): 11; Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, “Les missions orthodoxes en pays musulmans de moyenne-et basse-Volga,” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* 8, no. 3 (July–September 1967): 369–403.

During Catherine's reign, Tatars' proselytism among animists was encouraged only in regions that presented a political and economic interest for Russians, but never in the Middle Volga where the Orthodox Church had the undisputed monopoly on converting non-Christians. Until 1905, state laws strictly forbade interconfessional marriages and the return of baptized *inorodtsy* (non-Russians, literally, "those of other origin") to their previous faith, as well as proscribed and punished by exile those who converted animists (in Russian, *iazychniki* [pagans]) to any other confession but Eastern Orthodoxy. Although state laws did not prohibit animists from converting to Islam, administrative practice discouraged such conversions to protect Orthodox supremacy.<sup>58</sup> Until 1917, eighteenth-century laws that banned the opening of mosques with a minaret in proximity of or inside villages populated by former apostates or Kräshens (even a few) were still in force on paper, but occasionally bent in practice.<sup>59</sup>

After the first 1802 apostasy, the Orthodox Church confronted with an ever more vigorous Islam understood that top-down coercion was not the best way to bring apostates back to Christ and sought more peaceful ways to keep its converts. The Holy Synod ordered the translation of religious texts into native languages, which resulted in the publication of a Tatar catechism in 1803. Tatar was introduced into the curriculum of Kazan's religious and state schools. In 1830, the Synod ordered that on Sundays and feast days, the Gospel, creed, and various prayers be read in the language of the *novokreshchenye*. It encouraged priests to use non-Russian native languages in their preaching and, in 1842, after the outbreak of a new mass apostasy, it instituted a special chair of indigenous languages—Tatar, Arabic, Mongol, and Kalmyk—at the Kazan Theological Academy, reopened the same year. The academy's aim was to recruit students from the seminaries and train them as local seminary teachers, missionaries, or church officials. Five years later, Czar Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855) ordered that the most important parts of *The Divine Liturgy* and *The Liturgy of the Hours* be translated into native languages. But the language of translation for Tatar was too far from the vernacular, and restricted the listeners' understanding of the divine truths.<sup>60</sup>

In the 1850s, one of the most brilliant students of the Kazan Theological Academy, Nikolai Il'minskii, changed the whole church approach to mission in the Volga region, after Kazan Bishop Grigorii (Postnikov) (r. 1848–1856), concerned with reports of

58. *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (SPb., 1832), vol. 14, art. 40; "O preduprezhdenii i presechenii otstupleniia ot pravoslavnoi very," *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (SPb., 1857), vol. 14, ch. 3, section 1, art. 47–54, pp. 11–12 (apostasies from Orthodoxy in general); section 2, art. 55–59, pp. 12–13 (apostasies from Orthodoxy into paganism, Islam, and Judaism); M. N. Palibin, *Ustav dukhovnykh konsistorii* (SPb., 1900), 23–30; Paul Werth, "Tsarist Categories, Orthodox Intervention, and Islamic Conversion in a Pagan Udmurt Village, 1870s–1890s," in *Muslim Culture in Russia and Central Asia from the 18th to the Early 20th Centuries: Inter-Regional and Inter-Ethnic Relations*, vol. 2, ed. Anke von Kügelgen, Michael Kemper, and Allen Frank (Berlin, 1998), 389–393.

59. PSZ 4 (1700–1712), no. 1946: 226–227; 11 (1740–1743), no. 8664: 719–720; Malov, "O tatarskikh" (December 1867): 296; RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 459, ll. 1–167; f. 821, op. 133, d. 505, ll. 1–6, 76, 137–144.

60. Geraci, *Window on the East*, 49–61; Il'minskii, *Opyty perelozheniia*, 3; N. A. Spasskii, *Prosvetitel' inorodtsev Kazanskogo kraia Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii* (Samara, 1900); "Svedeniia o missionerskom otdelenii," vol. 1, *Missionerskii protivomusul'manskii sbornik. Trudy studentov missionerskogo protivomusul'manskogo otdeleniia pri Kazanskoi dukhovnoi akademii* (hereafter MPMS) (Kazan, 1873), I–XVI; "Ob otkrytii v g. Kazani Bogosluzheniia na tatarskom iazyke," *IKE* no. 2 (15 January 1870): 48.

new apostasies, sent him to visit baptized Tatar villages in 1848. Born in Penza to a priest in April 1822, Il'minskii initiated a new and daring missionary strategy—to develop an Orthodox Christian culture among the non-Russian peoples of the empire in their vernacular languages. Two basic principles guided his work: first, to teach natives in their local languages; and second, to train native teachers, missionaries, and Orthodox priests. In 1863, Il'minskii founded the Kazan Central Baptized-Tatar School with the indispensable help of Vasilii Timofeev (1836–1893), a Kräshen from Mamadysh district, and the collaboration of Evfimii Malov, a deacon's son from Simbirsk province who first studied and then taught anti-Islamic studies at the Academy. Il'minskii worked closely with the Brotherhood of St. Gurii, which he helped to found in 1867 with church hierarchs, merchants, government officials, and pedagogues. The Brotherhood, a private organization, financed Kräshen, Chuvash, Mari, and Udmurt schools in Kazan, Ufa, and Orenburg provinces, and the translation of religious books and pedagogical material in Kräshen Tatar, Chuvash, Mari, and Udmurt languages. Two decrees from the Synod facilitated the work of Il'minskii: the Synod allowed training and ordination of non-Russian clergy in 1867, and the celebration of the liturgy in non-Russian languages in 1883. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education backed up Il'minskii's work. In 1872, Il'minskii became the director of the newly opened Native Teachers' Seminary in Kazan. Today, the Kräshen community of Tatarstan is composed of former *starokreshchenye* and a small portion of *novokreshchenye* who have remained faithful to Christianity thanks to Il'minskii and especially to his Kräshen disciples.<sup>61</sup>

## Apostasies as Movements of Conversion and Faith Renewal

### *Chronology and Statistics*

Despite legal measures forbidding apostasy from Orthodoxy, many descendants of the baptized Tatar state peasants began to apostatize en masse as they embraced Islam. These collective apostasies occurred every decade, following one another in rapid succession in 1802–1803, 1826–1830, 1842, 1856, 1865–1866, 1870, 1882–1883, 1895–1896, and 1905. Entire villages sent petitions to the czar to allow them to confess their true faith. The apostasies corresponded to Russo-Turkish wars, changes in reign, or to the periodic tax censuses (*revizii*) introduced by Peter I and local parish censuses that obliged the Kräshens to identify themselves as “Tatars” or “Kräshens,” that is Muslims or Christians.<sup>62</sup> They also coincided with outbursts of cholera in 1830, 1849, and 1853; bad harvests in 1864–1865, 1867–1868, 1870, and 1873; the building of new churches; or the introduction in 1870 of new education laws that rendered

61. Werth, *At the Margins of Orthodoxy*, 183–193, 223–235; Geraci, *Window on the East*, 47–85, 86–115, 116–136; Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860–1917* (Montreal, 2001), 17–61; D. Zelenin, *N. I. Il'minskii i prosveshchenie inorodtsev* (SPb., 1902).

62. The parish censuses triggered anxiety among the Tatars themselves who feared that they would be counted as baptized. P. B. Znamenskii, “Kazanskii tatars,” in *Zhivopisnaia Rossiia, otechestvo nashe v ego zemel'nom, istoricheskom, plemennom, ekonomicheskom i bytovom znachenii*, vol. 8, *Srednee Povolzh'e i priural'skii kraii*, pt. 1, *Srednee Povolzh'e* (SPb. and Moscow, 1910): 144–145.

the teaching of Russian obligatory in Qur'anic schools. Apostate Krāshens read all these events as confirmation of their apocalyptic expectations for a restorer of the true religion who would liberate them from the Christian yoke.<sup>63</sup>

Each successive apostasy involved an increasing number of baptized Tatars over a larger geographical area. The very first one broke out in Nizhnii Novgorod province in the *novokreshchenyi* village of Moklokovo, which comprised several baptized Tatars of Mishar origin and Chuvash families, and spread to thirteen villages. The second wave of apostasies, between 1827 and 1856, affected a larger territory comprised of essentially *novokreshchenye* in the Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara, Viatka, Ufa, and Orenburg provinces. In Kazan province, the most committed apostates lived in Chistopol' and Spassk districts. The third apostasy of 1865–1866 also began in the Kazan diocese, touching not only the areas of the previous movement (Simbirsk and Nizhnii Novgorod provinces in particular), but also incorporating Chuvash, Udmurts, Maris, and for the first time *starokreshchenye* in Mamadysh and Laishevo districts. The most affected of all parishes was Achi where 1,000 *starokreshchenye*—among them Elyshevo and Kibiak-Kozi—apostatized for the first time between 2 April and 15 May 1866. *Novokreshchenye* from Chistopol' district led the apostasy, but baptized Tatars in the districts of Tetiushi and Sviiazhsk of Kazan province left the church in greater numbers than the years before. Starting in the 1870s and continuing well into the 1890s, new apostasies broke out among the *novokreshchenye*, the *starokreshchenye* (especially Kazan and Mamadysh districts), baptized Udmurts, Maris, and Chuvash of Kazan province, Orenburg (Orsk district in particular), and Ufa region (Belebei and Menzelinsk districts). The last apostasy, between April 1905 and December 1907, embraced all fourteen bishoprics in the Volga-Ural region and Western Siberia. After that date, cases of apostasy affected mainly *starokreshchenye* villages in the Mamadysh area in Kazan province, animist Chuvash and Finno-Ugric peoples in Ufa and Samara provinces, and Nagaibak Cossack families, who were moved in 1842 from Belebei district to Orenburg district to guard the farther eastern frontier. In their new settlements, Nagaibaks shared living with other Mishar Cossacks of the Muslim faith, and embraced Islam.<sup>64</sup>

63. The construction of a church prompted baptized Chuvash of Byzlyk Vasil'evka to apostatize in 1891 in Belebei district. An Islamized Chuvash woman spread the word that after the building of the church it would rain for forty days as in Noah's story and to make sure that the church did not sink into the earth, Christians would sacrifice a newborn or a virgin under its foundation, NART, f. 93, op. 1, d. 128 v. l. 36 ob.; on cholera epidemics, see *Privolzhskie goroda i seleniia v Kazanskoii gubernii* (Kazan, 1892), 132–133; on bad harvests, see Il'dus Zagidullin, "Tatarskie krest'iane Kazanskoii gubernii vo vtoroi polovine XIX v. (60–90-e gg.)" (Kand. Diss., Kazan State University, 1992), 67.

64. RGLA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, l. 119; Il'minskii, *Opyty perelozheniia*, 36, 64; Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 116; Evfimii Malov, "Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia missiia v Kazanskom krae v sviazi s istorieiu musul'manstva v pervoi polovine XIX veka," *PS*, no. 8 (1868): 338; Porfirii Men'shikov, "Achinskii prikhod, Laishevskogo uезда, v nastoiashchem sostave," *IKE* no. 16 (15 August 1868): 442; B. Znamenskii, "Zapiska N. I. Il'minskogo po voprosu ob otpadeniakh kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskoii gubernii 1881 goda," *PS* (1895): 259; Sofia Chicherina, *U privolzhskikh inorodtsev. Putevye zametki* (SPb., 1905), 132–134; I. Zlatoverkhovnikov, *Ufimskaia eparkhiia. Geograficheskii, etnograficheskii, administrativno-statisticheskii ocherk* (Ufa, 1899), 209–211; "Otpadeniia iz pravoslaviia v magometanstvo i ikh prichiny," *PB* 16, no. 16, bk. 2 (August 1908): 314; Antonii Ivanov, "Ostupnicheskoe dvizhenie kreshchenykh i nekreshchenykh Chuvash Samarskoii gubernii v magometanstvo. Derevnia Alekseevka, Bugul'minskogo uезда," *PB* 22, no. 1 (1914): 160; Iskhakov, "Etnodograficheskoe razvitie," 10, 13–16.

TABLE 1.2 Number of Apostates in Kazan Province

District	Kräshens (1862)	Apostates (1862)	Muslim Tatars (1858)
Cheboksary	427		182
Chistopol'	3,996	3,152	55,940
Kazan	2,561	16	89,567
Kozmodem'iansk		9	21
Laishevo	12,353	623	42,634
Mamadysh	15,304	2,267	80,563
Spassk	562	260	36,162
Sviiazhsk	5,302		22,426
Tetiushi	3,782	42	52,968
Tsarevokokshaisk			20,474
Tsivil'sk	1,090	897	6,673
Total	45,377	7,266	409,257

Source: Compiled from Malov, "Statisticheskie svedeniia o kreshchenykh tatarakh v Kazanskoï i nekotorykh drugikh eparkhii, v Volzhskom basseine," *Missionerstvo sredi mukhammedan i kreshchenykh tatar* (Kazan, 1892), 400, 405–406.

Despite many lacunae in the Kazan Ecclesiastical Consistory records and parish registers, the missionary Malov calculated that in 1862 in Kazan province there were 7,266 apostates from Orthodoxy and 45,377 other Kräshens who had officially remained Christian. According to the calculations of students at the Kazan Native Teachers' Seminary, in 1898 there were 32,000 apostates and 42,000 Kräshens: 90 percent of Tatars were Muslim, 4 percent apostates, and 6 percent Kräshens. In 1901, the governor's statistics showed 31,737 apostates and 43,570 Kräshens, and just before 1905, the same source showed 34,092 apostates and 47,044 Kräshens. Finally, between 1905 and 1907, missionary sources registered a slight increase to 36,299 apostates, and in 1910, the Ministry of Interior counted even more—38,999 apostates.<sup>65</sup>

Obviously, the population growth among the baptized population did not explain the increased number of apostates. Islam had made new converts. Those statistics also show that after 1905, more than half of the Kräshens in the Kazan province had remained Christian. Such success of Orthodoxy suggests that Kräshens actually debated the formulation of their communal identity, whether Muslim or Orthodox, and ultimately made a conscientious choice between the two faiths.<sup>66</sup>

65. Nikolai Bobrovnikov, *Nuzhny li tak nazyvaemye protivomusul'manskie i protivoiazycheskie eparkhial'nye missionery v guberniakh evropeiskoi eparkhii?* (Kazan, 1905), 7–8; N. Kugleev, "Missionerskaia ekskursiia v kreshcheno-tatarskie seleniia Elabuzhskogo uezda," *Viatskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 49 (8 December 1911): 1040; RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 472, l. 47 ob.; NART, f. 93, op. 1, d. 618, ll. 3–6, 57; Il'dus Zagidullin, *Perepis' 1897 goda i tatory Kazanskoï gubernii* (Kazan, 2000), 40.

66. For more statistics including Kazan, Ufa, Simbirsk, Penza, Orenburg, Viatka, Samara, Saratov, Tambov, Astrakhan, Riazan, and Nizhnii Novgorod provinces, see Damir Iskhakov, *Istoricheskaia demografiia tatarskogo naroda (XVIII–nachalo XX vv.)* (Kazan, 1993), 94–99.

TABLE 1.3 Number of Apostates in Kazan Province in 1901

District	Kräshens	Apostates	Muslim Tatars
Cheboksary		800	3,040
Chistopol'	5,565	8,200	91,193
Kazan	1,521	1,541	151,576
Laishevo	12,957	1,746	63,027
Mamadysh	22,125	3,515	115,050
Spassk	1,397	514	55,647
Sviiazhsk		6,743	37,462
Tetiushi	5	6,531	94,237
Tsarevokokshaisk		195	29,472
Tsivil'sk		1,952	12,950
Total	43,570	31,737	653,654

Source: *Pamiatnaia knizhka Kazanskoï gubernii na 1901 g.* (Kazan, 1901), 18–23.

#### *Islamic Communities in Formation: Pattern and Main Characteristics*

In 1801 Czar Alexander I (r. 1801–1825) reinstated the practice of accepting collective petitions. By doing so, he not only opened the doors of upward communication between the ruled and their ruler, but he unintentionally facilitated the work of Islamized Kräshens who sought to bring their whole community closer to Islam, forcing individual clans to assert their religious identity more exclusively, at least in legal terms. Signing the petition did not actually mark the time when baptized Tatars converted to Islam, which would imply a sudden change of heart as in Evangelical Christianity. Nevertheless, it signaled the moment when, as a group, villagers announced publicly their assimilation into the community of the Prophet or their willingness to participate more fully in the religious community of Islam. As in many other religious transformations, “participation” or “adhesion” are better words than conversion because they denote a more gradual process of acculturation involving communities rather than individuals. Tatars said of Kräshen communities leaning toward Islam that they “were becoming white” (*agharip kilälär*), referring to the purifying effect of Islamic ablutions and denoting a process of assimilation into the culture of Islam, not a simple automatic return to the faith of their forefathers. But the word “conversion” is worth retaining here since apostates took the fundamental step to switch collectively and spectacularly from one “legal” category of faith to the other. After all, many could have simply opted for religious intermediateness and continued living as Muslims underground without going through the trouble of apostatizing officially.<sup>67</sup> Tellingly,

67. NART, f. 10, op. 2, d. 1383, l. 250; Arthur Nock, *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford, [1933] 1961), 7; Michael Lambek, “Localizing Islamic Performances in Mayotte,” in *Islamic Prayer Across the Indian Ocean: Inside and Outside the Mosque*, ed. David Parkin and Stephen C. Headley (Richmond, Surrey, 2000), 65–70; Maurus Reinkowski, “Hidden Believers, Hidden Apostates: The Phenomenon of Crypto-Jews and Crypto-Christians in the Middle East,” in *Converting Cultures: Religion, Ideology and Transformations of Modernity*, ed. Dennis Washburn and A. Kevin Reinhart (Boston, 2007), 409–433.



Kräshens who remained Christian called apostates *tatargha chiqqan keshelär* (“people who left to be with the Tatars”), implying that they had stepped outside their communal boundaries and, in their view, had become “other.” In other words, apostates had left a community defined by its baptism for another.<sup>68</sup>

Culture as a producer of symbols, myths, and rituals played an important role in the shaping of the baptized Tatars’ group identities and imagination. Yet, before investigating further the sources and conduits of Islamic knowledge based on Turkic literary texts, spiritual songs, and missionary encounters, the study of the outward development of the apostasy movement—its inception, climax, and repression—as attested in provincial, clerical, and missionary reports helps to uncover the centrality of literacy in the Islamic expansion. Usually, apostate leaders, who sought to gain the support of all family clans, were the most exposed to Islamic and, to some extent, Russian literacy. Their skills allowed the movement to grow rapidly in size and ultimately transformed the religious landscape of the Middle Volga. But apostasy leaders met many obstacles inside and outside their village commune, since not all baptized Tatars were willing to give up their legal status and join Islam officially. Violence and fear, although present, were not the only factors that explained the refusal of some communities to sign the petition. Islamic literacy had not penetrated all Kräshen communities, indigenous beliefs still played an important role in the maintenance of communal boundaries, and later in the 1870s, Orthodox literacy in vernacular languages presented a new challenge to the further expansion of Islam. However, each apostasy brought new hearts to Islam.

At first glance, apostasies presented striking similarities with Russian peasant riots. Like former serfs and religious dissenters, the apostates did not attempt to rebel against the prevailing czarist order. In fact, they turned to the *tsar'-batiushka* (little father) as their supreme arbiter and ally. Like the Old Believers (Orthodox Christians who rejected the liturgical reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon [1652–1658]) in Cheliabinsk district in 1866, they referred to a pseudo-ukaz permitting them to profess their religion officially.<sup>69</sup> At times the apostates’ cause even merged with that of the Old Believers. In 1865, the parishes of Bishevo and Isheevsk, Simbirsk province, which had a high number of religious dissenters, were rife with rumors that the czar had allowed both Kräshens and Old Believers to declare their true faith.<sup>70</sup> Russian contemporary police reports and missionary diaries also hint at the direct or indirect participation of important Naqshbandi Sufi figures and disciples in the Chistopol', Sviiazhsk, and Mamadysh districts, as well as the use of two important Islamic religious concepts as decisive impetuses for the mobilization of those who wanted their Muslim identity recognized by the Russian state: the jihad and Mahdism.

Although the early history of Sufism in Eurasia is incomplete, it is well established that two orders played a central role in the Islamization of Volga Tatars: the Yasawiyya and the Naqshbandiyya, both known for their flexibility toward local customs

68. Letter in Tatar of a Kräshen teacher, Andrei Vasil'evich (13 November 1872), NART, f. 968, op. 1, d. 175, ll. 1–1 ob.

69. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Orenburgskoi oblasti (hereafter GAOO), f. 55, op. 3, d. 4/1, ll. 38 ob.-40; Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston, 1989), 1–26.

70. NART, f. 4, op. 97, d. 1, l. 87 ob.

and their use of vernacular languages to make converts. At the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century, the Naqshbandiyya—which came to eclipse the Yasawiyya—took firmer root in the Kazan province thanks to the disciples of two major shaykhs, Niyaz Quli b. Shah Niyaz at-Turkmani (d. 1821), located in Bukhara, and Fayd Khan al-Kabuli (d. 1802), who taught in Kabul.<sup>71</sup> While their disciples brought Tatars to a stricter, more observant form of Islam, the Naqshbandiyya also defied Russian law and proselytized in non-Russian and baptized communities. By calling for jihad and using Mahdist elements in their discourse, they invited the Muslim Tatar community to revitalize their faith, the baptized community “to recommit themselves to the religion of their ancestors,” and the non-Muslims of Turkic and Finno-Ugric origin to adhere to Islam.

Jihad signifies a continuous struggle on the path of God. It comes from an Arabic verb *jahada*, which means “to strive.” On a personal level, it may be a peaceful, continuous spiritual striving toward moral perfection. At the collective level, it may be an armed or peaceful struggle—either offensive or defensive—for the spread of Islamic virtues inside and outside Muslim society.<sup>72</sup> Alternatively, Mahdism, an apocalyptic myth, called for action in the immediate future to restore justice before the end of time. According to Islamic traditions, the Mahdi or the “guided one” would unite all forces to fix the problems of this world according to Islamic law. The Mahdi is supposed to appear during a period of anarchy when men and women have turned away from their faith. Thanks to the Mahdi, the pure original Islamic faith will be reestablished before the coming of the imposter Messiah (*al-Masih ad-Dajjal*), called by Sufis “the final deceiver,” and his defeat by ‘Isa (Jesus), who then will follow the Mahdi and acknowledge Muhammad’s authority. In times of alien domination or social and political injustice, Muslims often turn to the hope of a Mahdi. During Bonaparte’s occupation of Egypt (1798–1801), a Mahdi movement arose against the French, and in the nineteenth-century Sudan, the Mahdi Muhammad Ahmad (1845–1885) rose against General Charles Gordon (1833–1885) and the Turks.<sup>73</sup>

Before the Crimean War, again in 1865–1867, 1884, and around 1905, vagabond Tatars, mullahs, Sufis, and indigenous elders inclined to apostatize began to preach in a very specific, Mahdist apocalyptic form. Because in Muslim apocalyptic literature the signs of the final hour could include the replacement of Islam by Christianity, the Kräshens’ mere existence in the land of the former Bolghar and Kazan kingdoms constituted a thorn in the heart of Islam and signaled the imminence of the final hour when people would turn away from the true faith. Itinerant Sufis reminded believers of their obligation to realize the will of God on earth, the jihad, and announced that time would end with the final victory of Islam. If all Kräshens adopted Islam, Muslims would outnumber Russians. Recalling the *hijra* of the Prophet (when opposition

71. Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 151–153.

72. Nazif Shahrani and Robert Canfield, eds., *Revolutions and Rebellions in Afghanistan: Anthropological Perspectives* (Berkeley, 1984), 28.

73. The Qur’an says nothing about the Mahdi. The Mahdi apocalyptic myth is developed in the hadith literature in Abu Da’ud (d. 888), Ibn Majah (d. 887), and Abu ‘Isa at-Tirmidhi (d. 892). Timothy Furnish, *Holiest Wars: Islamic Mahdis, Their Jihads, and Osama bin Laden* (Westport, Conn., 2005), 7, 13. For Sudan, see P.M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898 (A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow)* (Oxford, 1958), 22–23.

to his message forced Muhammad to flee from Mecca to Medina), itinerant Sufis encouraged their listeners to go to Turkey or Bukhara and await the Day of Judgment. They spoke in passionate terms of the coming of the Mahdi. The Ottoman sultan, according to them, would take possession of the Muslim lands and restore the Khanate of Kazan before the coming of the imposter Messiah and his defeat by the Prophet 'Isa. Islamic traditions foretold that Jesus would punish Christians who deified Him, smash crosses, and kill their pigs. Not only did this type of discourse in the 1860s fuel the apostasies, but it also encouraged Islamized Chuvash to migrate to Turkey, which they did in the Saratov province, along with Kräshens, mostly *novokreshchenye* from Tetiushi, Sviiazhs, Spassk, and Chistopol' districts who sold their houses and cattle. Crimean and Kazan Tatars also joined them in their migration to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>74</sup>

In Sunni Islam, the Mahdi was not rigorously defined, which led to a large variety of popular interpretations.<sup>75</sup> Although already born, he could not be identified because of the believers' sinfulness and lack of unity. Only after all believers united, would he reveal himself, pass judgment on the purity of their faith, and crush the infidels. Concretely for the apostates, it meant that the Mahdi would appear only if all peasants inside and outside their village boundaries had joined the "apostasy." Some Kräshens leaning toward Islam were more specific and identified the Ottoman sultan, the head of the world Islamic community, as the Mahdi. The sultan would restore right governance in the immediate future, and the Kräshen apostates would be able to live like Muslims openly, without fear. But in 1905, the sultan of Turkey was not at war with Russia. The Tatars then spread new rumors, this time among Islamized and nonbaptized Chuvash of Buguruslan district, and gave the Ottoman leader a new substitute—the "Japanese czar," who had agreed to free Tatars from the threat of "baptism."<sup>76</sup>

Unlike the Mahdist movement in Sudan, the apostate movements did not end with the organization of a theocratic kingdom and the emergence of a territorial state. However, once the petition was sent but before the troops arrived, apostates formed an extraterritorial distinct community aware of its specific identity. Thus, after the arrival of those itinerant Sufi preachers, they spread rumors of an imperial edict that would permit them to profess Islam officially. These rumors might have had an actual basis in a new czar's routine confirmation of his subjects' religious rights (which, of

74. M. Laptev, *Materialy dlia geografii i statistiki Rossii, sobrannnye ofitserami general'nogo shtaba: Kazanskaia guberniia* (SPb., 1861), 232; Ivanov, "Oststupnicheskoe dvizhenie . . . Derevnia Alekseevka," 151; Nikolai Ostroumov, *Sudanskii Makhdi i voznikshee v 1881 godu vosstanie sudanskikh musul'man* (Offprint from *Strannik*, 1890) (SPb., 1889), 3; S. Bagin, "Ob otpadenii v magometanstvo kreshchenykh inorodtsev Kazanskoi eparkhii i o prichine etogo pechal'nogo iavleniia," *PS* 46, no. 2 (February 1910): 227; G. Komissarov, "Religioznoe sostoianie chuvash v XIX veke," *PB* 2, bk. 1, no. 21 (November 1913): 620–621; NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3048, ll. 31–31 ob.; and f. 1, op. 2, d. 2111, ll. 11 and 27–27 ob.; on Jesus's role in the Mahdi apocalyptic myth, see Furnish, *Holiest Wars*, 18.

75. R. Hrair Dekmejian, "Charismatic Leadership in Messianic and Revolutionary Movements: The Mahdi (Muhammad Ahmad) and the Messiah (Shabbatai Sevi)," in *Religious Resurgence: Contemporary Cases in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Richard Antoun and Mary Elaine Hegland (Syracuse, NY, 1987), 98; Jan-Olaf Blichfeldt, *Early Mahdism (Politics and Religion in the Formative Period of Islam)* (Leiden, 1985), 10.

76. Eruslanov, "Magometanskaia propaganda," no. 16 (1895): 387–388; A. Ivanov, "Tsarstvo islama sredi chuvash," *PB* 15, no. 19 (October 1907): 110.

course, would not have included the right of Christians to convert to Islam) or in new laws permitting Muslims to open new mosques. Although such laws did not apply to them, the apostates interpreted them in their favor and opened their own clandestine prayer houses. The ukaz of 20 February 1764, which forbade forced conversions to Orthodoxy, served as the basic foundation of these rumors. The Kräshen apostates were only pointing out the state's inconsistencies in its policy toward the indigenous population.<sup>77</sup>

The news of the edict was then discussed in the local Orthodox parishes. First, the communes met to check the news, sometimes openly and sometimes in secret at night. Villagers elected and sent envoys to nearby villages, usually close relatives since Kräshen villagers practiced exogamy. Occasionally they turned to a mullah whom they trusted for more information.<sup>78</sup> Upon the envoys' return, the commune met again to decide, depending on its degree of attachment to Islam, whether to join other villages in an open apostasy from Orthodox Christianity. Those most convinced chose a representative who could write the villagers' Muslim names on a piece of paper and/or "read" the villagers' clan symbols (*tamghas*). Villagers who could not sign their names inscribed their *tamgha* on a stick, after which the representative brought the list of names, the signatures, and the stick to scribes who wrote the petition in Russian and in Tatar.<sup>79</sup> In the latter, they asked not for their return to Islam, but for the recognition of their Islamic identity inherited from their ancestors, even if their ancestors were of animistic Chuvash origin. The petition went on to claim that in order to increase their emoluments, Russian priests had enlisted them as Orthodox Christians. They then sent the petition to St. Petersburg, told the parish priest of their desire to live as Muslims, and in the interval, before the answer arrived from the czar, they ceremoniously opened their mosque and Qur'anic school. At the same time, they destroyed all signs that they belonged to Orthodoxy, stopped going to church, and refused to pay parish taxes or let the priest enter their homes with his icons. They got rid of their belts, cut their long hair, shaved their beards, donned Muslim skullcaps (the *käläpüsh* or *tübätäy*), discarded their icons, and burned books printed in Cyrillic characters.<sup>80</sup>

During the Kräshen apostasies of the 1860s, the spiritual jihad mobilized entire villages. Believers put the Muslim religious law into practice and experienced it collectively for the first time. If the month of Ramadan started after they apostatized, the villagers fasted together. In Elyshevo, people still remember that neighbors made sure to wake up at the same time before dawn to eat breakfast (*säkhär ashü*). The night before, women, who were in charge of the meal, pulled a string across the street and attached a small rattle at the windows, which awakened neighboring families.<sup>81</sup>

77. PSZ 16, no. 12126: 704–707; Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 125–126; Malov, "Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia," 16, no. 5 (May 1870): 234; Runovskii, "Ocherk istorii khristianskogo prosveshcheniia," no. 11 (1 June 1911): 385.

78. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 3; f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 9–9 ob.

79. The *tamghas* had jurisdictional value among all peoples of Russia. They indicated kinship and served to mark property (land, cattle). They took various geometric shapes. E. T. Solov'ev, *Znaki sobstvennosti v Rossii: Istoriko-arkheologicheskii ocherk s prilozheniem 6720 znakov* (Kazan, 1885), 125, 149, 194; NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1010, l. 3; f. 13, op. 1, d. 943, l. 8.

80. Malov, "Ocherk," 17, pt. 3 (1871): 245, 252, 410; 18, pt. 1 (1872): 134; and pt. 2 (1872): 41; NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, l. 9 ob.; f. 4, op. 101, d. 11, l. 114 ob.; f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 13–16.

81. Tälghat Näjmiev and Mäghsum Khujin, *Yashä, Saba-Yort* (Kazan, 1999), 171.

Elders collected both religiously prescribed and voluntary alms (*zakat* and *sadaqa*). In August 1865, the Chuvash and *novokreshchenye* of Verkhniaia Nikitkina erected their own prayer house (without a minaret) with their own donations; those who could not give alms volunteered their work. When there was no mosque, village elders instituted collective prayer five times a day, sometimes outside in the prairies as in Kibiak-Kozi, Laishevo district, or inside the most spacious houses.<sup>82</sup> They also forbade fermented drink, created a separate cemetery for the Muslim dead, and buried their dead the Muslim way—that is, in a *kafn* (a white sheet in which the dead were wrapped) and not in a coffin. In one memorable event in June 1866, four *starokreshchenye* villages—Shepsheik, Nurma, Sulabash, and Bitoman in Kazan district—joined together to oppose the transfer of the body of a common kin, Akulina Pavlova, which laid in a ditch and was already giving off an unpleasant smell, to the Christian cemetery of Alaty. “We would prefer to die near the body than let you take the deceased away,” cried the villagers to the police. After a successful fistfight, they buried the body near the village of Shepsheik in a secret place and had their own representative recite the appropriate prayers.<sup>83</sup>

Apostates also elected a muezzin to call for prayer and an imam to lead communal worship, keep their vital records, arbitrate disputes about inheritance, and teach their children. In some cases several literate apostates took turns as imams. Villagers also dared to attend the nearby Tatar mosque on Fridays.<sup>84</sup> Since apostates in *starokreshchenye* villages were often not circumcised, adults and children submitted themselves to circumcision, inviting a Tatar circumciser called *baba* from outside. (In the *novokreshchenye* baptized villages of Verkhniaia Nikitkina and Verkhniaia Kamenka in Chistopol' district many villagers had already been circumcised in the 1840s by elderly women.)<sup>85</sup> Thus, around 1865, a *baba* came to the *starokreshchenyi* village of Kibiak-Kozi, Laishevo district, from Staraiia Ura village in Tsarevokshaik district. In 1872, a Tatar from Masra village, Kazan district, a village known for its ritual hereditary specialists in circumcision, stayed two weeks in Ianasal, Laishevo district, and performed his work, not without casualties: the unofficial muezzin died from the surgery and another adult almost perished. Both Masra and Ianasal were situated on the Arsk road, an important trade route, sensitive to Mahdist rhetoric.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time that apostates built a new society in conformity with the tenets of Islam, they also sought to convince waverers to convert “officially” to Islam, sometimes forcibly. If the village did not present a united front, as in the case of Otary parish in 1866 where covillagers denounced the leaders of the apostasy to the police, there was a strong chance that the apostasy would fail.<sup>87</sup> The coexistence of two faiths

82. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, ll. 148, 215 ob; f. 13, op. 1, d. 943, l. 371; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5136, ll. 6 ob.-7.

83. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 48–67.

84. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 12.

85. When questioned by police, apostates made the point to say that they were not circumcised. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 71, 102. On Verkhniaia Kamenka, NART, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1998, l. 6 ob.

86. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 218 ob., 288 ob.; and NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 2812, ll. 78, 85; f. 13, op. 1, d. 943, l. 376; f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 7 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, ll. 89–89 ob.; and f. 1, op. 3, d. 3068, l. 24; on Masra village, see Qayyum Nasiryi, *Saylanma äsärlär*, vol. 3 (Kazan, 2005), 243.

87. Compare Otary parish (NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1010, ll. 3–14 ob.) and Azbaba (NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1119, l. 26), where villagers remained united and supported their representatives even after they were arrested. As a result the leaders of Azbaba could not be prosecuted.

in the village also implied a division of resources between the maintenance of both church and mosque. Some also worried that they would not be properly buried if they belonged to the minority religion in the village. For all those reasons, declared Muslims put a lot of pressure on other members of the community, either economically, by controlling the minority's mode of subsistence, or symbolically, by marking the space between believers and infidels.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, at the start of the apostasy movement, symbolic markers—a stream, a road, a bridge, or the opening of a new cemetery—divided the village space into two different worlds: the clean and the unclean. In Ianasal village, Laishevo district, apostate women threw stones at nonapostate women who sought to have access to the stream. “Do not make our water unclean,” they yelled in an attempt to sacralize part of the village space.<sup>89</sup> Water indeed plays an important purifying role in Muslim rituals. Converts to Islam must perform the *ghusl*, the greater ablution, in which the whole body is washed to remove impurity. Tatars, as well as Islamized Krāshens and Chuvash, believed that Christians—and Russians in particular—were dirty because they did not perform ritual ablutions before entering a sacred space or praying. Krāshens and their Tatar neighbors called Islamized Krāshens *aq* (white) and Krāshens who adopted the Russian ways *qara* (black). *Aq* also referred to the customs of removing one's shoes before entering the sacred space of the mosque, and the habit of cutting hair very short (Russians and Krāshens grew their hair long). Late nineteenth-century Tatar reformers contested this habit of shaving one's head as a sign of differentiation between Muslim believers and infidels. For the reformist theologian Riza' ad-Din b. Fākhr ad-Din (1858–1936) the length of hair had nothing to do with religion, but for apostate Krāshens its length was of ultimate importance.<sup>90</sup>

With the same desire to clean themselves from bodily impurities, the apostates of Elyshevo village in 1866 shaved their head on the bridge, a reminder of Judgment Day when all men and women would have to cross the *Sirat* bridge over hell.<sup>91</sup> After the building of a church and the opening of a Christian school in 1869, a woman stood on the same bridge that led to the church and warned that this bridge led to hell. Later on, the children of apostates jealously guarded their street that Krāshens of Saltygan Kliuch (Köyek) had to take to reach the church: “Do not tread on our street. We are Tatars now.” After their official conversion to Islam, apostates considered nonbelievers as pollutants and sought to remove them from the village just as they removed impurities from their body before engaging in daily prayers.<sup>92</sup>

Besides symbolic intimidation, Muslim converts also used economic pressure against the Christian minority. In Elyshevo, Kondratii Filippov (d. 1873?), a noncommissioned officer, opposed the apostasy of 1865. After twenty-five years of military

88. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 40; f. 1, op. 3, d. 9740, ll. 1–15 ob. (In Ianasal, Laishevo district, frictions existed between apostates and Krāshens. In 1895, apostates continued paying for the priest and Eastern Orthodox teacher's expenses because of the persistent presence of Krāshens, who were also their relatives.)

89. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, ll. 7 ob.-8, 32.

90. “Kakim sposobom tatory uvlekaiut chuvash iazychnikov v mukhammedanstvo,” *IKE* 11, no. 8 (15 April 1877): 231; Sofiiskii, “O kiremetiakh kreshchenykh tatar Kazanskogo kraia,” 687; Rizā' ad-Din b. Fākhr ad-Din, *Jāwāmi' al-kālim shārhe* (Orenburg, 1917), 368–370 (hadith no. 229).

91. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 24; Malov, “Ocherk,” 17, pt. 3 (1871): 246–247.

92. Saltygan Kliuch is also spelled Satlygan Kliuch in archival and missionary accounts. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, ll. 7 ob.-8 ob., 32; f. 1, op. 3, d. 3697, ll. 5 ob., 9.

service, Filippov had become an outsider, and at the time of the apostasy, the elders and his own son kept him from participating in the affairs of the commune or in the games and dances of the spring feast.<sup>93</sup> In the case of Semen Stepanov, a Kräshen of Tatarskie Azeli in Sviiazhsk district, who refused to apostatize, the apostates went even further and asked the *volost'* bureau to transfer his family to another village.<sup>94</sup> Both men constituted a threat to their villages' homogeneity. They were living proofs that apostates of both villages had baptized ancestry. (Officially, Kräshen apostates presented themselves as Muslims, falsely mistaken for baptized Tatars.) But more important, they could report on the apostates' activities to the governor's police in case of an inquiry. Furthermore, Filippov epitomized the czar's power, and Stepanov's literacy in Russian challenged the authority of other representatives who offered their own interpretation of Russian law. Finally, apostates were aware that if the whole village united, Russian authorities would be unable to deport them collectively.<sup>95</sup>

Even after the Cossacks arrived and crushed any chance the apostates had of ever becoming officially Muslim, the need to form a homogeneous Islamic society and the desire to experience Islam collectively did not die. Within the village borders and beyond, convinced apostates sought to win the support of those who had feared to declare their apostasy officially, or had shown more attachment to their clan tutelary spirits. The religious landscape of a community was in constant flux, depending on the interests of the commune and the pressure of kinship networks inside and outside the village unit. It could take decades to evolve. The *novokreshchenye* of the village of Tavliar in Mamadysh district declared their apostasy in 1869, after experiencing pressure first from their Tatar Muslim fellow villagers, who threatened to take their land and expel them from the commune and, later, from apostate relatives living in other villages who had declared their Islamic identity earlier in 1866. When in 1892 two families decided to return to Orthodoxy, the village assembly refused to allocate them land. A similar incident occurred at about the same time in the parish of Shemorbashi, also in Mamadysh district.<sup>96</sup>

Conversely, other *starokreshchenye* communes guarded themselves from any Islamic influence. In 1875, two rich apostates from Nikiforova, petitioned to be transferred to a Tatar Muslim village to profess Islam freely.<sup>97</sup> In other cases, Kräshens who remained Christian wished to found separate villages or separate communes. Thus Tatar-speaking baptized Chuvash and Kräshens of the village of Baimurzino, Tetiushi district, who constituted the majority in 1884, asked for the creation of two communes—one Christian and the other Muslim—claiming that life had become intolerable. Local Russian authorities, despite episcopal pressure, refused to grant the Kräshens' request under the pretext that keeping up two communes would be too costly for them.<sup>98</sup> More drastically, the commune of Tiamti, Mamadysh district, now

93. Malov, "Ocherk," 17, pt. 3 (1871): 414 and 18, pt. 2 (1872): 69, 77; NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 137 ob.

94. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, ll. 82 ob.-83 ob.

95. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, l. 87.

96. NART, f. 4, op. 101, d. 23, ll. 12–12 ob.; *Istoriko-statisticheskoe opisanie tserkvei i prikhodov Kazanskoj eparkhii*, vol. 6, G. Mamadysh i Mamadyshskii uezd (Kazan, 1904), 383, 385–386.

97. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3697, l. 2; *Istoriko-statisticheskoe opisanie tserkvei i prikhodov Kazanskoj eparkhii*, 161.

98. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 6810, ll. 1–4.

in the hands of Kräshens faithful to Christianity, petitioned to keep two deported apostate families from returning to their village in 1908.<sup>99</sup>

In general, if two-thirds of the village households had chosen Islam, the last third had no other choice but to follow their neighbors. Likewise, especially after the introduction of Il'minskii's schools in the 1870s, Kräshen villages that remained predominantly Christian discriminated against would-be Muslims in their midst. In apostate villages, village councils threatened to increase the taxes, and to expropriate and redistribute the land of those who did not want to sign the petition. They denounced recalcitrants as troublemakers to the *volost'* authorities, who often happened to be Muslim Tatars, and frightened elderly opponents by saying that they would not bury them in the event of their death.<sup>100</sup>

Officially, the apostasy upheaval ended with the intervention of the police and the arrival of priests and missionaries. Apostates though were not easily intimidated. In 1866, they refused to accept the police verdict and when asked did not give their Christian names. Many stubbornly kept their Muslim skullcaps on and listened distractively. Despite their mute resistance, the leaders of the Kibiak-Kozi movement in Laishevo district were imprisoned, exiled to Siberia, and/or subjected to corporal punishment. In Elyshevo, men were submitted to the whip and women to the withe (willows still grow on the riverbank.) In 1868, eleven apostates from Simbirsk province and forty-seven from Kazan province were sent to Siberia. Even after their arrest, apostate leaders of Laishevo district continued to pray five times a day in their cells.<sup>101</sup>

Until the 1850s, whole families could be deported to all-Russian villages. Unmarried cohabiting couples (usually two baptized Tatars or, more rarely, a baptized woman and a Tatar man) were systematically separated. The women and children were sent back to their native village, but sometimes their children were placed with Russian families.<sup>102</sup> These separations had tragic consequences. In March 1855, sixteen children in Sluzhilaia Maina, Chistopol' district, were taken away. When two teenagers returned to the village and a mother tried to retrieve her two small children at their foster home, the police intervened immediately. Parents and relatives barricaded a house with the children inside, and armed themselves with spears and pitchforks, but in vain. The police chief forced the parents to sign a paper that stipulated that they would not take their children back unless they remained Orthodox.<sup>103</sup>

In 1866, soldiers sought to erase all visual signs of Islam. In Saltyganovo, Sviiazhsk district, they collected and destroyed all skullcaps and in Verkhniaia Nikitkina, the vice governor of Kazan, Emel'ian Rozov, sealed the prayer house, despite the cries

99. NART, f. 4, op. 1, d. 123760, ll. 1–3.

100. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 2563, ll. 13 ob.-14; f. 4, op. 101, d. 23, ll. 12–12 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 40; f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, l. 42; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, l. 27 ob.; petition of a Kräshen opposed to the apostasy in Tatarskie Azeli, Sviiazhsk district, in NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, ll. 82 ob.-85.

101. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, l. 11; f. 13, op. 1, d. 945, ll. 46–46 ob., 71; f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, ll. 62–63; f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, l. 79; Näjmiev and Khujin, *Yashā, Saba-Yort*, 171; RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 89–90; Rizaeddin Fākhreddinev, *Bolghar wā Qazan Törekläre*, 54.

102. In general Russian families were reluctant to foster children who had not been raised in the Orthodox faith and feared their parents' retaliation. NART, f. 4, op. 84, d. 45, ll. 187–188 ob.

103. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 943, ll. 10–11, 17 ob.; f. 1, op. 2, d. 944, ll. 15–15 ob.; f. 1, op. 2, d. 1119, ll. 14–15; f. 1, op. 3, d. 12201, l. 6 ob.



and supplications of the villagers who knelt down before him.<sup>104</sup> Rozov argued that even Muslims had to petition for a permit to build a mosque. But to his amazement, apostates continued arguing on legal ground that their building was not a mosque, but a prayer house without a minaret, which, according to law, did not require special permission. After Rozov's departure, village lore recalled, they broke the seals and performed their prayers. A year later, the judge ordered the village to pay a fine of 150 rubles for opening the mosque illegally.<sup>105</sup> As for the mullahs living in neighboring villages, they were required to give written promises that they would not let Kräshens attend their mosques nor teach Kräshen children. Apostates were forbidden to leave the village.<sup>106</sup> Finally, clerics arrived with new crosses and icons. They baptized children, preached to the adults, and organized a ceremony of reunification with the church during which petitioners swore faithfulness to Eastern Orthodoxy and declared Muhammad a false prophet.<sup>107</sup> Only after the apostasy of 1866, thanks to Il'minskii, were schools opened in sensitive areas. Although Il'minskii condemned the common practice of converting native peoples by force or bribery and called for the opening of schools, he also urged the state officials to exile the leaders of the apostasies to Siberia even if they were undoubtedly practicing Muslims. With the support of the Procurator of the Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev (r. 1880–1905), the missionary succeeded in preventing any relaxation of the law against apostates despite some local officials' appeals for grace.<sup>108</sup> After Il'minskii's death, the Brotherhood of St. Gurii continued supporting this line of thought, assigning in 1899 450 rubles to help displace ten apostates from the Kazan province to Samara province; among them was a native of Elyshevo *volost'* who had represented his village during the collective apostasy in the 1860s.<sup>109</sup>

Despite the efforts of both church and state authorities, individual petitions continued to pour in, a woman asking for the liberation of her husband or a man asking for the right to get his internal passport back. Further, apostates adopted strategies of

104. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 215 ob. (from vice-governor Rozov's report); "Donesenie Kazanskogo gubernatora B. Ia. Skariatina ministru vnutrennikh del P. A. Valuevu," in *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19-go veka: Agrarnyi vopros i krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Tatarii XIX veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1936), 249.

105. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, ll. 148, 217; f. 4, op. 98, d. 34, ll. 81, 84. The restrictions concerning the opening of mosques targeted cathedral mosques where the whole community gathered on Fridays and on the days of Islamic festivals (200 to 300 parishioners were required and a petition had to be signed). Prayer houses were simple izbas. People gathered there for the performance of their everyday prayers. No permission was required. *PSZ* 19, no. 13490: 101–102; Znamenskii, "Kazanskie tatars," 130; Malov, "O tatarskikh," (December 1867): 296, (January–April 1868): 3; Rorlich, *Volga Tatars*, 41; on the history of Verkhniaia Nikitkina (Yughari Tubilghitaw), see Ähmärof, "Mükrehlär hälendän," col. 6.

106. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 230, l. 48; f. 13, op. 1, d. 945, l. 59; and f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 215 ob.

107. Malov, "Ocherk," 18, pt. 2 (1872): 43; *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19-go veka*, 251–258; samples of sermons in NART, f. 4, op. 72, d. 72, ll. 171–171 ob., and f. 4, op. 77, d. 56, ll. 85–85 ob. The same policy was applied between 1827 and 1830. V. Zelenetskii, "Ocherki missionerskoi deiatel'nosti nekotorykh Kazanskikh arkhiepastyrei, Arkhiepiskop Iona (1826–1828)," *PB* 1, bk. 1, no. 1 (January 1901): 21–24; idem, "Arkhiepiskop Filaret (1828–1836)," *PB* 1, bk. 1, no. 5 (March 1901): 196–201; Malov, "Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia," no. 9 (1868): 27–29, 29–47; no. 10 (1868): 135–140; pt. 1 (January–February 1870): 115–126.

108. *Pis'ma N. I. Il'minskogo k ober-prokuroru sviatishhego sinoda K. P. Pobedonostsevu* (Kazan, 1895), 213–214.

109. NART, f. 93, op. 1, d. 671, ll. 2, 5–6.

passive resistance. They refused to wear their crosses and pretended to have forgotten them at the steam bath, turned icons to face the walls or covered them with hats or towels; if a priest made a remark, they blamed mischievous children. Parents also hid their children when a priest passed by. Finally, when missionaries came to teach them, they often encountered an obstinate silence.<sup>110</sup>

More important, links between those arrested or deported and the original community were not easily broken. When wives were sent to their parents' village, they often came back to live with their husbands. Apostate men managed to obtain temporary passports from the *volost'* bureau (often headed by Tatars who winked at this violation of the regulations) and spent winters in Muslim villages where they earned a living; at harvest time, they returned to their families. To keep their property and ties with their original community of faith, deported parents also married their children into families living in their native villages.<sup>111</sup> Finally, local epics immortalized the fate of apostates who had been exiled and awaited their return. In the 1878 *bäyet* (epic) of Elyshevo, Ismail—the deported leader of the village—sings his sorrow, reminding his countrymen and women to continue to observe their duties as Muslim believers.<sup>112</sup>

#### *Preconditions and Accelerators for Apostasies*

The apostasies partly arose from the reforms attempted by Catherine II, partly from the reinvigoration of Islamic education and Sufism. Catherine's reforms allowed the Tatar community to prosper and extend its economic and cultural networks among the Kräshens and other peoples living in the Middle Volga, the Bashkir area, and the Kazakh steppe. The empress forbade the Orthodox Church to proselytize among her Muslim subjects and established the official Muslim Spiritual Assembly of Orenburg in Ufa in 1788. At the same time, she favored the economic and spiritual expansion of Tatar merchant colonies in Central Asia closed to Christian merchants. Tatars seized on the occasion to open trade as far as India and China and complete their theological studies in the great Islamic centers of Bukhara, Samarkand, and Kabul. Mosques and schools, headed by Sufi shaykhs, opened in the villages of Maskara (Mächkärä), Kurmanaevo (Kizlâw), Al'met'evo (Yanga Älmät), and Tiunter (Tüntär), bringing neighboring Turkic and Finno-Ugric villages to Islam. In one century, the number of mosques increased 60 percent. There were 536 mosques in the Middle Volga in 1742. In 1858, the number of mosques rose to 430 in Kazan province and 418 in Orenburg province.<sup>113</sup>

110. NART, f. 4, op. 98, d. 9, ll. 32–32 ob., f. 4, op. 101, d. 11, l. 114 ob; and f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, l. 48; Chicherina, *U privolzhskikh inorodtsev*, prilozhenie no. 1, p. 10.

111. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 1835, ll. 3–3 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 3048, ll. 31–31 ob.; f. 4, op. 77, d. 17, ll. 61–61 ob.

112. I am fortunate to have procured two copies of this epic thanks to the kindness of Gölsinä Khämüdullina in Elyshevo: one can be found in Mahisärwâr Ibrahim qızı Bikmökhämmätova's manuscript notebook (*däftär*) in Arabic script, l. 71 and the second is an unpublished and printed "Ismäghiyäl bāyete," as sung by Ghajilä Khanova, an inhabitant of Elyshevo on 18 November 1947 (Elyshevo, 1991). Published portions can be found in Gölsinä Shärifullina's article, "Urīs-kyäfer kilgänder Yilish awilä ilenä," *Idel*, no. 5 (May 1993): 69, and in Näjmiev and Khujin, *Yashä, Saba-Yort*, 175–176. In a sad repetition of history, Ismail's grandson was sent to Siberia as a *kulak* during the collectivization in the 1930s. Personal communication, G. Khämüdullina (Ismail's direct descendant), Elyshevo, May 2008.

113. PSZ 16, no. 12126: 704–707; Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 125–126; Malov, "Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia," 16, no. 5 (May 1870): 234; S. Kh. Alishev, *Istoricheskie sud'by narodov Srednego Povolzh'ia XVI–nachalo XIX veka* (Moscow, 1990), 215.

Modernization of Russia implied a broadening of the notion of citizenship, and Muslims were invited to participate in the effort of Westernizing Russia. The economic and cultural development of the Tatars had an important impact on the Kräshens, Chuvash, and Udmurts who lived in their proximity. The Kräshens, in particular, spoke the same language and could take advantage of the new opportunities that Tatar trade and schooling offered to them. Because of the low fertility of their fields, many of the Kräshen peasants in Kazan province left their villages during fall and winter to earn money elsewhere and returned for the spring planting and summer harvest. Baptized seasonal workers chose trades that were not popular among Tatars, such as tailoring. Hired by Tatars, they conformed their life to their immediate Muslim environment. After their return to the village, they spread their knowledge of Islam to their families and became the main leaders of the apostasy movements.<sup>114</sup>

Tatars and baptized seasonal workers leaning toward Islam became increasingly aware of the political changes that had followed Catherine's reforms. The closing of the Office for the Affairs of New Converts led Tatars to believe that the *tsar'-batiushka* was their ally against the Orthodox Church and local administrators who did not know the law. Tatars contended that the Kazan archbishop Luka had been sent to Siberia after they complained to Catherine II's ministers of Luka's attempts to make them Russian. Apostate Kräshens similarly believed that the ruler was on their side.<sup>115</sup>

Two cases, one in Simbirsk and the other in Kazan province, confirmed the apostates' expectations. In 1807, the plaintiff Alifa from Simbirsk province denied that she had been brought up in the Christian faith, and the Senate concluded that, based on Catherine II's legislation (in particular the 1764 law that forbade forcible conversion of non-Christians), she was allowed to remain officially Muslim. The Simbirsk court followed the Senate's instructions and, later, the Kräshens of Simbirsk claimed that an imperial edict (that is the final decision of the Simbirsk court) had permitted them to profess Islam officially because they too knew nothing about Christianity.<sup>116</sup> Later, in 1824, the Romashkina and Azeeva villages in Chistopol' district argued that during the last tax census they had been mistakenly categorized as Orthodox Christians. The provincial administration (*upravlenie*) looked at their request favorably partly because the consistory in charge of baptismal records could not determine the date of baptism of half of the inhabitants. Although parish registers showed that the villagers had attended church previously, those Kräshens were allowed to be Muslim. Other baptized Tatars in Kazan province used this case as proof that the ruler allowed them to be Muslim. Church officials, however, did not accept this judgment and continued to visit the two villages until the 1860s. Twenty years later, the district chief of Spassk city allowed a new convert from the village of Kargapol, who was first married in a church, to become a bigamist according to Islamic law. Such decisions confirmed the apostates' belief that the state could serve as their ally in the struggle against the church.<sup>117</sup>

114. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 131 ob.

115. Malov, "O novokreshchenskoi," 165.

116. *PSZ* 16, no. 12126: 704–707; Malov, "Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia," no. 10, pt. 1 (1869): 151–154; Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 125–126.

117. Malov, "Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia," no. 8 (1868): 328–334; idem, "Prikhody starokreshchennykh i novokreshchennykh tatar v Kazanskoi eparkhii," *Pravoslavnoe Obozrenie* (hereafter *PO*),

Apostates constantly played on the fact that the state, not the church, had the power to favor or to hinder the growth of Islam. They often complained about parish priests who, supposedly, made them Christian to increase their emoluments. In the parish of Sheshma, Chistopol' district, converts claimed that they paid no less than five rubles for a baptism and five to fifteen rubles for a funeral, which the priest did not even conduct, since they quickly buried their dead the Islamic way and informed the priest only after the fact. Russian peasants also criticized greedy priests who extorted money from the poor. Apostates added that priests rarely talked about the Christian faith, except during the celebration of religious rites (baptism, marriage, and funerals).<sup>118</sup>

In fact, contrary to what baptized Tatars leaning toward Islam believed or wanted to believe, there was not a real dichotomy between church and state policies. In general, the state fully backed the church. Until the 1917 Revolution, the Orthodox faith was the main component of Russian nationality. However, the Ministry of State Domains (the agency responsible for the state peasants), despite some pressure from the Ministry of Interior and the Orthodox Church, was not willing to pay the full cost of “protecting the baptized natives” from Islam. When the Russian government exiled Christian converts from Spassk, Tetiushi, and Chistopol' districts, as it did in the 1830s through the 1850s, it encountered a number of practical problems. First, the converts refused to leave their land; in their reports the local police expressed their fear that the baptized and their Muslim neighbors whom they believed to be sympathetic to their plight would revolt; they suggested sending the army, but sending the army was expensive. Second, the transfer of natives to Russian villages disrupted local economies. As a sign of protest, the deported apostates often refused to work on their new land and pay taxes, which contributed to an increase of the tax share for the rest of the commune. Third, it was difficult to find a village in Kazan province not surrounded by other Tatar villages. Fourth, when deported, a family was entitled to the same amount of land that it owned previously. In Spassk district, the Kräshens who apostatized were poor. They had small land holdings, and their transfer was easier than in the case of the Kräshens living in the Chistopol' district. The result was that in 1848 the minister of state domains, Count P. D. Kiselev stopped the transfers of 1,600 apostates in Chistopol' district and ordered the creation of an itinerant church (*pokhodnaia tserkov'*). Later the Ministry of Interior in 1861 ordered an end to transfers of Kräshens who had shown their discontent. This act of weakness was then interpreted by the Kräshen apostates as another sign of the czar's support for the Islamic cause.<sup>119</sup>

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vol. 17, no. 8 (August 1865): 464, and vol. 18, no. 12 (December 1865): 480–481; idem, *Prikhody starokreshchenykh i novokreshchenykh tatar v Kazanskoi eparkhii* (Moscow, 1866), 30; Mozharovskii, “Izlozhenie,” 127–130.

118. NART, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1976, ll. 2–2 ob.; f. 2, op. 1, d. 2153, l. 13; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 943, ll. 331–337; I. S. Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth-Century Parish Priest*, trans. Gregory L. Freeze (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Malov, “Pravoslavnaia protivomusul'manskaia,” no. 9 (1868): 27–47; no. 10 (1868): 135–140.

119. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 590, ll. 13–15 ob.; f. 1, op. 2, d. 717, ll. 20–21; f. 1, op. 2, d. 943, l. 12; f. 2, op. 1, d. 1907, ll. 10–12, 45 ob., 80; and f. 2, op. 2, d. 259, l. 25; RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, ed. khr. 733; and f. 821, op. 133, d. 454, ll. 298–302 ob.; Mozharovskii, “Izlozhenie,” 190–213, 251; Malov, “Prikhody starokreshchenykh,” vol. 18, no. 12 (December 1865): 464–466, 490.

Among Russian official documents found in apostate hands in 1866 was one referring to Kiselev's order. This was probably the famous "decree" that apostates in 1865 read in the markets of Kazan province to convince their fellow peasants that the state supported their cause. However, the reluctance of the Ministry of State Domains to deport Kräshens did not mean that the Ministry supported their cause; in fact in its reports, deportation to Siberia was the ultimate option to get out of the legal impasse.<sup>120</sup>

Furthermore, local representatives of the state considered the church responsible for its flock, but around the same period, local church representatives showed similar uneasiness at resolving the problem posed by the apostasy outbreaks. Forced Christianization or re-Christianization was not an option, but before the emergence of Il'minskii's network of schools, conversion by the word was a difficult task. Distance between the parish village and Kräshen hamlets was in general substantial and, in many cases, the language barrier prevented priests from being effective preachers. Other doubts of a deeper moral nature emerged among some local hierarchs. Nikodim (Kazantsev), bishop of Cheboksary (r. 1854–1861), boldly suggested in 1858 that the petitioners' requests should be considered favorably. If a baptized Tatar believed himself to be a Muslim, why should the authorities continue to call him a Christian? Submitting those "Muslims" to such torture was a sin committed by the authorities. Perhaps for uttering such radical ideas, Nikodim was reassigned to Eniseisk in Siberia three years later.<sup>121</sup>

In 1864, the judicial reforms introduced by Alexander II (r. 1855–1881) made it more difficult to prosecute apostasy. At the local level, the Kazan circuit courts showed some reluctance to pursue cases against the petitioners. The latter could not be accused of writing petitions that were simply the expression of a general consensus within their respective communities.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, prosecutors had trouble distinguishing between proselytizers and proselytized because those arrested came from the same Kräshen milieu. Tatar mullahs and Sufi shaykhs had succeeded in promoting a native form of Islam among the Kräshens. If the village was united (which was not always the case) and fully supported its representatives even after their arrest, the prosecution was unable to argue that villagers were under their representatives' influence.<sup>123</sup> As a result, prosecutors believed that jury cases would be won by the apostates. Only clerics could remedy the situation by spreading the Gospel more effectively. At the very beginning of the apostasy of 1865, this resulted in the release of a number of baptized representatives, which later intensified the course of the apostasy. Once again, according to the apostates, the czar had shown his support.<sup>124</sup>

120. Kiselev's order was confiscated by the local police in the house of the representative of the districts of Cheboksary, Tsvil'sk, and Kazan districts, Aleksei Fedorov (Gizetulla Abdiushev). NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 174–175. In ca. 1890 at Karaduvan, district of Kazan, an apostate representative had access to a similar document that referred to the apostasy in Chistopol' district of four families in 1840 whose transfer was canceled because of its cost. Iapei Babai (pseud. Evfimii Malov), "O kreshchenykh tatarakh (iz missionerskogo dnevnika)," *IKE* no 20 (15 October 1891): 637–638. For the Ministry of State Domains' reports, see RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 48–58 ob.; and NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 754, l. 20.

121. Malov, "Prikhody starokreshchenykh," vol. 18, no. 12 (December 1865): 509; Pavel M. Stroev, *Spiski ierarkhov i nastoiatelei monastyrei Rossiiskoi tserkvi* (SPb., 1877), cols. 291, 1019.

122. NART, f. 4, op. 134, d. 16, l. 19 ob.

123. NART, f. 4, op. 98, d. 34, l. 173; f. 13, op. 1, d. 1119, ll. 20–22.

124. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 49–58 ob.; and NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 2812, ll. 25–25 ob.; Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 296–297.

In 1874, the prosecutor of the Kazan circuit court freed two Kräshen privates who had refused to attend church services in the army and who came from villages that had petitioned the government for official recognition of their Muslim faith in 1865. According to the prosecutor, the laws against apostasy did not apply to individuals who had been baptized at an age when they had no understanding of their deeds.<sup>125</sup> This rule could only increase the number of apostates as it contradicted earlier state policies; retired soldiers often led the apostasies. But in 1888, the Orenburg Criminal Chamber used the same reasoning to dismiss a case against Sil'vestr Andreev, an accused apostate.<sup>126</sup> Two other obvious contradictions, pointed out by the authorities themselves and the church, was that judges allowed apostates called at the witness stand to swear on the Qur'an in the presence of a mullah, and that apostates had their internal passports issued under their Muslim names, and not their baptized Russian names.<sup>127</sup> Finally, in 1881, apostates in Chistopol' district signaled to the Kazan provincial authorities that in Ufa province, the governor's office had allowed neighboring mullahs to register the births and deaths of apostates, and even officiate among them. This only pointed to local variations in the enforcement of the law and to the apostates' capacity of keeping themselves updated of any change in its application. In general, Kazan authorities showed less flexibility than those in Ufa; they permitted *volost'* heads, not mullahs, to keep metrical books—Imperial Russia's system for keeping track of vital statistics—for the apostates. (Normally, the local clergy—Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist—maintained the metrical books for their communities.) As a result, some apostates preferred to register themselves at the local *volost'* boards under their Muslim names rather than wait for a collective petition, thus officially rejecting Orthodoxy at a lower cost.<sup>128</sup>

In 1895, new petitions reached the desk of the Kazan governor Petr A. Poltoratskii (1842–1909), who, overwhelmed by their number (30,000 altogether), first proposed a general amnesty, and then retracted his offer. His administration agreed that allowing apostates to become officially Christian would jeopardize the supremacy of the Eastern Orthodox Church over other confessions; yet it also admitted that keeping apostates from being registered legally as Muslims deprived them of their rights. Apostates could not officially inherit according to the sharia. Even more problematic was the fact that with no recognized clergy to keep the metrical books, the apostates were drafted into the army based on their appearance rather than their actual age. Keeping apostates from becoming officially Muslim would not make them into good Christians. Because the petitioners were the grandchildren or great-grandchildren of apostates and were not cited in the Orthodox parish registers as baptized, Poltoratskii proposed that apostates be permitted to register as Muslims before a certain

125. NART, f. 4, op. 97, d. 1, l. 393.

126. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 399, l. 13 ob.; f. 1, op. 2, d. 1119, l. 88; and f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, l. 125 ob.; GAOO, f. 55, op. 3, d. 278, ll. 5–6.

127. NART, f. 2, op. 1, d. 2256, ll. 26–27; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5136, ll. 128 ob.–129; f. 2, op. 2, d. 1429, ll. 1–1 ob.; Petr Troitskii, "Novokreshchenskie prikhody Kazanskoi eparkhii v ikh proshlom i nastoiashchem" (Kursovoe sochinenie, 1915) in NART, f. 10, op. 2, d. 1383, ll. 234–235.

128. NART, f. 2, op. 2, d. 1921, ll. 2–3 ob.; "Otchet o deiatel'nosti Soveta Bratstva Sv. Guriia ot 4 okt. 1871 g. po 4 okt. 1872 g.," *IKE*, no. 3 (1 February 1873): 90; Paul Werth, "The Limits of Religious Ascription: Baptized Tatars and the Revision of Apostasy, 1840s–1905," *Russian Review* 59, no. 4. (October 2000): 95.

deadline; after the deadline, petitions would not be considered. Against strong church opposition, Poltoratskii's proposal failed. However, because of the governor's initial willingness to compromise, in 1894–1896 some apostates from the city of Chistopol' and the districts of Spassk and Chistopol' were granted the right to become Muslim officially. But in 1897 the apostates' luck had run out and the governor systematically declined all requests, discouraging further police investigation at the local level.<sup>129</sup>

Despite their defeat, though, the apostates' tenacity in promoting confessional self-identification through legal channels succeeded in destabilizing the official conception of religious affiliation and demonstrated the natives' legal knowledge and capacity to exploit the inconsistencies of Russian law. On the one hand, no one could be forcibly converted to Orthodox Christianity, the dominant religion of the Russian state; on the other, apostates to Islam claimed that because they had always been Muslim, they should not be forcibly categorized as Christians.

### *Mobilizers of the Apostasy Movements*

Among those arrested by the clerical and state authorities in 1803, 1827–1830, and the 1860s, there were Tatar and Kräshen students of charismatic Sufi leaders, Tatar mullahs who taught Kräshens in their schools (often denounced by their Tatar Muslim parishioners but not by the apostates), baptized men (among them veterans and seasonal workers) who represented their villages, and baptized women who were accused of spreading rumors from village to village. They constituted the intellectual elites, legal experts, and voices of their villages. All of them participated in the broadening of the apostate *umma* (the Muslim community of faith) beyond their territorial boundaries.

The apostates' petition movement proves Robert Crews's argument that Muslim communities of Russia did not live in cultural autarky but used Russian institutions of power to construct their Islamic identity and consolidate their communal boundaries. Writing petitions to the czar or the governor required knowledge outside Islam—first of the Russian language, then of administrative technicalities, and finally, legal precedents. Apostates and some of the mullahs who supported them worked within the Russian legal system and learned from previous individual and collective attempts to change the legislation. In the 1830s they sent their petitions on a simple piece of paper, which according to Russian law could have detrimental consequences—the petition then could be disregarded without being read. But, by the 1860s, they had learned their lesson; they followed the rules to the letter and used the special, more costly, official paper (*gerbovaia bumaga*) for their petitions.<sup>130</sup>

Would-be Muslims also quickly learned how to present themselves to authorities adequately. In 1802 they admitted that they had been baptized and so were immediately classified as criminal apostates. However, by 1827 many claimed that they had always been Muslim, that their ancestors had been Muslim, and that their

129. NART, f. 2, op. 2, d. 4452, ll. 90, 96–98; f. 2, op. 2, d. 4960, ll. 4, 8–9, 15, 25; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5134, ll. 5–6, 49; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5136, ll. 128 ob.-129, 132–133, 181–181 ob.; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5133, l. 35; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5132, l. 35; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5131, l. 47; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5137, l. 16; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5141, l. 45; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5142, l. 20; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5143, l. 13; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5144, l. 26; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5145, l. 139; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5350, ll. 66–66 ob.; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5353, l. 22; and f. 2, op. 2, d. 5355, ll. 16–16 ob.; Otdel rukopisei Instituta iazyka, literatury i istorii Akademii nauk Tatarstana, f. 56, op. 1, d. 4, ll. 137 ob.-138; Werth, "Limits of Religious Ascription," 504.

130. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 134, ll. 1, 4.

classification as Christians was simply an unfortunate clerical error or the result of the priests' cupidity. They pursued the same strategy in the 1860s, using their Muslim names exclusively and occasionally including a summary of the main tenets of the Islamic faith. Even baptized Chuvash villages in Tetiushi district claimed that their ancestors had always been Muslim.<sup>131</sup>

The leaders' dilemma consisted in gathering petitions the fastest way possible to create a sense of urgency and collective unity. Apostatizing was risky business and not everyone was ready to pay for the extra financial expenses it entailed. Villagers had to acquire copies of the decrees or pseudo-decrees that justified their appeal. In 1827, apostate leaders of Sviiashsk district paid four rubles for a copy of the 1807 decision of the Senate that had allowed Alifa from Simbirsk province to adopt Islam officially. Apostates also typically had to pay administrative fees (in general, thirty to fifty kopecks per family), hire Russian translators, bribe local authorities, remunerate their own mullah, buy Islamic primers (two kopecks each), and purchase clothing that distinguished them as Muslims. In 1866, the Elyshevites paid twelve rubles to send a petition and about three rubles for the Muslim skullcaps sewn by one of their villagers and informers in Kazan.<sup>132</sup> Leaders thus had to gather signatures and gain the consensus of several villages in various provinces in order to gather the required sum. As a result, they did not choose villages at random. In 1802, Vasili Estifeev (b. 1779) from the mixed Baptized Mishar-Chuvash village of Moklokovo, whose grandfather accepted baptism when marrying a Kräshen, visited other villages in Nizhnii Novgorod province, claiming that in Kazan district, Kräshens had been allowed to become Muslim. During his trip, he chose to go to Kräshen villages that could afford the cost of writing a petition. But in 1865, representatives of villages that could not afford the cost of the petition because of the small number of apostates traveled themselves to popular trading places such as Tetiushi and the Hay Market of Kazan where representatives of larger villages gathered signatures.<sup>133</sup>

Kinship and trade networks helped to propagate the news about the pseudo-edict and extend the apostate movement. The leaders of apostasies were often related by marriage; father-in-law and son-in-law signed petitions together. Like Tatars, the Kräshens practiced exogamy. The bride rarely remained in her home village and so linked two communities together. This facilitated the flow of rumors from one village to another before, during, and after the rebellion. In December 1865, the village of Varangush in Tsarevokokshaisk district learned about a gathering of signatures at the

131. Petitions (1827–1829) in *Otdel rukopisei Kazanskoi nauchnoi biblioteki im. Lobachevskogo*, f. 7, ed. khr. 28, ll. 1–256; Malov, *Prikhody starokreshchenykh i novokreshchenykh tatar v Kazanskoi eparkhii*, 24; published petitions for the 1860s in *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19-go veka*, 242, 244, 247; NART, f. 4, op. 72, d. 12, ll. 334–335; f. 13, op. 1, d. 943, ll. 331–337; on Chuvash villages in Tetiushi district [Kukshum, Belaia Voloshka, and Uteeva], see Rozov's report in Il'minskii, ed., *Kazan'skaia tsentral'naia*, 299.

132. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 1–1 ob., 11. The representative of apostate villages in Kazan district paid about the same price (sixteen rubles) for their petition, NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, l. 20 ob.

133. Evfimii Malov, "Nyneshnee religioznoe polozhenie kreshchenykh tatar Zavolzhskego kraia," *PO* 7 (1866): 123; Il'minskii, *Opyty perelozheniia*, 21–22, 40; V. Magnitskii, "Nechto o Chuvashakh, Tatarakh i Mishariakh," *Deistviia Nizhegorodskoi Gubernskoi uchenoi Arkhivnoi komissii (Sbornik statei, soobshchenii, opisei i dokumentov)* 3 (Nizhnii Novgorod, 1898): 39; NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 222, ll. 32–32 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 859, l. 4 ob.; f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, 20–20 ob.



Hay Market of Kazan through their wives who were natives of Iabash and Nurma, two apostate villages of Kazan district.<sup>134</sup>

By exiling Christian converts to Islam, the Russian government contributed to the greater spread of the apostasy movement. Petitioners of different parishes and provinces found themselves exiled to the same Russian villages; their common experience only strengthened their resolve to fight for their religious rights. They learned about the existence of other Islamized Kräshen communities, and established new connections between hitherto isolated villages. Thus, in the 1840s, apostates from Almurzina and other villages in the southern part of Spassk district were displaced to the Russian village of Kutema, east of Chistopol' district; there they came to contact with apostate villages in Chistopol' district, north-west of Kutema, which resulted in the formation of a much compact group of 712 individuals, ready to petition again.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, in the suburb of Novosheshminsk in Chistopol' district, there were baptized Tatar families transferred from Sredniaia Biktemirova in Spassk district, Sluzhilaia Maina in Chistopol' district, and Maris from Tsarevokokshaisk district. Single apostate families were also exiled to the same village from different districts and villages at different times. In the suburb of Starosheshminsk, there was a family from Tetiushi district deported in 1847, three other families from three different villages of Chistopol' district deported in 1849, 1852, and 1857, and one more transferee from Mamadysh district in 1855.<sup>136</sup> What was worse for the Russian authorities, the contacts between the exiles and their native villages did not cease. In the village of Omara, Mamadysh district, lived apostates from Almurzina, Spassk district. When a priest came to inspect them, only five of seventeen individuals resided in Omara; the others lived in Almurzina. Because apostates from Almurzina were also displaced to the Russian village of Kutema in Chistopol' district, exiles served as informants between hitherto isolated baptized communities in Spassk, Chistopol', and Mamadysh districts. Finally, when the local authorities transferred *novokreshchenye* to the baptized Chuvash village of Shemursha in Buinsk district, Simbirsk province, to be instructed in the Christian faith, it only furthered the Islamization of the native Chuvash.<sup>137</sup>

The biography of the most important apostate representative, Egor Fedorov (1826–after 1906), alias 'Alim Ismä'il ughli, also called Samigulov, reveals even more vividly the significance of these exiles and their revolutionary tactics. A close-cropped dark-haired man with gray eyes and light brown eyebrows, about five foot six, Samigulov was born in 1826 in Verkhniaia Nikitkina before the first apostasy of his village, composed of baptized Chuvash and *novokreshchenye*, in 1829.<sup>138</sup> A decade later, Samigulov's village apostatized a second time and received the visit of a priest who explained to them the principles of the Orthodox faith in Tatar. But the villagers refused to give their Russian names, and insisted on educating their children in the Islamic

134. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 9–9 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 859, l. 5.

135. NART, f. 4, op. 84, d. 263, l. 10 ob.; *Karta narodonaseleniia Kazanskoï gubernii po plemenam. Sostavlena po mestnym istochnikam General'nogo Shtaba Polkovnikom A. Rittikh* (SPb., 1870).

136. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 541, ll. 3, 17 ob.; f. 4, op. 99, d. 20, ll. 67–70 ob.

137. NART, f. 4, op. 134, d. 33, l. 10; Runovskii, "Ocherk istorii khristianskogo," no. 7 (1 April 1901): 242, footnote 25.

138. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 351–353, 385; on the history of Verkhniaia Nikitkina (Tubilghitav village), see Ähmärof, "Mükrehlär hälendän," col. 2.

faith.<sup>139</sup> In 1849, the Russian authorities deported the village leaders from Chistopol' to Mamadysh, a district spared by the apostasy movement, where other exiles from Spassk district had been moved. Around the same time, leaders of other apostasies in Spassk were also transferred to Chistopol' district, which encouraged new exchanges of information between apostates of various origins. The result was that in Mamadysh district, partially under Samigulov's leadership, *starokreshchenye*—who had not previously participated in the apostasy movement—joined Islam for the first time in 1865 along with the Chistopol' and Spassk apostates.<sup>140</sup>

In 1856, 1858, and 1859, Samigulov, who was also the disciple (*murid*) of a famous Naqshbandi shaykh in Chistopol' district, served as the unofficial mullah of his village and sent petitions to St. Petersburg, and even made special trips to the capital, asking the government to allow his exiled countrymen and countrywomen to return to the village. Each time his requests were denied. But in August 1865, the deported apostates defied authorities, and without authorization came back to their village where they founded a mosque and a Qur'anic school.<sup>141</sup> Then, between September and December 1865, Samigulov—who repaired watches and samovars, and occasionally sold lemons to finance his trips—visited Kräshens, Chuvash, and Maris and convinced whole villages in Tetiushi, Kazan, Mamadysh, Tsivil'sk, Cheboksary, and Laishevo districts that the emperor had authorized his village to erect a mosque.<sup>142</sup> His strategy for convincing other Kräshens to apostatize can be seen clearly in his 1865 visit to Karatun village, Tetiushi district. Karatun was a market village and thus offered an opportunity to reach a wider audience. Earlier apostate leaders had also preached their message in markets; in 1827 the Kräshens had heard calls to convert to Islam at the market in Shonguty, Tetiushi district.<sup>143</sup> To create a sense of urgency and rally as many people as possible in the most spectacular way, Samigulov used the support of prominent local apostates, employed Mahdist rhetoric, and chose a symbolic date—the beginning of the Muslim fast of Ramadan—as the deadline for collecting signatures. In 1843, Samigulov's village had apostatized during Ramadan.<sup>144</sup> Overall,

139. The exact date of their apostasy was 1843, NART, f. 2, op. 1, d. 1911, ll. 2–2 ob., 13.

140. Evfimii Malov, "Statisticheskie svedeniia o kreshchenykh tatarakh Kazanskoi i nekotorykh drugikh eparkhii, v volzhskom basseine," in *Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta*, vol. 4 (1866): 339; idem, "Prikhody starokreshchenykh," vol. 18, no. 12 (1865): 466; on the Chuvash apostates of Verkhniaia Nikitkina, see NART, f. 4, op. 80, d. 60, l. 62 ob.

141. The underground mosque of Verkhniaia Nikitkina existed earlier but had burned in 1858 and was rebuilt in 1861 and then in 1865. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 73 ob.-74.

142. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 73 ob.-82, 218–219 ob.; and NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, l. 81 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, ll. 102–102 ob., 232 ob.-233; f. 4, op. 134, d. 16, ll. 19 ob.-20; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 134–134 ob., 148 ob., 150 ob., 215, 217, 249–273, 256–256 ob., 402; Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 291–292, 304 (Rozov's report); Malov, "Nyneshnee religioznoe polozhenie kreshchenykh tatar Zavolzhskogo kraia," *Strannik* 7, tom 3, no. 8 (August 1866): 73; *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19-go veka*, 233–236, 250–251 (Samigulov's petitions and police reports); Sergei Rybakov, "Otpadenie kreshchenykh inorodtsev v Islam i ikh provshchenie," *PB* 2, no. 14 (July 1899): 245.

143. Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 123–124.

144. Samigulov let a prominent local apostate figure, 'Abdryafik Mökhammätev, introduce him and support his story—that in 1856 Alexander II had issued an edict allowing the Kräshens to declare themselves Muslim. He also used the same tactic in the village of Saltyganovo, Sviiazhsk district, and in Kibiak-Kozi, Laishevo district where he stayed in the house of a prominent apostate whose son shortly became the village unofficial mullah. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 227, ll. 81–81 ob.; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 945, l. 55 ob.

the underground mullah's strategy proved extremely successful. At this one meeting in Karatun, he gathered 800 signatures, and later another 1,000 Kräshens joined the ranks of the rebellion.<sup>145</sup>

Back in Kazan, shortly before Christmas 1865, Samigulov wrote new petitions in a Tatar hotel and made another important and symbolic step to prove that apostates could live according to sharia rules, taking a Muslim Tatar widow as his second wife.<sup>146</sup> Samigulov was then arrested, but for lack of incriminating evidence—the law condemned Muslim but not Kräshen proselytism among Eastern Orthodox—he was released, and returned promptly to his village, where in May 1866 he faced the authorities one more time. As the police made its first attempt to seal his mosque, Samigulov boldly climbed on its roof and urged everyone to enter the building and pray. The villagers complied and the police were unable to close the prayer house. Only upon the vice-governor Rozov's arrival was the prayer house finally sealed, and Samigulov, sent to the prison of Chistopol', where he continued to appeal his case. Four years later, unable to bring formal charges against Samigulov under the new legal regime of 1864, the Ministry of Internal Affairs exiled him to Siberia by administrative fiat. The legendary underground mullah was still alive in 1906, when finally his native village obtained the right to profess Islam openly. At the age of eighty, the former leader of the 1865 apostasy movement lived in the city of Semipalatinsk, where an important Volga Tatar trading colony was located along the Kazakh steppe frontier.<sup>147</sup>

Leaders of Kräshen apostasies were seasonal workers, traders, or craftsmen like Samigulov who, freed to some extent from the vagaries of weather and field cultivation, constituted a relatively well-to-do and literate segment of the population concerned with bringing apostate communities into the broader community of the Prophet. In the 1870s, baptized seasonal workers from Elyshevo convinced Kräshens in Menzelinsk to join the apostasy movement, pushing the apostasy movement eastward.<sup>148</sup> In general, very successful seasonal workers could earn enough to open their own shops in the city, hire their covillagers, even build mosques in Tatar villages, and advance the money to their poorest fellow villagers for signing the petition, which resulted in the fastest gathering of signatures. They were the ones who brought Muslim stories to the village and bought Muslim books at the fairs they visited for their trade. In short, it was they who interpreted Russian and Islamic law, consolidated Islamic knowledge at the village level, and broadened their communities' sacred territory.<sup>149</sup>

145. Malov, "Nyneshnee religioznoe," *Strannik* (August 1866): 73–74; Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 82.

146. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 134–134 ob. In another case of polygamy, a father-in-law denounced his son-in-law for taking a second wife, NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, ll. 32 ob.-33 ob.

147. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 2 ob.-4, 49–58 ob.; f. 821, op. 8, d. 780, l. 10 ob.; and NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 340–341 ob.; Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 297, 305, 311 (Rozov's report); Ähmärof, "Mükrehlär häləndän," col. 6; on Muslim merchant colonies, see Frank, *Muslim Religious Institutions*, 71.

148. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, l. 300; and NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3272, l. 9.

149. Malov, "Ocherk," 18, pt. 1 (1872): 399; NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 3697, l. 2; NART, f. 4, op. 133, d. 7, l. 16; f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 1–1 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 138 ob.; *Istoriko-statisticheskoe opisanie tserkvei i prikhodov Kazanskoi eparkhii*, 36.

## Literacy and Its Practicality among the Apostates

Islamic knowledge, both oral and written, provided a tool to understand the universe, but it also played an essential technical part in the orchestration of the apostasy movement. At the same time, access to Islamic knowledge did not preclude the acquisition of Russian literacy which, even before Il'minskii's reforms, was available to Kräshens in some limited form through church or Ministry of State Domain schools. Indeed, not all leaders could read or write like Samigulov, but they still knew the importance of literacy and looked for Russian clerks or literate Tatars to perform the tasks they needed for the gathering of as many names as possible in the shortest time possible.

For the first half of the nineteenth century, it is not easy to determine the level of literacy, both in Tatar and Russian, among the apostate communities. When questioned by the police, apostates usually answered that they could not read or write due to their lack of access to Qur'anic schools and mullahs. During the apostasy of 1866, Gizetulla Abdiushev (Aleksii Fedorov) (b. 1820), the representative of Cheboksary, Tsivil'sk, and Kazan districts, fluent in Russian, declared to the police that he could neither read nor write in Russian or Tatar, and signed his deposition with a *tamgha*. When the police searched his home, though, they found official Russian documents about the Chistopol' district apostasies of 1846, the 1859 petitions of Chistopol' district in the Tatar language, and a diary detailing the number of printed Islamic primers distributed in the apostate villages of Tsivil'sk district (1,304 primers), when officially Tsivil'sk district had but 897 apostates. This discovery was a clear indication that Abdiushev, like other "apostate" missionaries valued print, a technology long employed by European missionaries to spread Christianity and embraced by Naqshbandi Sufis weary of contesting the Russian state religious boundaries. Whether literate or not, Abdiushev's memory was also impressive. The representative of Cheboksary could name the apostate villages in his and Tsivil'sk districts, give the number of apostates for each village, and "read" their *tamghas*, an indication of preliteracy.<sup>150</sup>

Other evidence shows that most Kräshen representatives were literate in Tatar, and even Russian. Many in Tetiushi and Chistopol' districts had studied in Islamic schools, sometimes beyond the elementary level, and some in local Russian parish schools.<sup>151</sup> In marketplaces, apostate leaders encouraged their followers by publicly reading and translating copies of the spurious edict granting the Kräshens permission to declare themselves Muslim. In the 1820s some apostates hired Russians to write their petitions, but in the 1860s apostates copied the petitions in Russian and Tatar in their own hand. In 1827, two representatives from the Sviiazhsk district,

150. *Tamgha*, common to one clan, took various geometric forms and occasionally exhibited the shape of Arabic letters. When a son married and built a house, usually close to his parents, the latter adopted his father's *tamgha* with very slight variations. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 81 ob.-82; and NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 102-103, 197; Nicholas Ostler, "The Social Roots of Missionary Linguistics," *Missionary Linguistics/Linguística Misionera*, ed. Otto Zwartjes and Even Hovdhaugen (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2004), 33-46; Naqshbandi Sufis favored the use of print to spread Islamic education. Michael Laffan, "The New Turn to Mecca: Snapshots of Arabic Printing and Sufi Networks in Late 19th Century Java," in the special issue of *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, titled "Langues, religion et modernité dans l'espace musulman" (124 [November 2008]: 113-131).

151. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, l. 25 ob.; f. 10, op. 1, d. 1655, ll. 19, 21 ob.

Larion and Vasilii Ivanov, hired a mail clerk to write their petition, and a soldier to write down the names of the plaintiffs in each village they visited. In 1836, the apostates of Chistopol' and Sviiazhsk districts still turned to two Russians, a retired clerk and a chancellor, for composing and copying their petition.<sup>152</sup> But within fifteen years, Kräshens were copying their own petitions. When police surprised nine Kräshens in a Tatar hotel in Kazan, one of them, Samigulov, was reading aloud in Tatar, while another Kräshen, Iarofei Grigor'ev from Simbirsk province, was writing in Russian. The police seized Russian legal texts and a petition from Simbirsk. The Kräshens of Kazan province had made substantial progress in Russian literacy since their first apostasy.<sup>153</sup>

Most of the 1866 petitions had been composed according to the model of the 1856 Verkhniaia Nikitkina petition in Chistopol' (Samigulov's village). Their literate language indicated that a Tatar educated in a madrasa had authored the text, rather than a self-educated Kräshen. This Tatar appeared to be from Bugul'ma district.<sup>154</sup> But, if the Kräshens did not have the skills to compose the original text, they had enough literacy to copy hundreds of petitions. The judicial investigator of the Kazan Criminal Chamber was impressed that so many villagers in Kibiak-Kozi, Laishevo district could read and write.<sup>155</sup> Samigulov's handwriting in Arabic script by far excelled his writing in Cyrillic, which was at the level of a first-grader. Copying petitions themselves kept the Kräshens' expenses down as it was quite costly to hire a public scribe. Once the Kräshens had the basic text of the petition, they could introduce the names of their village, representatives, and covillagers. In 1865–1866, Kräshens of Verkhniaia Nikitkina remodeled Samigulov's 1856 petition, and their new copy ended up in the hands of the literate representatives of Elyshevo, who used it to draft their grievances.<sup>156</sup>

The practice of copying petitions greatly speeded up the process of apostatizing. After 17 April 1905, thanks to the new Edict on Strengthening the Principles of Religious Toleration, mullahs distributed printed petition forms in the name of the Spiritual Assembly of Orenburg. Petitioners who had learned to read and write in Il'minskii's elementary schools could just enter their names in Cyrillic letters individually. The Ministry of Interior, however, continued to receive petitions copied or even composed by the apostates themselves. A twenty-seven-year-old woman from Verkhnie Otary, Mamadysh district, copied a petition with many spelling mistakes,

152. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 134, l. 9; f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, ll. 102–102 ob.; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 102, 172, 197; *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19-go veka*, 236; Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 285; Mozharovskii, "Izlozhenie," 123–125.

153. NART, f. 10, op. 1, d. 1655, l. 18 ob.; *Materialy po istorii Tatarii vtoroi poloviny 19-go veka*, 234–236.

154. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, ll. 233 ob., 234 ob.

155. In 1868, three men and a woman taught Islamic literacy in four different houses. Parents also sent their children to the elementary Qur'anic school in a nearby village of Kazaklar (also called Verkhnie Kibiak-Kozi) until Bol'shie Kibiak-Kozi obtained the right to build its own mosque. (NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 1818, ll. 1 ob., 4; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 945, l. 22.) The father of the historian Yakhya Abdullin, born in Bol'shie Kibiak-Kozi in 1885, studied at Kazaklar in the 1890s. Yakhya Abdullin, interview by author, 30 May 2000, Institute of History, Kazan.

156. Petition of Aul-Urmat, Kazan district, in 1866, NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, ll. 13–17; Samigulov's deposition, NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 938, l. 402; Shärifullina, "Uris-kyafir," 67.

but her childish handwriting was perfectly readable. And a thirteen-year-old boy, who attended a Russian school in the same district, wrote six lines about his wish to become Muslim and signed for his mother, a widow, who had her own portion of the petition typed.<sup>157</sup>

Literacy in Tatar also helped representatives to organize the movement and stay in touch with their native community when they brought the petition to the state or provincial capitals. During his 1802 stay in St. Petersburg, Estifeev—the only literate person in his family—wrote letters encouraging his fellow villagers to resist local priests and police. In May 1866, a native of an apostate village who ran a business in the Tatar neighborhood of Kazan wrote home to explain to his fellow villagers what they should do after sending their petition. They should give children Muslim names, buy Muslim skullcaps, and open a Muslim cemetery. The same year, Kräshen emissaries from neighboring districts distributed the same type of written instructions to Kräshens of Sviiazhsk district, warning parents not to turn to the priest for baptizing their newborns or burying their infants, but to proceed according to Islamic law.<sup>158</sup>

Although literacy was an important tool of resistance, it is difficult to date the appearance of Muslim books among Orthodox Tatars. Nevertheless, the age of the first apostate leader, Vasilii Estifeev—literate in Tatar, Persian, Arabic, and Russian—who was twenty-three in 1802, shows that the Kräshens had access to Muslim schools even before the establishment of the Asian printing house (*Aziatskaia tipografiia*) in Kazan in 1801, at a time when such schools used manuscripts that Tatar merchants had brought from Central Asia.<sup>159</sup> According to Russian Orthodox missionaries, the printing house facilitated further access to Tatar literature without the necessary help of a religious specialist and thus accelerated the further spread of Islam among the Kräshens, who officially could not have immediate access to a religious expert and could potentially instruct themselves and become teachers in their own milieu. Naqshbandi Sufis favored the use of print to spread Islamic education, and Russian statistics provide support for the popularity of published Islamic literature in the Volga region. In 1802, 11,000 copies of the Muslim primer *Sharā'it al-Īmān* (Foundation of Faith, composed in 1776?) were published; in 1806, 19,000; and between 1855 and 1864, 147,000. Likewise the *Häft-i Yäk* (a Persian word that means “one seventh” or “the seventh part” of the Qur'an) appeared in 1802 in 7,000 copies, in 1806 in 3000, in 1842 in 6,400, in 1846 in 4,000, in 1847 in 5,400, and finally between 1855 and 1866 in 70,000. The story of Joseph (*Qiṣṣa-yi Yūsuf*), a mystical book well-known among the Kräshens, appeared in 21,000 copies between 1854 and 1864, and *Ākhīr Zamān Kitābī* (The Book of the End of Time), an eschatological book sold 9,500 copies between 1855 and 1864. This literature, popular at home and in primary schools, was extraordinarily cheap. In the 1860s, the Muslim primer cost only two kopecks, and a Qur'an between seventy-five kopecks and a ruble. In addition to printed religious

157. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 234; f. 2, op. 2, d. 12824, l. 11; f. 2, op. 2, d. 12825, ll. 251–252; f. 2, op. 2, d. 12826, ll. 430, 450; RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, ed. khr. 455, d. 6, ch. II, ll. 27–29, 35–38; and f. 821, op. 133, ed. khr. 454, d. 6, ch. I, ll. 84–87; Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 305–306.

158. Il'minskii, *Opyty perevozheniia*, 21, 40; Malov, “Ocherk,” 18, pt. 1 (1872): 77; NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, ll. 9–9 ob.; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, l. 1 ob.

159. Rybakov, “Otpadenie kreshchenykh inorodtsev v Islam i ikh prosveshchenie,” 243.

books, manuscript copies of the story of Joseph and other popular religious literature could be found in Kräshen milieu.<sup>160</sup>

It is also difficult to determine the scope of Tatar proselytism among the baptized population, because Kräshens did not volunteer such information. Kräshen apostates refused to provide the names of their Tatar mullahs and teachers because they knew that their “educators” could be prosecuted and sent to Siberia. They would rather name a dead mullah who taught them the tenets of Islam. It was not until 1895 that some apostates, surer of their rights and eager to show that they were true Muslims, gave the names of the mullahs and shaykhs who let them visit their mosques. In most cases though, they argued that because they were “officially” baptized, the mullahs forbade them to go to their schools; consequently, they had to perform all the rituals on their own.<sup>161</sup>

Still novices in the art of apostatizing, the Kräshens of the 1802–1803 apostasy were more vocal about the Tatar mullahs’ involvement in their acquisition of Islamic knowledge. They mentioned that Tatar *abizlar* (probably from the Arabic *hafiz*, mullahs or educated Muslims who knew the Qur’an by heart) opened schools to their children and visited them at home, sometimes three times a day. Those *abizlar* criticized them for having Russian icons in their homes and said repeatedly that if Kräshens had to live like Christians on the outside, they should at least keep the Muslim faith alive in their heart.<sup>162</sup>

Contrary to the Russian priests who taught everything in Russian, mullahs translated the prayers from Arabic into Tatar, which encouraged the Kräshens to read and learn more about the Muslim faith. Estifeev, the leader of the 1802–1803 apostasy, knew Arabic and Persian, which shows that he had access to higher learning because these languages were not taught as subjects in the primary Islamic schools. In the mixed Mishar-Chuvash village of Moklokovovo there were two mosques. It is possible that Estifeev studied there, but his age and his unmarried status suggest that he might have studied in a more distant madrasa. Peasants encouraged early marriages to increase production, and those who married early often worked on the land and had no time for going to school. Estifeev, on the contrary, fitted the pattern of those Muslim students who left home to pursue their studies in a distant land and married upon their return. The training in madrasa was particularly long and strenuous.

160. Eruslanov, “Magometanskaia propaganda,” no. 14 (1895): 276; Nikolai Il’minskii, “O kolichestve pechataemykh v Kazani magometanskikh knig i o shkole dlia detei kreshchenykh tatar,” in *Kazanskaia tsentral’naia*, ed. Il’minskii, 113–114; Malov, “Pravoslavnaia protivomusul’manskaia,” 14, pt. 2, no. 7 (1868): 230, 232, 242–244, 246–249, 250–253; M. N. Farkhshtov, “Ob uchebnykh posobiakh mektebov i medrese Bashkirii do nachala XX veka,” in *Sotsial’nye i etnicheskie aspekty istorii Bashkirii* (Ufa, 1988), 45; on the cost of books, NART, f. 10, op. 1, d. 1655, l. 16 ob.; Evfimii Malov, *Akhyr zaman kitaby: Mukhammedanskoie uchenie o konchine mira* (Kazan, 1897), 38; Timofeev’s diary in Il’minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral’naia*, 72; for a detailed history of the printing of Tatar religious books, Abrar Karimullin, *U istokov tatarskoi knigi* (Kazan, 1971), 177; Geoffrey Roper, “Faris al-Shidyāq and the Transition from Scribal to Print Culture in the Middle East,” in *The Book in the Islamic World: The Written Word and Communication in the Middle East*, ed. George N. Atiyeh (Albany, 1995), 216.

161. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 228 ob. (Rozov’s report); and f. 2, op. 2, d. 5129, l. 2.

162. Il’minskii, *Opyty perelozheniia*, 23–24; “Abyzy,” in *Islam na Nizhegorodchine. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2007), 8–9.

It is likely that Estifeev studied at the madrasa of Ovechii Vrag, where the founder, Abdul Zhälil Bikkinin (b. 1740?), well known for bringing Kräshens to Islam, taught Islamic sciences, Arabic, Persian, and mathematics. According to one story, when the famous *abiz* learned that his Tatar-speaking coachman's name was Semen, he stopped his carriage abruptly, instructed the coachman in the tenets of Islam, and changed his name to Süläyman. The teacher of Ovechii Vrag invited Kräshen children to his school. At his request, the son of a Kräshen woman from Bazlovo village stayed three months (probably free of charge or in exchange for light labor) at his school, leaving his father and mother behind. Bikkinin wanted the boy to pursue his studies, but his father needed him for work. Nevertheless, the mullah's efforts were not spent in vain. Once back at the village, his former student taught his family what he had learned at school.<sup>163</sup>

Although not all Kräshens had access to higher learning, some had access to one form or another of primary schooling. Proportionally, in Kazan province in the 1850s, the number of mosques was higher per capita than the number of churches. There were 731 mosques with schools attached for about 400,000 Muslims, which did not include official and clandestine prayer houses, and there were 950 churches for 1,076,744 Orthodox Christians.<sup>164</sup> The same could be said about Viatka province where in 1902 Kräshens lived mainly in two districts, Elabuga and Malmyzh, and often apostatized. There was one mosque in the province for every 799.5 Muslims and one church per 3,640.5 Christians. More important, there was one Qur'anic school per 594.1 inhabitants and one church school for every 1,362.3 inhabitants. Similarly in Ufa province in the 1880s there was one Russian school (either a Ministry of Education, *zemstvo*, private, missionary, or church school) for every 3,160 inhabitants and one Qur'anic school per 784 inhabitants.<sup>165</sup>

Islamic schooling was both a tool of conversion and resistance. Each time Kräshens declared their apostasy, they publicly opened a school, invited madrasa students to teach their children, or appointed a literate Kräshen. Baptized children who lived in mixed villages in Tetiushi or Sviiazhsk districts, where Muslim Tatars constituted the majority, attended the Qur'anic school assiduously. Kräshens also participated physically or financially in the construction of the mosques and schools.<sup>166</sup> But in some cases, the rest of the Tatar community refused to provide for the educational needs of the baptized families and barred them from their schools and mosques. Literate Tatars of the same villages, then, took upon themselves the function of

163. Il'minskii, *Opyty perelozheniia*, 23–24, 68; “Bikkinin, Abdulzhalil,” in *Islam na Nizhegorodchine*, 28–29; Damir Mukhetdinov, “Traditsii sufizma na Nizhegorodchine: Istoki i evoliutsiia,” *Sufizm kak sotsiokul'turnoe iavlenie v Rossiiskoi umme* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2007), 67–68; idem, *Iz proshlogo religioznogo musul'manskogo obrazovaniia na Nizhegorodchine v XVIII–nachale XX vv.* (Nizhnii Novgorod, 2004), 10–11, 18.

164. According to Nikolai Il'minskii and Gordii Sablukov (1804–1880), a professor at the Kazan Theological Academy, in the late 1850s, NART, f. 10, op. 1, d. 1655, l. 17.

165. M. Reshetnikov, “O nuzhdakh pravoslavnoi missii sredi magometan Viatskoi gubernii,” *Viatskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti*, no. 20 (16 October 1905):1097, 1099–1100; B. Iuzefovich, *Khristianstvo, magometanstvo i iazychestvo v vostochnykh guberniakh Rossii* (Moscow, 1883), 32–33.

166. NART, f. 4, op. 97, d. 1, ll. 87 ob, 148 ob.



unofficial mullahs, visited families in their homes, and instructed their children separately from the other Muslim children.<sup>167</sup>

In all-Kräshen villages where there was neither mosque nor official mullah, the situation was more complicated. Itinerant Tatar mullahs, among them artisans and *shakirds* (students), who often hid their identity, taught Kräshen adults and children. Because the state imposed a strict quota on the number of mosque congregations (*mahalla*) and limited their proximity to Kräshen, baptized Finno-Ugric, or Chuvash villages, the opening of new mosques was a very delicate operation. *Shakirds* were often unable to find a permanent position in a village school or mosque after completing their education. But villagers welcomed them to serve as their unofficial mullahs. In the 1840s, a Muslim Tatar from Spassk district regularly visited the Kräshens in Baitiariakova village, Chistopol' district, and read them prayers at home. Later, in the 1860s, a Muslim skullcap maker from Tetiushi district who had studied in Kazan taught Kräshen and Tatar children in the mixed Tatar-Kräshen-Chuvash village of Azbaba, Sviiazhsk district, and at the villagers' instigation, served as their unofficial mullah. Finally, in 1865, a teacher named Muhi ad-Din, assisted by his wife, taught both boys and girls in the village of Elyshevo, Mamadysh district, for several months before leaving for another village.<sup>168</sup>

These itinerant teachers' pedagogy was quite effective. Muhi ad-Din's students in Elyshevo had learned to reject all images, drawings, portraits, icons, and crosses—the symbols of the Orthodox world. His main textbook was the Muslim primer *Sharā'it al-Īmān* or as it was popularly known among the Tatars, *Īmān Shartī* (Principles of the Faith) by which the children learned not only reading but also the personal and communal obligations of their faith during the first year of primary school. Although they could not translate their Arabic prayers into Tatar, Muhi ad-Din's students mastered the rudiments of literacy and the Muslim faith. These results were comparable to those of the schools attached to the Tatar mosques.<sup>169</sup>

Among the 1860s leaders of the apostasies whose ages varied between thirty and sixty, the level of literacy was the highest—demonstrating knowledge equivalent to at least four years of primary schooling. One such leader in Elyshevo could read the *Häft-i Yäk* almost without error and was able to translate Arabic words into Tatar. Another, who was particularly respected by the villagers, took the *Häft-i Yäk* and read it with the aid of the *tafsir* (commentary on the Qur'an or exegesis), which existed in Turkic language.<sup>170</sup> But the students of Qur'anic schools could advance far beyond the mere recitation of certain religious texts. The Kirilov (in Tatar, Wälitov) brothers of Udmurt origin, who played a critical role in the apostasy of Elyshevo, and had an impressive quantity of Islamic works including the *Häft-i Yäk* and the *tafsir*,

167. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 846, ll. 1–2; f. 1, op. 3, d. 228, l. 151.

168. NART, f. 1, op. 2, d. 399, l. 14 ob.; and f. 13, op. 1, d. 1044, ll. 4 ob.-6, 15, 27, 32 ob.; Malov, "Ocherk," 18, pt. 1 (1872): 65, 396.

169. Malov, "Ocherk," 17, pt. 3 (1871): 240, 243–244, 247–248, 406.

170. Malov, "Ocherk," 17, pt. 3 (1871): 241–242. In the *tafsir*, every word, every verse is glossed. The *tafsir* provides grammatical and historical information helpful in understanding the text. The Volga Tatars preferred the *tafsir* of Jalal ad-Din al-Mahalli (d. 1459) and his disciple Jalal ad-Din as-Suyuti (d. 1505) (Iakov Koblov, "Konfessional'nye shkoly Kazanskikh tatar," *Inorodcheskoe obozrenie* 2, no. 1 [1915], supplement to *PS* [December 1915], published in *PS*, January–February 1917: 28, footnote 2).

demonstrated their literacy at their trial by reading aloud the petition and Tatar notes sent to them from Kazan. By doing so, the Kirilovs proved their ability to make the connection between the Arabic characters and the Tatar sounds they represented, to decipher a message whose form was not fixed by tradition or dictated by God, and finally to create their own text. One of the criticisms advanced by Russian missionaries and later Tatar modernists was that in traditional schooling, students could read only the texts that they had read with the mullah.<sup>171</sup>

Literacy undoubtedly played a crucial role in consolidating the apostasy movement. Not only did it allow apostates to write petitions or exchange strategic messages, but it also allowed families of neighboring villages to strike important marital alliances to consolidate Islam in their communities. During the apostasy of 1866, an Islamized family of Kibiak-Kozi conducted marital negotiations by mail; in a letter they offered their daughter to a young Kräshen man of Elyshevo on the condition that he officially convert to Islam.<sup>172</sup>

As a rule, the higher their level of education, the more the Kräshens resisted church intrusion. In 1866, the undecided in Elyshevo were often illiterate, mixed Russian and Arabic prayers together, and remained attached to their animist beliefs. Consequently, when Russian authorities and missionaries arrived to put an end to the apostasy, villagers did not show a united front, and allowed the police to question them separately, which led to the arrest and exile of the main leaders. Higher levels of Islamic knowledge could also lead to another form of internal strife: a new mullah with a deeper understanding of the texts could threaten the position of previous underground mullahs. As a result, villagers' knowledge of Islam constantly changed.<sup>173</sup>

Very often clandestine schools were headed by women, partly because they usually took care of the farm during the months their husbands were away; partly thanks to the separation of the sexes, the woman's world was closed to the male-dominated Russian state and clerical authorities. It is also possible that women who traditionally directed ancestral indigenous worship of the *kirämät*, as was the case in the village of Taveli, enjoyed special authority and once they partook in the civilization of Islam, they became its most enthusiastic carriers. After 1865 (the year Muhi ad-Din left the village), a baptized woman who had studied in Kazan before moving to Elyshevo secretly taught the village girls.<sup>174</sup> In 1870, another Kräshen woman replaced her. Some nearby villages such as Tri Sosny (Öch Narat), Staraiä Ikshurma, Savrushii, Sosnovyi Mys (Jänäy), Tokhtamyshovo in Mamadysh district, Kibiak-Kozi and Ianasal in Laishovo district, and Aziak in Kazan district also had clandestine Qur'anic schools. In Tokhtamyshovo, Elena Iakovleva, a widow and mother of eight (the oldest was nineteen and the youngest three) taught apostate and nonapostate Kräshen and even Muslim Tatar children. In 1883–1884, Kräshens who remained faithful to Christianity asked for the Kazan Consistory to close the clandestine Qur'anic school of Evdokiia Petrova in Bol'shie Savrushii, which attracted children of officially apostate and nonapostate parents. Even the village of Nikiforova where Il'minskii's system of

171. Malov, "Ocherk," 18, pt. 1 (1872): 72, 76–78; NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 12–12 ob.

172. NART, f. 13, op. 1, d. 1003, ll. 28–28 ob.

173. Malov, *Missionerstvo sredi mukhammedan i kreshchenykh tatar* (Kazan, 1892), 114–117.

174. Il'minskii, ed., *Kazanskaia tsentral'naia*, 153.

education was fully adopted, hosted a clandestine school for well-to-do apostates who numbered only twelve in the 1880s. Sometimes villages had two or three schools in private houses, allowing children to come surreptitiously in very small groups early in the morning or in the evening, since the schools' fragile existence was constantly threatened by priests, police, and disgruntled neighbors who denounced the clandestine teachers to the authorities.<sup>175</sup>

However, it was not just the privilege of women to teach in this underground network of Islamic primary schools. Any person who knew how to read and write could become a teacher. In the apostate village of St. Kiremet' (Iske Qarmät), Chistopol' district, Fäkhruulla Tahir (1849–1924), the father of the famous poet Khäsän Tufan (1900–1981), taught children basic Islamic literacy with other literate fellow villagers.<sup>176</sup> If necessary, villagers sent gifted children away to acquire a more sophisticated knowledge of Islam. In 1883–1885, an adolescent from Elyshevo, son of the unofficial mullah, studied in the madrasa of Toygil'dino (Töygel) in the district of Menzelinsk, Ufa province, where tailors from Elyshevo liked to work. Upon his return, the young man, Ibrahim Bikmökhämmät uli (Bikmökhämmätov) (d. 1933), was appointed mullah, taught boys and girls at his house, kept marriage registers, and a strict account of the *mähär* (bride price) and alms given in nature and money by his parishioners between 1899 and 1903.<sup>177</sup> If bothered by the authorities, unofficial mullahs argued that they collected birth, marriage, and death data for the *volost'*.<sup>178</sup> Ibrahim's mother, a teacher herself, married him to a literate woman, who became responsible for the girls' education.<sup>179</sup>

The oldest visible date on Elyshevo's tombstones, 1887, confirms that roughly at the time when the young Ibrahim Bikmökhämmätov was sent south to study, Islamic literacy had become much more generalized, or at least more visible in the village landscape. To mark the location of their relatives' tombs, the Elyshevites (literate or illiterate) used to inscribe the more discrete *tamghas*, which also identified their clan in their petitions to the czar, on small size elongated narrow flat boards or on a stone.<sup>180</sup> But in the 1880s, richer apostates had more elaborate tombstones erected.

175. RGIA, f. 821, op. 8, d. 763, ll. 288 ob., 289 ob., 299–299 ob., 301–301 ob.; and NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 1818, l. 4; f. 1, op. 3, d. 5720, l. 5; f. 4, op. 101, d. 16, ll. 17–18, 21–21 ob.; and f. 967, op. 1, d. 8, l. 6; *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Bratstva Sv. Guriia za semnadsatyi bratskii god s 4 oktiabria 1883 goda po 4 oktiabria 1884* (Kazan, 1884), 20; "Zakladka tserkvi v derevne Staroi Ikshurme," *IKE* no. 15 (1 August 1891): 468.

176. Khatip Ghosman, "Zur khislär häm tirän ideyalär shaghiyre," in Khäsän Tufan, *Saylanma äsärlär* (Kazan, 1964), 6; Mäsghud Ghaynetdinov, *Dawillarda jillärdä: Khäsän Tufannıng tormish häm ijat säkh-ifäläre* (Kazan, 1989), 8; Maksim Glukhov, "Khasan Tufan," in *Tatarica: Entsiklopediia* (Kazan, 1997), 468; *Tufan* (Kazan, 2000), 16.

177. *Otchet o deiatel'nosti Bratstva Sv. Guriia za dvadsat' tretii bratskii god s 4-go oktiabria 1889 g. po 4-e oktiabria 1890 goda* (Kazan, 1890), 43. The boys' parents gave the *mähär* to the girls' parents to pay for the marriage ceremony and guarded it for their daughter in case of divorce. Bikmökhämmätov's records indicated that Elyshevites in 1903–1905 paid between 15 and 400 rubles for the *mähär*. See marriage and alms registers in Gölsinä Khämüdullina's private collection. On the meaning of *mähär* in Islam, see G. N. Akhmarov, *Svadebnye obriady Kazanskikh tatar* (Kazan, 1907), 17, 19, 20.

178. Chicherina, *U privolzhskikh inorodtsev*, 143. Other examples of underground mullahs keeping registers for their parishioners in the 1890s can be found in NART, f. 2, op. 2, d. 5133, l. 5; f. 2, op. 2, d. 5136, l. 6 ob.; and f. 2, op. 2, d. 5137, l. 3.

179. NART, f. 1, op. 4, d. 4775, ll. 4–5 ob.; and f. 1, op. 3, d. 7798, ll. 178–179; Ildus Zahidullin, "Jilish awılı mäkruhlari," *Miras* 48, no. 11–12 (1995): 138–139.

180. Tomb of Iskhäq Bähshir ughli of Udmurt descent, Elyshevo cemetery.

Another tomb dated from 1898 quoted the *shahada* (the witness of faith). Such funerary inscription invited the literate passerby to read the prayer, and earn salvific merit for himself and the deceased. These tombs made clear to the public, be it Tatar, Kräshen, or Russian, that Islam was meant to stay in Elyshevo, despite the presence of a church. They also witnessed that the Elyshevites of the 1880s–1890s, who had seen their neighbors and kin depart in chains for Siberia in 1866 and 1878, were not fearful of the police anymore. Indeed, a bride from Elyshevo, who had married a baptized apostate from Chistopol' district had her family petition approved in 1895 due to the Kazan governor Poltoratskii's willingness to contemplate the possibility of a general amnesty for descendants of apostate families.<sup>181</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, Elyshevo had five unofficial teachers for 275 inhabitants; that is one teacher for every 55 villagers—an impressive ratio. In April 1907, the village finally received the official authorization to open a mosque. But the history of the teaching of Islam underground did not end there. During the collectivization, the revered daughter of Mullah Ibrahim Bikhmökhamätov, Mahisärwär (1902–1988), who died in a state of purity after performing her ablutions, revived her father's work and fulfilled the function of underground female teacher (*abistay*).<sup>182</sup>



1.2: Tombstone in Elyshevo cemetery. Photograph by the author.

181. NART, f. 2, op. 2, d. 5129, ll. 20–21, 25, 28–29.

182. *Volost'* statistics in 1883 in NART f. 1, op. 3, d. 5720, ll. 17–17 ob.; G. Khämüdullina, interview by author, May 2008, Elyshevo.

As a result of this permanent thirst for and accumulation of knowledge from one generation to another, a literate native elite arose not only among the Elyshevites, but also among other Turkic and Finno-Ugric villages of the Volga-Ural region, spreading Islam in their midst and beyond. In the 1860s, a baptized Chuvash served as a teacher and mullah in the Chuvash village of Kukshum, Tetiushi district, listed as a Tatar village in 1912; during a raid at his father's home, the police confiscated eleven Qur'ans, as well as a manuscript and religious books in Tatar. Even more impressive was that these new teachers taught not only within their own communities, but also in distant lands. For example, the descendant of apostates and future official mullah of Verkhniaia Nikitkina in 1909, taught around 1905 as a private teacher in the home of a rich Kazakh.<sup>183</sup>

Baptism prior to the reforms of Catherine the Great served initially as a cement between various ethnic communities and individuals, dislocated by the conquest. Many Krāshens were still attached to their indigenous beliefs and exposed to some degree to Islam, but wished to partake of their new conqueror's economic and spiritual power. However, after Catherine's reforms, many, but not all, baptized Tatars chose to apostatize from Christianity to Islam, revealing the presence of a strong Islamic missionary movement in their midst. Gradually, apostates to Islam moved from identifying themselves with their immediate village to a more geographically expansive sense of religious identity, which linked them to other apostatizing villages and to the civilization of Islam. Like the peasants in Algeria during the French rule, Islamized baptized Tatars also learned to cope with the colonial administration by absorbing some rudiments of the dominant state language and studying the intricacies of the legal system. Baptized peasants and merchants learned from their colonizers and challenged the way they constructed their religious identity.<sup>184</sup>

The mechanics of the apostasy movement showed that even though conversion to Islam was the result of a slow and gradual process of acculturation, the time of the apostasy constituted an important cathartic moment when apostates publicly proclaimed their detachment from Christianity, argued for their Islamic renewed identity, invited other hesitant villages to join them, and changed the religious landscape of their village. In some specific areas, the converted made a choice between not only Islam and Christianity, but also—less abruptly for sure—between their own indigenous beliefs (whose strength should not be underestimated) and the two universal religions. Even in the cases when it could be argued that apostates were crypto-Muslim, the apostasies can still be regarded as movements of intra-faith conversion. They involved the revitalization of one's faith by using Islamic eschatological rhetorical devices and obliged the baptized Tatars to defend and articulate their religious beliefs through their conquerors' legal grid.

One of the key explanations for the expansion and consolidation of Islam in the baptized milieu was the spread of literacy and religious print. Their diffusion

183. NART, f. 1, op. 3, d. 222, ll. 1–3 ob.; f. 1, op. 3, d. 231, l. 229; f. 93, op. 1, d. 128 v., l. 45; *Spisok selenii Kazanskoï gubernii. Vypusk 7. Tetiushskii uezd* (Kazan 1912), 15; Leonid Abramov, ed., *Na Zasechnoi cherte: Iz proshlogo i nastoiashchego novosheshmnskogo raiona Tatarstana* (Kazan, 2007), 138.

184. Ouarda Siari-Tengour, "Requêtes paysannes et Résistance culturelle," in *Pratiques et résistance culturelles au Maghreb*, ed. Noureddine Sraïev (Paris, 1992), 237–246.

encouraged the formation of an indigenous elite who complemented the teaching of sympathizing neighboring Tatar peasants, mullahs, Naqshbandi shaykhs, and itinerant students who came sporadically to their villages. Apostate villages also had their own teachers: fathers who tailored in Muslim areas or Islamized Kräshen milieus, mothers who had been in contact with Tatar women in everyday life, blind teachers who knew prayers by heart. The result was that in 1901, the mullah of the parish village of Meleuz in Sterlitamak province, Ufa district, was a Kräshen who had a higher Islamic education and gone to Mecca on the pilgrimage.<sup>185</sup>

Qur'anic schooling not only confirmed what Kräshens had heard of Islam at the market, sacred places, or at popular festivals, where they met Tatars, but it also gave them the ability to copy petitions, write names of petitioners, and decipher messages that were not of a religious content. Most important, the books used in Qur'anic schools, also sung at family reunions or popular festivals, prepared the way for their religious transformation. Apostate representatives drew images and metaphors from this literature, which struck people's imagination and strengthened their resistance to foreign encroachment. The following chapter examines the content and impact of this prose, which late nineteenth-century modernist Tatars blamed for introducing superstitions and false legends into popular discourse. These literary works, however, molded their childhood, the context they lived in, and penetrated the baptized milieu. They were the result of earlier processes of Islamization in the Turkic world and the product of a major Islamic revival of Sufi origin in the eighteenth century, which influenced the individual and collective consciousness of the converted communities and prepared them to respond to the Mahdist rhetoric of the vagabond Sufis who pressed them to join the community of their ancestors: Islam.

185. Otdel rukopisei Kazanskoi nauchnoi biblioteki, f. 7, ed. khr. 18, ll. 160–160 ob.